

Graduate Student Handbook

Master of Arts in Romance Languages

DEPARTMENT OF FOREIGN LANGUAGES

UNIVERSITY OF NEW ORLEANS

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INTRODUCTION

The graduate program in Romance Languages will lead to an M.A. degree in Romance Languages with a French or Spanish option and a concentration in one of two areas: language/culture/civilization or literature. The program both prepares students for further graduate study leading to the degree of Doctor of Philosophy and provides advanced work for teachers of French or Spanish in secondary schools and colleges. It also offers the opportunity for rigorous advanced study in the humanities to qualified persons from non-academic professions.

Graduate students are expected to read and conform to the directions and requirements stated in all sections of the Graduate Catalog that pertain to their program and to their remaining in good standing with the Graduate School and the University. The catalog, published every two years is available in the university bookstore; it contains information on such diverse topics as admission to candidacy, student loan funds, career planning and placement services, motor vehicle registration and transfer credit. Students should seek answers to their questions first by reading the catalog; after that they are welcome to make inquiries to the Graduate School Office, the offices of the Graduate Coordinators of Foreign Languages, and the office of the Chair of Foreign Languages. The current UNO catalog is also available on-line, at www.uno.edu/current.htm.

Moreover, the department distributes explanatory materials authored by our advisors and updated periodically, such as the "Master of Arts - Romance Languages" brochure, the two-page summary of requirements and objectives entitled "UNO: M.A. in Romance Languages", the yearly departmental "Newsletter," the Reading Lists" for both the French and the Spanish options on which the preparation for the comprehensive examination is based, and the present "Graduate Student Handbook," Most of these documents are on display in the organizer placed by the door of the departmental office LA 241. All are also available from the Graduate Coordinators.

The Graduate Coordinators advise all Romance Language graduate students in planning their programs, both comprehensively and semester by semester. A cumulative file of each student's progress is kept in the Graduate Coordinators' offices and should be referred to each time the student is advised. The Graduate Coordinators keep the students informed of important deadlines and of anticipated course offerings in semesters ahead. They make sure that the "Advisors' Guide to Advanced Course Offerings in Foreign Languages" (issued twice a year, in November and April) is widely disseminated among graduate students, and that the latter pay attention to all the relevant details, including the courses labeled ROML, courses that are taught in English for both the French and the Spanish students, and that are - most of them - 6000-level graduate seminars.

The Graduate Coordinators counsel students when they have problems, and he/she listens to their grievances and complaints. The Chair of the department also welcomes students' questions, inquiries, suggestions and complaints. The students may also voice their opinions on the program anonymously in the yearly poll for graduate students conducted in December.

Moreover, the major professors chosen by advanced students to advise them on their preparation for the comprehensive exams may also be consulted on matters concerning the students' progress in the program, and their career objectives.

PROGRAM OF STUDY

To aid you in the decisions you must make regarding your graduate education, here is a summary of the requirements for the various options available to you.

Language/Culture/Civilization

Literature

a. Non-thesis

b. Thesis

- a. 33 credits in course work with at least 15 in courses numbered over 6000 or; and
- b. 30 credits in course work with at least 15 in courses numbered over 6000 including up to 6 credits in thesis research.

Please note the following:

The Graduate School requires that the GRE be taken no later than during the first semester of graduate work. The GRE is not required of students already possessing an M.A. in another field.

Satisfactory performances on a comprehensive examination (written and oral) will be required. Candidates in the Language/Culture/Civilization area must demonstrate proficiency in one period of literature which they may select and are thus strongly encouraged to take several literature courses as well. The basis for preparing for the comprehensive examination is "The Reading List."

Reading knowledge at the fourth-semester level of a second Romance Language (French, Spanish, Portuguese, Italian, Romanian) or Latin will be required. Proof of completion of this requirement ought to be on file before the student approaches the comprehensive examination stage.

FOREIGN LANGUAGE REQUIREMENT

Degree candidates must be certified as having proficiency at the fourth semester level of a second Romance Language (French, Spanish, Portuguese, Italian, Romanian) or Latin.

There are two ways to certify that one has this proficiency:

1. Presentation of evidence (or an official transcript) that the student has passed the equivalent of at least a fourth semester's work in that language with a grade of B or better in the last course, or with an average of B or better in all college courses taken in the language—all such evidence subject to approval by the Department and by the Graduate School. Completion of this course work, moreover, must have been no earlier than six years prior to the time a student enters his/her graduate program at UNO.

2. A 'PASS' on a test designed at the level of the final examination in the fourth semester course in the language for which he/she is being tested. The student will be responsible for making arrangements with an appropriate Foreign Language faculty member for this service.

Testing in Latin is done by the UNO Foreign Languages Department. Students may repeat the foreign language test as often as necessary to make a passing score.

The foreign language requirement may be satisfied at any time during the candidate's program, but must be satisfied prior to taking the comprehensive exam.

TRANSFER CREDITS AND COURSE LOAD

As stated in the Graduate Catalog, “a total of 12 hours in extension and transfer credit may be used in a master’s degree program, if approved by the department and the Dean of the Graduate School, and if the candidate has completed at least nine hours of graduate residence at UNO with an overall B average.” Application for transfer credit should be initiated in the offices of the Graduate Coordinators.

Up to 6 hours of relevant course work from other departments in the university may be applied toward the M.A. in Romance Languages degree. Prior approval by the appropriate Graduate Coordinator is required.

If a student’s knowledge of the language of the other option is sufficient, courses offered in the other option may be selected and their credits applied to the total of 33 credits needed to graduate from the main option. No more than 6 credits in French for a student in the Spanish option, and vice versa will be allowed. The taking of such a course may also serve as a quick way to fulfill the language requirement needed to complete the main option (see Foreign Language Requirement).

Courses labeled ROML may be chosen by students in both options, as they are being taught in English and are aimed at the students of both options. The professors teaching them have command of English, French, Spanish and other Romance languages as well.

The maximum course load allowed by the Graduate School is of 12 semester hours in a regular semester and 9 in the summer term. Most full-time students take at least four semesters to complete the M.A. program. A maximum of 6 graduate credits may also be earned during summers. Part-time students often work on their degrees for several years. The department is prepared to accommodate students more or less at their own pace so long as a reasonable degree of continuity is sustained. It should be noted, however, that the Graduate School requires completion of the master’s degree program within eight years from the time of initial enrollment. For further details, see the Graduate Catalog.

Students holding graduate assistantship have to be enrolled in 9 credits every semester, 3 credits per academic year may be taken with “auditor” status (see Graduate Assistantships, below).

FORMS

A number of forms must be filled out and submitted to the Graduate School during the course of the M.A. program. The most instances these forms are prepared in the Graduate Coordinator's office with assistance from the student. The two most important of these are as follows:

Application for Admission to Candidacy. This form may be submitted at any reasonable time after the student has completed at least 12 semester hours of work with B or better grades and an overall B average. The form consists of a resume of the student's work completed and work yet to be done; it also states the student's thesis topic (thesis option) and the names of professors appointed to his/her examination committee (both thesis and non-thesis option). It must be submitted no later than at a specified date in the semester before the one in which the student expects to graduate. Exact dates are printed in the calendar in the opening pages of the Graduate Catalog, or are available on-line. The Graduate Coordinators will assist in the filing of this form.

Request for Master's Examination In the M.A. in Romance Languages, the examination being referred to here may mean two things: a) the comprehensive examination for the students in the non-thesis option; b) the thesis defense for the students in the thesis option.

This form must be filed by the Graduate Coordinators, after consultation with the student and the three members of his/her examination committee, no later than two weeks before the actual date of the examination or thesis defense, as the case may be.

For students who completed all their course work and take only their comprehensive exam or their thesis defense during their last semester at UNO, registration in the course labeled French 7040 or Spanish 7040, "Examination Only" will be required. The 7040 courses earn no credit for the student and could not be taken twice.

A third required form is transacted entirely by the student without assistance from the Graduate Coordinators. It is the Application for Master's Degree (Diploma) and must be filed during registration at the beginning of the semester in which the student expects to graduate. It is generally applied for in the Office of Admissions.

When pertinent to individual students, other forms having to do with transfer credits and exemption from taking the foreign language test are transacted from the Graduate Coordinators' offices.

THE COMPREHENSIVE EXAMINATION

Soon after a student has completed his/her course work, and after having fulfilled the second Foreign Language requirement, she/he will be scheduled for a three-hour written comprehensive examination. When all examination committee members have read the written exam in its entirety, the student will have a one-hour oral exam on the material of the written exam and on other appropriate material, such as the entirety of the “Reading Lists” in the chosen areas.

In conference with the student, the Major Professor chosen by the student selects areas of study and designates them as the subject matter of the examination, as described in the preamble to the “Reading Lists.” A committee of three faculty members (the Major Professor and two members) will examine the candidate for the M.A. in Romance Languages in four areas.

French M.A. candidates in the Literature track prepare 3 of the 7 literature areas (Medieval, Renaissance, 17th century, 18th century, 19th century, 20th century, Comparative Romance Literatures to 1800) and 1 area in Language/Culture/Civilization.

French M.A. candidates in Language/Culture/Civilization prepare 3 of the 7 areas in that track (Historical French Linguistics, Descriptive French Linguistics, Applied French Linguistics, Romance Linguistics, French Civilization I, French Civilization II, French Civilization III) and 1 area in Literature. No more than 2 areas above may be selected either in Linguistics or in Civilization. Students in this option may not choose the “Comparative Romance Literatures” list as their sole literary option.

Spanish M.A. candidates in Literature prepare 3 of the 8 literature areas (Spanish Medieval Literature, Golden Age I: Renaissance (16th century), Golden Age II: Baroque (17th century), Spanish 18th and 19th century: Enlightenment through Naturalism; Spanish 20th century: from 1915 to Present, Colonial Spanish American Literature through the 19th century, 20th century Spanish American Literature, Comparative Romance Literature to 1800) and 1 area in Language/Culture/Civilization.

Spanish M.A. candidates in Language/Culture/Civilization prepare 3 of the Language/Culture/Civilization areas (Historical Spanish Linguistics, Descriptive Spanish Linguistics, Applied Spanish Linguistics, Romance Linguistics, Spanish Civilization I, Spanish Civilization II, Spanish American Civilization I, Spanish American Civilization II) and 1 area in literature. No more than 2 areas above may be selected either in Linguistics or in Civilization. Students in this option may not choose the “Comparative Romance Literatures” list as their sole literary list.

The Reading Lists on which the examination is based may be obtained from the Graduate Coordinators.

THE COMPREHENSIVE EXAMINATION COMMITTEE

The examination committee for the comprehensive examination is composed of three members of the graduate faculty with expertise in the areas chosen for the exam. The student is generally given some voice in the selection of the committee members, especially the Major Professor.

The Major Professor is responsible for advising the student on how to put together his/her choice of tracks and areas selected from the appropriate "Reading Lists," and on the composition of the examining committee.

The committee gives a pass/fail to each area of the written exam. If a "pass" was secured in all four areas, the candidate proceeds to the oral comprehensive exam. If one of the four areas is judged failing, the student must retake the failed area before being permitted to take the oral exam. If two or more areas are judge unsatisfactory, the student must retake the entire exam before continuing to the oral.

If one section of the written exam is to be retaken, that section must be retaken no earlier than one month during the same semester and no later than the end of the following regular full semester; if the entire exam is to be retaken, it must be retaken no earlier than the beginning of the following regular semester and no later than the end of the following two regular semesters. Summer sessions are not considered regular full semesters.

On the oral comprehensive examination, a majority vote of the committee is required for a passing performance. In the event of failure on the oral exam, the student will be required to take the oral exam again, no earlier than one month during the same semester and no later than the end of the following full semester. Both the written and the oral comprehensive examinations may not be repeated more than once.

The written comprehensive examination lasts three hours and covers four areas, 45 minutes for each area. At least 50% of the written exam must be written in the target language, with the remainder written in English. The oral comprehensive examination is to be scheduled no earlier than three days and no later than seven days after the written exam. The oral exam lasts one hour on average, and starts with the "Explication de texte" in the French option. The candidate receives the text one hour in advance of the time of the oral exam and prepares its explication prior to the actual oral exam. The explication has to be articulated in French. The remainder of the oral exam may be conducted in a mixture of French and English. In the Spanish option, the oral exam lasts an hour on average, and proceeds according to the same rules just mentioned for the French option, including the "Textual Explication".

The chair of the examination committee (the Major Professor) has the following responsibilities during the oral comprehensive examination: he/she plans the order of questioning, serves as timekeeper, and conducts the evaluations made by the committee. At the conclusion of the oral comprehensive exam, after the student has left the room, the chair calls for a vote of "pass with Honors," "pass," or "fail," has the proper reports and forms signed by committee members, and informs the waiting student of the results.

In order for a candidate for the M.A. to be awarded “Honors,” the following conditions must be fulfilled:

1. Normally, the candidate for “Honors” will receive no more than one “B” in all graduate-level course work taken at U.N.O.
2. The candidate’s three-member committee must reach a unanimous decision as to the excellence of the candidate’s performance on:
 - a) the written oral examinations for non-thesis track students, or
 - b) the written and oral examinations and the thesis and thesis defense for the thesis track students.

The committee chairperson will inform his/her other colleagues of the candidates’s grade point average prior to the written examination.

The graduate coordinator will inform the Dean of the Graduate School of those candidates for M.A. with “Honors.”

THE THESIS

Although the thesis is usually drafted late in the program, every student interested in this option should from the beginning be giving serious thought to the selection of a topic. Commitment to a topic is not required until some time well beyond the middle of the program, but two or three ideas, often developing out of courses one has been taking, should be working in the student's mind. In some instances, a student may have a thesis topic suggested to him/her by a professor who has been impressed with a paper or report the student has done in a course. More in-depth research and lengthier writing on a topic a student has already investigated and possibly written upon in a seminar are acceptable procedures in fulfilling the thesis requirement. On the other hand, the topic may emerge from an interest that has no direct connection with any of the courses a student has taken. In any event, every student should feel free to approach the appropriate members of the graduate faculty to get their reaction to ideas the student has for a thesis topic.

Although ultimately the thesis topic must have the approval of the Graduate Coordinator in the option, the major professor, and the thesis committee, the choice of topic is the prerogative and the responsibility of the student; topics are never assigned by the department.

The average length of M.A. theses in the Foreign Language Department is 60 double-spaced typewritten pages, including notes and bibliography. However, the quality of the work is the significant consideration. The M.L.A. Handbook in its most recent edition, is to be used for all documentation. A detailed set of guidelines and procedures for the entire project of researching, drafting, and presentation and thesis to the department and the Graduate School is given to each student by the Coordinators when the projects get underway. Briefings and elaborations on this important document are made by the Coordinators and the major professor at pertinent times throughout the project.

THESIS DEFENSE

A one-hour oral defense of the thesis is scheduled by the major professor when the final draft of the thesis has been approved by the full committee. Upon the student's satisfactory response to questions from committee members about the content and form of the thesis, examination approval sheets are signed and the student is certified for graduation.

Any member of the graduate Foreign Language faculty may attend a thesis defense. Only Committee members may ask questions. The defense is open to the public.

GRADUATE ASSISTANTSHIPS

The department offers a limited number of graduate assistantships to qualified students. Occasionally, but always in very limited numbers, assistantships are available in the summer term; for a student to count on a summer appointment, however, would be completely unrealistic.

Assignment of assistants and specification of duties are made according to the needs of the department—which may vary considerably from semester to semester—but in no instance are the duties of an assistant to exceed the equivalent of 20 work-hours per week.

All graduate assistants are classified as full-time students and are responsible for paying all fees. G.A.'s are considered Louisiana residents for fee purposes. Each Assistant receives a copy of his/her official appointment (Personnel Action Form).

Appointments are normally for a full nine-month term, but each semester the appropriate supervisors, together the department chair, conduct a review of each assistant's performance in his/her graduate work and job assignment to give the department assurance that responsibilities are being met.

The Graduate School permits a student to hold an assistantship appointment for a maximum of four semesters. Depending on whether a student receives an appointment at the outset of his/her program or at some later time, the department may reduce the number of semesters he/she is eligible for reappointment. It would be contrary to department policy, for instance, to subsidize a student for two full semesters during which time he/she is engaged only in completing the thesis.

Applications for assistantships may be made at any time, but offers for appointments are generally made the first week of April and again in early November if there are any spring semester vacancies. Appointments are made by the chair upon recommendation of the Coordinators. Application forms are available in the office of the Coordinators, and all application materials should be sent to the Coordinators rather than to the Graduate School. Only 'degree' students are eligible to apply; students who enter the program on a 'provisional' status are not eligible to hold assistantships. After an applicant has formally accepted an offer for an assistantship, he/she is expected to sign the standard loyalty oath required of university employees and also to certify in writing a commitment to full-time graduate work.

The M.A. program in Romance Languages at UNO offers the following types of graduate assistantships (G.A.-ships):

Research Assistantships (R.A.-ships). R.A.'s assist senior professors in their research and teaching duties. If the beginning R.A. has completed the 18 credits of graduate course work at the moment of appointment he/she may hold a "type III" appointment. If he/she has not yet completed the 18 credits at the moment of appointment, a "type II" appointment only will be offered.

II. Teaching Assistantships (T.A.-ships). T.A.'s teach one section of an elementary course, under some guidance and supervision provided by the Graduate Coordinators in the option of their choice (French or Spanish). Two types of appointments occur in this category of assistantships.

a) T.A. II: when the 18 credits have not been completed at the time of the initial appointment. T.A.'s of this type are closely supervised in the conduct of their classes and their final grades have to be approved and their grade sheets entered via computer by the supervising Coordinator before filing.

T.A. III: when the appointee has completed 18 credits before his/her appointment. T.A.'s in this category will carry substantial additional duties beyond the teaching of the one elementary course to warrant the higher pay received, e.g., a second section of the elementary course, and the running of informal conversation groups for our students under the aegis of the department. While they receive some supervision in the conduct of their classes from the appropriate supervisors, they are responsible for the overall instruction given, and for the final grades.

The review mentioned on p. 9, paragraph 4 of the Graduate Student Handbook applies to both categories.

In rare cases and when the budgetary situation permits, a T.A.II may be 'promoted' to T.A. III status to reward his/her outstanding achievements in some area. But the completion of the 18 credits of graduate course work does not make one automatically eligible for such a promotion.

III. Foreign Language Lab Monitors. In rare cases, a graduate assistantship may be offered to a qualified graduate student who will work in the Foreign Language Lab. This type of appointment will depend on departmental resources and needs, and on the candidate's qualifications.

Term of Appointment

Graduate Assistants hold an assistantship appointment for a maximum of four semesters. If an emergency occurs and a G.A. does not serve for one of the four semesters in full, a reappointment for an additional semester may be granted, if the overall performance of the G.A. in question warrants this exception.

An assistantship appointment ceases after four semesters whether the graduate student has completed his/her degree requirements by the end of the fourth semester of employment or not. More often than not G.A.'s complete their degree before the four-semester appointment expires.

The obligation of "full-time status"

The following remarks elaborate on paragraph 3, p. 10 of the Graduate Student Handbook:

The full-time student status that the G.A.'s have to maintain at all times entails a 9 credit course load (i.e., 3 courses, mostly at the graduate level, but not exclusively so). A graduate assistant not enrolled for 9 credits cannot hold his/her appointment. No more than 3 of these credits can be taken with the "auditor" status; and only once per academic year.

The G.A.'s in our program have a duty to enroll first in the graduate courses offered by our department, and their choices have to be approved by the Graduate Coordinators. These students have been selected to benefit from our program in a manner unavailable to other students, and a certain degree of loyalty to the department which allows them to further (and partially finance) their education at such a high level is to be expected.

Our degree requirements allow (as the "note" in UNO - M.A. in Romance Languages, the two-page summary on requirements, p. 1 indicates) that: "With permission, up to six (6) hours may be taken outside Romance Languages". This permission will be granted after proper advising, and not at random or automatically.

In the case of a summer appointment, a rare occurrence, the full-time student status entails 6 credits, only 3 of which can be taken with "auditor" status. The choice of courses in such instances will have to be made, again, after appropriate advising.

The summer appointment is made in addition to, and independent of, the four-semester limit for the regular appointment as a G.A.

Other obligations of a G.A. (advising, meetings, etc.)

A graduate student who holds an assistantship in the M.A. in Romance Languages program at UNO has special obligations with respect to advising.

He/she meets with the Graduate Coordinator during registration to come up with a reasonable choice of courses for the respective semester.

He/she meets periodically with the Graduate Coordinator to get advice/help/information in order that the good standing in grades and overall performance could be maintained. A student not in good standing cannot continue to hold an assistantship, and a sudden withdrawal from an appointment for reasons of unsatisfactory grades (i.e., below the B average) may put the

department in a very awkward situation.

The Teaching Assistants consult closely with the Graduate Coordinators with respect to their teaching duties.

An official meeting occurs once a semester for all graduate assistants. They meet with the coordinators and the chair to discuss issues of pertinence to their studies and their work. Attendance is mandatory. The meeting usually takes place at the very beginning of each term.

Benefits for Graduate Assistants

The graduate assistant status confers certain special benefits upon those holding such appointments. Here are some of them:

- Free tuition for courses taken during the summer between the first and the second year of their appointment.
- Precedence given them when an unexpected opening to teach an elementary course offered through Metro College occurs in summer.
- Support for their professional pursuits undertaken during or after their graduate studies with us (letters of recommendations, calls in their support, advising).
- Special events designed for them.

Our graduate assistants are a select group and we are proud of their accomplishments. Pride in our program and dedication to its success ought to inspire them to.

Useful addresses:

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