

**University of Illinois  
Department of French & Italian**

**M.A. Examination in French Applied Linguistics**

**1. Goals and general outline**

The goal of the M.A. examination in French Applied Linguistics is to assess candidates' knowledge in theoretical and applied areas of the discipline and their capacity to contribute to an informed discussion of selected topics in French literature and culture studied by the candidate in the [program](#). The examination consists of a written and an oral component, and it is conducted by a committee of three faculty members (see below).

**The written component** of the M.A. examination can take one of two forms:

- a long qualifying paper centered on a research topic (henceforth, 'M.A. paper')  
**or**
- three short essays (henceforth, 'essay writing') featuring fields of specialization studied by candidate in the program (e.g., sociolinguistics, history of French, language acquisition, and pedagogy).

The topic of the M.A. paper and, alternatively, the topics of the three areas of the essays should be related to candidate's course work in the program and are selected in collaboration with the candidate, the advisor, and faculty members teaching in the program.

**The oral component** of the M.A. examination is typically administered at least a week after a successful written examination. It can also take two forms:

- an oral presentation of the main findings of the M.A. paper followed by a discussion of the paper and of selected readings on the candidates' reading lists,  
**or**
- a discussion of the three short essays and of selected readings on the candidate's reading lists.

Each of the two options is also accompanied by a discussion of selected topics in French literature and culture based on the candidate's course work in the program.

**The M.A. examination committee** is chaired by the graduate advisor in French Applied Linguistics. The committee is composed of the chair, one faculty member in French Applied Linguistics and one faculty member in French literature and culture. Faculty members in French Applied Linguistics read and grade the written component (both options, see below); all three committee members administer and evaluate the oral component of the examination.

**The language** of the examination is French. Exceptions for the use of English may be granted in some areas of French Applied Linguistics that primarily feature readings in English.

## **2. Written component**

### *2.1 Option #1: M.A. paper*

In order to facilitate qualified candidates' early initiation to research, the French Applied Linguistics program offers students an early opportunity to develop original hypotheses and learn relevant methodologies to test these hypotheses.

At any time during their studies in the program, M.A. students in French Applied Linguistics may select faculty members in – or associated with – the department to work in a selected research area. This area can be any area in, or related to, French Applied Linguistics. The wide range of electives that students can take allow them to take courses with multiple faculty members whose research and expertise can be relevant to their interests. Once the topic of the M.A. paper is established, M.A. candidates work with their advisor and selected faculty who further advise them on the project throughout the duration of the program.

The format of the M.A. paper is a long, critical essay of about 30-40 double-spaced pages in total, including all references, figures, tables, and appendices. M.A. candidates selecting the paper option are required to submit their paper to the M.A. committee at least three weeks prior to the date of the oral examination. Submission is contingent of the completion of all required course work in the program and the approval of the faculty member advising the student on the research topic. Precisions about the structure and the formatting of the paper are communicated by the advisor.

The most successful M.A. papers can lead to successful Ph.D. thesis proposals, if the candidate applies and is accepted in the department's Ph.D. program.

### *2.2 Option #2: Essay writing*

As an alternative to the M.A. paper, M.A. candidates in French Applied Linguistics can elect to write three short essays featuring core and applied areas of French Applied Linguistics. The total time allotted to writing the essays is 4 hours.

Core areas of French Applied Linguistics comprise, but are not limited to: phonetics and phonology, syntax, semantics, pragmatics, sociolinguistics, history of French, and language policy and planning, translation and interpretation, second-language acquisition, second language learning, and language teaching and pedagogy.

Each essay question featured on the written exam has two alternatives; the candidate can select one of the two to answer. The essay questions are not communicated to the candidate ahead of time, but possible topics and multiple model questions from earlier years can be obtained from the advisor.

The essays are typically written by the student on a computer set up by the SLCL Graduate Student Services. SLCL Graduate Student Services also manage the logistics of the written

and oral examinations: confirming the exam dates, gathering the essay questions from the two examining French Applied Linguistics faculty, administering the written exam, sending the candidate's essays to faculty, and receiving the exam committee's evaluation.

### **3. Reading list**

The three essays of the written examination (if the candidate chooses the Essay writing option) and the French Applied Linguistics part of the oral examination are based on a reading list tailored to each candidate's specialization and compiled from essential readings in the field and readings covered in courses taken by the candidate. A sample of such readings is shown here:

[Sample Readings in French Applied Linguistics.pdf](#)

To allow sufficient time for preparation and study, M.A. candidates are encouraged to finalize their reading lists with examining faculty and the advisor as early as possible in the fall and spring semesters of their examination year.

The selection of titles on the reading list is at the discretion of the candidate and the two examining faculty members based on actual coursework completed by the candidate and examined by faculty members with published records as specialists in the selected fields. The chair asks for a copy of the reading list about a month before the written exam.

### **4. Oral component**

The oral examination is typically administered at least a week after a successful written examination. The total duration of the oral is between 1.5 to 2 hours and, depending on the format of the written component, it can also take one of two forms:

- an oral presentation of the main findings of the M.A. paper followed by a discussion of the paper and of selected readings on the candidate's reading lists,

**or**

- a discussion of the three short essays and of selected readings.

Depending on the candidate's preference, the oral component of the M.A. examination either starts or concludes with an informed discussion of selected topics in French literature and culture. The examining faculty member is selected from faculty who previously taught courses to the candidate in the program. Selected topics are based on a short list of works identified by the student in consultation with the faculty expert of the M.A. committee. Students are encouraged to cover a broad range of periods and genres. The selection, ultimately, is at the discretion of the candidate and the examining faculty member. The Chair asks for a copy of the reading list about one month before the examination.

All members of the Committee can join any discussion during the oral examination, if so inclined. Each different part of the examination, however, is primarily conducted by the faculty member specialized in the field.

Additional details of the various aspects of the M.A. examination are communicated to the candidate in due time by the advisor.