

Foreign Language Graduate Reading Exam

The goal of the foreign language reading exam is for students to demonstrate the ability to understand and translate recent historical sources or contemporary writings that they might encounter in the course of their historical research. The exam is offered in Spanish, French, German, and Cherokee. To pass the exam, students must demonstrate a grasp of vocabulary, grammatical structures, and common idioms and expressions.

The exam requires students to translate a passage of between 300 and 400 words into standard written English. Passages are drawn from journalism sources (a newspaper article, for instance) or from general textbooks in history or a related field. Students will have one hour to complete their translation. A bilingual dictionary will be provided. In accordance with policies published in WCU's Code of Student Conduct, students may not use any other resources in the completion of the exam, including any other books, notes, electronic devices, or any other person.

A sample file of old reading exams is available in the office of the Modern Foreign Language department.

Evaluation

High Pass:

- Thoroughly accurate rendition of the original material
- Translation is written in idiomatic English
- Very few problems with difficult syntax and/or vocabulary; few or no errors in basic syntax and idiom

Pass

- Mostly accurate rendition of the original material; some sections may show signs of misunderstanding.
- Translation may have some unidiomatic English
- Some problems with syntax and/or vocabulary; this might involve significant errors in one or more difficult passages
- Some examples of loose paraphrase

Fail

- Limited comprehension of the material; significant and frequent errors in translation
- Frequent use of unidiomatic English translation; frequent errors or gaps
- Significant problems with syntax and/or vocabulary throughout
- Frequent examples of loose paraphrase