Program in Classical Languages: PhD Requirements

Timetable
The doctoral program, for which the MA is a prerequisite, is designed to be completed in 4-5 years by well-prepared students (a total of 6-7 including the MA): 2-3 years to complete the preliminary requirements described below, and another 2 years to write a dissertation. Students who pursue study abroad or seek to develop broader expertise, or who take up appointments elsewhere before finishing, naturally take longer. The emphasis in the first year is on coursework, mainly seminars; students also work on satisfying exam requirements in the languages (both classical and modern) and in ancient history. The emphasis in the second year shifts to completing any remaining exams (the literature exams are usually taken last) and developing plans for the dissertation.

Course Requirements
The regular PhD program has no specific course requirements. In practice, students normally register for three courses (9 credit hours) each semester they are in residence until they advance to doctoral candidacy (see below). Students receiving financial support from the University, whether in the form of a fellowship or a teaching appointment (TA or AI), are required to register for 9 hours.

Note: To be appointed an Assistant Instructor (AI), students must first take a graduate course in teaching methods (LAT 398T), offered every Spring semester. Students normally take this in their fourth semester; students entering with an MA may take it in their second semester.

Examinations
Students must pass a series of eight written examinations before they may advance to candidacy and dissertation research under the supervision of a dissertation committee. These examinations are designed to ensure competence in skills and methods essential for all areas of classical scholarship. The exams are prepared and evaluated by GSC committees appointed jointly by the GSC and Department Chairs. Committees for Translation and Literature exams consist of a chair and two readers; committees for exams in Modern Languages and Ancient History consist of a single member.

1. Greek and Latin Translation
Reading proficiency in both classical languages is required for the PhD. Separate three-hour written examinations in each language serve to ensure proficiency and also to promote familiarity with a representative range of authors and genres. Students are expected to pass one of these exams before the end of their fourth, the other before the end of their sixth semester of graduate work.

Examinations comprise six passages (three poetry, three prose) of about 25 lines each: at least two passages (one prose and one poetry) are drawn from texts found on the Translation Reading Lists; the remainder are drawn from works similar in style and genre to those on the same lists. Examinees have three hours to translate four passages, two from each group (poetry and prose). Translations should be accurate and demonstrate understanding of syntax. To ensure anonymity, examinees use pseudonyms.

Examinations are offered twice annually: early in the Fall semester (the third or fourth week) and following the Spring break (the ninth or tenth week). In exceptional cases, students may request an exam at times other than the regularly scheduled dates; requests should be addressed to the GSC Chair, who is authorized to approve requests on reasonable grounds (such as study or research abroad).

Exams are prepared and evaluated by a GSC committee appointed jointly by the GSC and Department Chairs. The committee consists of a chair and two readers; membership rotates minimally, one member changing each year so far as faculty schedules permit. The chair selects and prepares passages subject to approval by the two readers (glosses are optional). The readers evaluate the exams independently, assigning each pseudonym a Pass or No pass and marking each passage likewise; their agreement is decisive, and only split verdicts are referred to the chair for a final decision. There is no formula for
Pass; for example, three passages at Pass and a fourth No pass may or may not demonstrate proficiency. Examiners are urged to provide corrections and constructive advice.

Translation Reading Lists These lists indicate the range of authors and works you should be able to read when you take the translation exams.

- [Greek translation reading list](PDF, 52K)
- [Latin translation reading list](PDF, 39K)

2. Modern Languages
Reading proficiency in German and one other modern foreign language (usually French or Italian) is required for the PhD. Proficiency is tested by a 90-minute written translation exam, in which use of a dictionary is permitted. Students are expected to pass one exam before the end of their fourth semester, the other before the end of their sixth semester of graduate work. Special courses for graduate students, with emphasis on reading skills, are offered by the Departments of French-Italian and Germanic Languages.

3. Greek and Roman History
Separate three-hour written examinations are required in Greek and Roman History. These are designed to ensure familiarity with major primary and secondary sources, and a critical grasp of basic historiographical principles. In Greek History, the focus is on the Archaic and Classical periods. In Roman History, the focus is on the period from 133 BCE to AD 68, though background knowledge from the early Republic to the death of Constantine is expected. Students normally fulfill this requirement by taking survey courses in Greek and Roman History (CC 383, offered in alternate years) and passing the final exam in each course.

4. Greek and Roman Literature
Separate examinations are required in Greek and Roman Literature: in each case a three-hour written exam, followed by a short oral exam. The written exams consist of two essays (one on a general question, and one on a narrower topic) and critical comment on three passages (from a choice of five), addressing issues of content, form, and style. Students are expected to deal coherently with significant issues in literary history and to demonstrate familiarity with methods of literary criticism. Students preparing for these exams should consult in advance with members of the faculty serving or likely to serve on the exam committee. An individualized program of directed reading in a conference course (no more than one for each exam) is an acceptable means of developing the broader and deeper command required to pass these exams.

Literature Reading Lists These lists indicate the authors and works with which you should be familiar before taking the literature exams.

- [Greek literature reading list](PDF, 76K)
- [Latin literature reading list](PDF, 61K)

These are normally the last qualifying exams students take, and students are expected to pass both by the end of their fourth year.

Dissertation
The final requirement for the PhD in Classics is a dissertation: a substantial work of original scholarship on a topic in the area of the student’s special expertise. Students are encouraged to work closely with faculty members to explore suitable topics beginning in their third year of study, with the goal of developing a preliminary prospectus by the end of their fourth year. Students who remain in residence normally take two years to complete their dissertation; those who accept appointments elsewhere before finishing typically take longer.

For details, see Procedures.

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