Language Requirements

FOREIGN LANGUAGES

1.10 Foreign Languages: Becoming proficient in the foreign languages that have been and continue to be important for art history and for the particular culture that you study is essential for graduate-level scholarship. Before beginning graduate school, you should brush up on your foreign languages and begin to acquire the new ones that you will need for your graduate work. Being behind on languages may make your first year much more difficult than it needs to be, and may prevent you from doing the type and quality of work that you would like to do. All incoming students are eligible to enroll in an intensive language course at the University in the summer prior to their first year (see 1.13).

1.11 Which languages?: All students must be certified in at least two foreign research languages and are encouraged to meet this requirement in the first year.

For all students, except specialists in African, Islamic, and Latin American art, one of these must be one of the following modern research languages: Chinese, French, Italian, or Spanish. African art specialists must be certified in French. Islamic art specialists must be certified in German, French, or Italian. Latin American art specialists must be certified in Spanish. The language selected for proficiency examination must correspond to the student’s research plans and the student must achieve a grade of high pass on the language exam. Students whose secondary and/or college/university education was primarily conducted in a required language may petition the Director of Graduate Studies for exemption from the language exam.

All students, except specialists in African, East Asian, Islamic, or Latin American art, must also be certified in German by achieving a grade of pass or better on the German language exam. Students studying East Asian art must be certified in Japanese by achieving a grade of pass or better on the Japanese language exam. Students studying African art must be certified in an indigenous language. Students studying Latin American art must be certified in Portuguese or an indigenous language. Students whose field of study requires them to learn one or more languages that are not modern or not Western European may opt for Track II.

The final exams given in the university’s language courses for reading knowledge are sometimes the same as the university’s exam for that language. Whenever this is the case, students may alternately pass their requirement in that language by earning the grade specified above on the final exam taken within the context of the course.

In addition to the requirements listed above, each field will have its own expectations for languages. The level of proficiency for these additional languages should be determined by the faculty advisor (see 1.12) and noted on the supplemental language contract. Below is a list of what fields typically require:

Western: German and a modern research language (generally French or Italian), plus:

- Ancient: Greek and Latin
- Medieval: Depending on the area, Medieval Latin and/or Greek and modern language of the country of specialization
- Renaissance: Latin and modern language of the country of specialization
- Baroque: Latin and modern language of country of specialization

Asian:

- Chinese Pre-modern: Modern Japanese, classical Chinese, modern Chinese
- Chinese Modern: Modern Japanese, Modern Chinese

Islamic:

- German, French, or Italian, and, depending on area of specialization, Arabic, Persian, and/or Ottoman Turkish

African:

- French and one indigenous language; depending on area of specialization, one or more additional European and/or African languages

Latin American:

- Pre-Columbian: Spanish, and, depending on area of specialization, one or more indigenous language and/or modern language of the country of research
- Colonial: Spanish, and, depending on area of specialization, Portuguese and/or one or more indigenous language, and/or Latin, and/or Italian, Dutch, or German
- Modern: Portuguese and Spanish

1.12 Supplemental Language Contract: Each student schedules a meeting with their faculty advisor no later than the first quarter, to discuss which, if any, supplemental languages are necessary for the student’s academic plans and the level of proficiency needed. This language plan must be recorded on a Supplemental Language Contract. Complete the form with your faculty advisor, co-sign and date it, and return it to the Department Assistant, who will place it in your department file. This form will help the Director of Graduate Studies work with you to fit language study into your program of study. The language plan recorded on the supplemental language contract is usually completed by the end of the third year and must be completed for the student to advance to ABD status. If the language contract includes language study after the third year, this should be stated explicitly. Language study beyond the third year will not be required to obtain formal admission to candidacy.

1.13 Pre-First Year Summer Language Study: All students, but especially those working in premodern fields and fields outside Europe and North America are encouraged to work intensively on language study the summer before their first year. Students may register to take a condensed year-long language course in the University’s summer session. The Department will make available what funds it can to support students in fields with extensive language study requirements engaged in pre-first year summer language study. For foreign students, this will entail early planning in collaboration with the University in order to allow sufficient time to obtain a student visa. Information will be given to students early in the acceptance process.
1.14 How to Meet the Language Requirement: You should register to take the appropriate University language exam (listed in course search) when you register for courses. More information about and samples of university language exams can be found here. The language requirement in modern European research languages may be met through the University's language exam as specified above (see 1.11) or by successfully completing the third quarter of the introductory language sequence. The final exams given in the university’s language courses for reading knowledge are sometimes the same as the university’s exam for that language. Whenever this is the case, students may alternately pass their requirement in that language by earning the grade specified above on the final exam taken within the context of the course.

If you don't achieve the necessary “High Pass” or “Pass” on the exams for your research languages as specified in section 1.11, you will be expected to enroll in a University-directed language course. In the unlikely event that you have no background in one of the languages that can meet the requirements for the degree, you should enroll in a University language sequence beginning in the autumn. Neither an independent course nor a language exam other than the University’s can serve as a substitute. An introductory or intermediate-level language course in one of the modern European research languages cannot be counted towards the degree and is expected to be a fourth course, on top of the usual three-course load. For the language in which you need a High Pass, you’ll be expected to continue enrolling in language courses each subsequent quarter until the exam is passed with a High Pass or the substitute (a grade of B+ or better in the third quarter of the introductory sequence) is achieved. For the language in which you need a Pass, you’ll be expected to continue enrolling in language courses each subsequent quarter until the exam is completed with a Pass or the substitute (a grade of B or better in the third quarter of the introductory sequence) is achieved. For the modern Western European research languages, the introductory one-year sequence is appropriate. For additional languages you may need for your field, one year of study is often not sufficient. Consult your faculty advisor about the number of years you’ll need and record your individual requirements on the supplemental language contract.

1.15 Course Credit for Language Courses: The University does not allow graduate students to receive course credit for beginning-level language courses. Credit is given only for intermediate- or higher-level language courses. Track II students are allowed to take one beginning-level language course sequence (in a non-modern or non-Western language) as part of their three-course load during their first year, but these language courses are not counted towards the 18 courses required for the degree. During their second year, Track II students may wish to count three intermediate or higher-level language courses towards the course requirements for the degree. Any student who wishes to take additional intermediate or higher-level languages may include them among the non-departmental courses that count toward the required total of 18, with the exception that intermediate-level modern Western European language courses cannot be counted towards the 18 courses required for the degree.