

Student Learning Assessment Rubrics
Department of Semitic and Egyptian Languages and Literatures

Rubric for M.A. level Comprehensive Examinations

| Trait | Level | | |
|--|--|---|--|
| | Exceeding Expectations (3pts) | Meeting Expectations (2pts) | Below Expectations (1pt) |
| 1) Knowledge of the grammar, syntax, and basic vocabulary of the major and minor languages | Striking mastery of grammatical and syntactical forms of the major and minor languages | Clear understanding of the common grammatical and syntactical forms of the major and minor languages | Lack of adequate knowledge of the grammatical and syntactical forms of the major and minor languages |
| 2) Identification and discussion of selected grammatical and syntactical features in an assigned text in a major or minor language | No significant errors in identifying selected grammatical and syntactical features in an assigned text | Correct identification of most of the selected grammatical and syntactical features in an assigned text | Identify less than 75% of the selected grammatical and syntactical features in an assigned text |
| 3) Ability to translate accurately the selected texts in the major and minor languages into English | Clear and correct translation that effectively expresses even idiomatic nuances in correct English diction | Adequate translation into grammatically correct English | English translation significantly misrepresents the meaning of an assigned text |

Results and Outcomes

3 pts — Students with this score on both exams will earn their MA and continue on to the PhD level.

2 pts — Students with this score on both exams (or with 3 pts on one and 2 pts on the other) will earn their MA and faculty will determine whether or not they continue on to the PhD level.

1 pt — Students with this score on either exam must retake the exam to earn the MA degree. A second failure to pass the MA exam will result in termination from the program.

Comprehensive Exams FAQ

When do students take comprehensive exams?

- Semitics students typically take MA comprehensive exams in their fourth semester and PhD comprehensive exams in their seventh semester.
- Fall exams are typically administered on Wednesday–Friday of the first week of November; spring exams are typically administered on Wednesday–Friday of the first week of April. Students choose two of those days, one for each exam and will have from 9am–5pm on each day to complete the exam.
- Students may take comprehensive exams during the summer sessions, but note that tuition waivers do not cover summer registration (with the exception of work waivers).

Do students need to register for comprehensive exams?

- Students must be enrolled in the appropriate one-credit course, SEM 698 or SEM 998, during the semester in which they take their exams.
- When necessary, students may register for SEM 698 or SEM 998 without taking exams in order to maintain continuous matriculation. For example, if a student has completed all required coursework in the fall semester but does not want to take comprehensive exams until the following summer or fall semester, he or she should register for SEM 698 or SEM 998 during the intervening spring semester.

Within the 30 credit-hours required for the MA degree, what classes are required before sitting for comprehensive exams?

- Students must have completed 9 credits hours beyond the introductory level in their major research language, and 6 credit hours beyond the introductory level in their minor research language. Students may take their exams during the same semester in which they are fulfilling this requirement.
- For some languages only the first semester is considered “introductory level” (e.g., Coptic, Ethiopic, Syriac), while for others the first two semesters are considered “introductory level” (e.g., Akkadian, Arabic, Aramaic, Hebrew). For other languages not listed here, please consult with the faculty.

When must the modern language requirements be fulfilled?

- In order to sit for MA comprehensive exams, students must have fulfilled one of their modern language requirements. In order to sit for PhD comprehensive exams, students must have fulfilled both modern language requirements.

- Modern language requirements may be fulfilled in one of two ways: (1) taking a placement test; or (2) taking—and successfully passing—the reading knowledge classes offered by CUA’s Department of Modern Languages and Literatures (French 500 or German 500). The placement tests are administered by Morgan McDonald in CUA’s Counseling Center.
- For those students who opt for the placement test, they must have received their passing grade before sitting for exams. For those who opt for the French 500 or German 500 class, students may be enrolled in that class during the same semester in which they sit for exams.

Are the exams “open-book”?

- In general, students are allowed access to lexica for MA exams. This should be discussed beforehand, however, with the faculty member administering the exam so that it is clear which reference works can be consulted during the exam and which ones cannot.

Can comprehensive exams be taken on computers rather than written out by hand?

- This is at the discretion of the appropriate faculty member and must be arranged beforehand.

When and how should I start preparing for the exams?

- MA exams primarily focus on translation skills and are open-lexicon, and so we recommend that students do as much reading and translating of primary sources as their schedule allows (consult with individual faculty members for more specifics). For PhD exams, we recommend that students get their reading list from the appropriate faculty member at least six months before the exam (if not earlier).

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