



Duke Divinity School Th.D. Language Exam Guidelines



Th.D. Students are expected to demonstrate reading competence in at least two modern languages other than English. Normally the two languages will be chosen from the following three options: German, French or Spanish. These are to be chosen in consultation with and approved by the student's principal advisor.

Additional proficiencies may be required in light of the student's particular research interests. For example, students whose work focuses on Christian Scripture are also required to demonstrate proficiency in Hebrew and Greek.

With approval from their principal advisor, a student may petition the oversight committee to substitute a different modern language (or languages) for the standard prescribed languages. Petitions should be emailed to the Th.D. Director and include a recommendation letter and rationale from the principal advisor. The petition should demonstrate that the alternative language was carefully selected to support the student's research concentration.

Students entering the Th.D. program who have passed relevant research language exams in other graduate programs within the last five years may have these scores accepted as demonstration of reading proficiency.

The Th.D. program provides financial support of up to \$750 per student toward the costs of courses taken to prepare for language exams.

Reading competence will be demonstrated by successful completion of written examinations in the languages selected. Testing dates for language examinations will be offered throughout the year, and students will need to work with their advisor and the proctor (Samantha Anderson – sanderson@div.duke.edu) to set a date for the examination. It is recommended that language exams be taken in January, May, or September. Normally, the principal advisor will select the passage and deliver it to the proctor before the test date. The passage should be about 600 to 800 words in length, taken from recent scholarly books and peer-reviewed articles or classical work in the student's area of study. The passage should not be readily available in English translation, and should not be made known to the student in advance of the exam

Students have 2 hours to complete the examination. Their translation may be handwritten, or they may use a computer provided by the office of academic formation and programs. Students are allowed to use a printed (not online or electronic) dictionary during the examination.

Once the examination is completed by the student and returned to the proctor, the proctor will deliver the translation to the grader, who will evaluate the translation and assign a grade of "Pass" or "Fail." Graders will take into account the difficulty of the passage, the amount completed, the accuracy of the translation, and comprehension demonstrated within the translation. The graders are expected to return examinations to the proctor in a timely manner. The student can then obtain the graded examination from the proctor in the registry.

Students who do not pass the exam will normally be expected to wait three months before taking the exam again.