

Guidelines for the MA exam (non-thesis option)

M.A. IN FOREIGN LANGUAGES, CULTURES, AND LITERATURES
Department of Modern and Classical Languages and Literatures
Revised May 14, 2018

These are departmental guidelines. All Graduate School policies and procedures must also be followed. The Graduate School is the final authority in determining that requirements and deadlines have been met. Students should consult the University's Graduate Catalog, available at <http://graduateschool.vt.edu/>.

Committee

By the end of the second semester of full-time enrollment or after 15 credit hours, each student pursuing the exam option will select a committee chair and two committee members, in consultation with the departmental Graduate Studies Director. The committee should be chosen from among the department's tenured and tenure-track faculty (Assistant Professor, Associate Professor, Professor). The student must contact each potential committee member, each of which must agree to serve on the committee. Faculty with different specialties should be chosen, to reflect the range of periods, regions, and genres on the reading list.

The non-thesis exam committee is responsible for the following:

- providing guidance and input as the student prepares for the exam;
- reading and pre-approving their advisees' exam reading list;
- indicating whether or not the student is ready for the M.A. examination at the time of the scheduling of the exam;
- submitting exam questions in advance, and keeping those questions confidential;
- providing an assessment of the student's exam responses.

Reading list

The reading lists include some choices and options. The student will finalize the list in consultation with her/his MA advisory committee. The finalized list, which should include full bibliographic details for each work selected, will then be signed by the student, her/his advisory committee, and the departmental Graduate Studies Director. The exam questions will be based on this list.

Scheduling the exam

The student's finalized Plan of Study must be filed and approved by the Graduate School before the exam is scheduled. The departmental Director of Graduate Studies will work with exam candidates to schedule a date for the exam, in accordance with Graduate School deadlines. Multiple candidates from the same language should take the exam on the same days. Examinations will typically be given only during the fall or spring semester, and during or after the student's final semester of coursework. The student must be enrolled at Virginia Tech during the time of the examination.

Graduate School forms

The student is responsible for obtaining and filling out the appropriate Graduate School forms relating to the non-thesis examination. These include the examination scheduling form, which must be filed well in advance. The student will obtain all required signatures. The student will submit the forms to the Graduate School, meeting relevant deadlines. For forms and deadlines, see <http://graduateschool.vt.edu/>.

Format of the exam

The exam will consist of essay questions. Questions will be broad in scope, but answering them will require a demonstration of detailed knowledge. Strict time limits will be observed. The exam will be taken over two days. Each day there will be two sessions of two hours each (four sessions total). Students may use dictionaries, primary sources, and notes, but should keep in mind that consultation of these materials will take away time from composing coherent essays. The examination will be conducted in the target language, with the exception of the linguistics section of the Hispanic Studies reading list.

Administering the exam

The examination will be administered online. A faculty proctor will be available by phone during the examination time window, for troubleshooting any technical difficulties. The faculty proctor will set the window during which the student can access and complete the exam.

Each of the two two-hour sessions will cover different reading list sections and different questions. The question(s) for each session will not be revealed until the student begins that session. The student may take a break between sessions, as long as the exam is completed within the specified time window.

Honor code

The university's Graduate Honor Code establishes academic integrity among graduate students. All incoming graduate students are notified of the honor code upon application to Virginia Tech. By accepting admission, they agree to comply with the Graduate Honor Code, which requires honesty and ethical behavior in all academic pursuits. The Constitution of the Graduate Honor System is available at <http://ghs.graduateschool.vt.edu/>.

Assessment

In accordance with Graduate School Policy, each advisory committee member will assess the exam responses as satisfactory or unsatisfactory, and communicate that assessment to the advisory committee chair. To pass the exam, a graduate student is allowed at most one unsatisfactory vote. If a student fails an examination, one full semester (a minimum of 15 weeks) must elapse before the second examination is scheduled. Not more than two opportunities to pass any one examination are allowed. A student failing any of the examinations required by Graduate Policies two times will be dismissed from graduate studies by the Graduate School. For updates to these policies, see <http://graduateschool.vt.edu/>.