Hows and Whys: Guidelines for the M.A. in Chinese

M.A. students in the Department of Asian Languages and Literature must adhere to (1) the University of Washington's Graduate School regulations, (2) the Department of Asian Languages and Literature policies and procedures, and (3) all program specific regulations.

The information below is meant only as a reference. Final authority in all cases remains with the official regulations.

General Aims

The goal of graduate study is to train students to make original contributions to scholarship in their field. Therefore, the graduate student needs to build a solid awareness of the publications in the field of specialization, the major questions that are being (and could be) researched, as well as the methodology for answering such questions. In addition, the student should have a solid grasp of the broader academic context in which the field of specialization is situated (i.e. "the big picture").

The following explains the rationale behind each of the general requirements for M.A. students in the department, and outlines the procedure students should follow to satisfy them. It also contains, in bold, the specific rules of the Chinese language and literature program over and above those of the department. Finally, notes in boxes are explanations, examples, and additional commentary.

Admissions

In addition to the general department admissions requirements, an undergraduate grade point average of 3.0 in the junior and senior years is a prerequisite for admission to the program in Chinese.

Admission to the M.A. program with specialization in Chinese language and literature requires that a student have strong undergraduate preparation in one of the following: Chinese language and literature, another foreign language and literature, Asian Regional Studies, Comparative Literature, Linguistics, English, Philosophy, or History. He or she will, in addition, be expected to have completed four years of modern Chinese and one year of classical Chinese, each with a grade point average of at least 3.0. Students lacking such preparation may be admitted to the M.A. program provisionally, and will be required to make up the deficiencies during their first year of residence.

How to Proceed

The following explains the rationale behind each of the general requirements for M.A. students in the department, and outlines the procedure students should follow to satisfy them.

1. Meeting with the Advisor

Each new student is assigned an interim advisor, that is, a graduate faculty member with whom the student can discuss the course of his/her study in the initial stages. Upon arrival, the student should meet as soon as possible with the assigned interim advisor to chart
a plan of course work and the student should meet quarterly with the advisor to keep him/her apprised of his/her progress. It is the student's task to take the initiative for these meetings, and the advisor's to file a formal progress report once a year. Once the student has determined the area of specialization and the faculty member he/she would like to work with, he/she should discuss this with the interim advisor and appoint a permanent advisor.

2. Filing a Program of Study

Practically, the graduate student should start by carefully planning a program of study that will contribute to achieving the skills mentioned above. Each of the department's programs has its own required graduate courses. The student should carefully plan when to take which courses, keeping in mind that many courses are not offered every year, and that some courses will not be offered when faculty are on leave. Ideally, students should take at least one course with every faculty member in their program, so as to familiarize themselves with the full range of scholarship and expertise available to them.

The student should submit a feasible proposal of study to the advisor, which, after approval, will be filed by the department secretary no later than the third quarter of graduate study. The plan of study should be viewed as a guideline rather than a straitjacket; specifics of the plan are likely to change as the student proceeds, but the general course of study should be clear.

There is a minimum course requirement of 45 credits, and the student must take classes and examinations relating to both the linguistic and literature aspects of the language of specialization. Classes in other disciplines might also be advisable (e.g., religion or anthropology), depending on the student's chosen field of specialization. Please note that a graduate student is required to maintain a minimum 3.0 GPA.

The student's file will contain a checklist of the required courses in his/her program and the student will be responsible for checking off each requirement as the courses are completed. When all courses are taken, the student will present the completed list to the Program Coordinator and ask him/her or his/her designated representative to sign off the box "course work completed" on the checklist. If there are any irregularities (such as course substitutions), an explanation will be placed in the file along with the signature.

Program Description. The program in Chinese language and literature offers work in the textual, linguistic and literary study of Chinese as well as in the history and criticism of the Chinese literary tradition. The student will work out an individual course of study with an adviser. Although a student normally emphasizes either linguistics or literature, both are important components for all students. Courses offered in other programs within the department, and in other departments, such as Comparative Literature, Anthropology, Linguistics, or one of the other language and literature departments, may constitute valuable additions to the program where they support and enrich a special emphasis.

Course Work and Credits

1. Degree Requirements. Two options are available to the student in the M.A. degree program: (1) a thesis program, and (2) a non-thesis program which requires two seminar or research papers in lieu of a thesis, and two 500-level departmental courses in addition to the requirements specified below.

2. Special Course Requirements. The M.A. course program must include in every case the following courses or their equivalent (38-40 credits):

- a) Second-Year Classical Chinese, Chin 551, 552, 553 (5,5,5)
- b) Methods and Materials, Chin 559 (5)
- c) History of Chinese Literature (any one course of the three-quarter sequence), Chin 461, 462, 463 (5,5,5)
d) The Chinese Language, Chin 442 (5)
e) At least one course from each of the following two groups (8-10 credits)

**Group I -- Literature**

- History of Chinese Literature, Chin 461, 462, 463 (5,5,5)
- Advanced Readings in Modern Chinese Prose, Chin 482 (5)
- Readings in Chinese Prose, Chin 554, 555, 556 (5,5,5)
- Studies in Chinese Literature, Chin 561, 562, 563 (5,5,5)
- Readings in Vernacular Fiction, Chin 580 (5, max. 15)
- Studies in Chinese Drama, Chin 575 (5, max. 15)
- Readings in the Thirteen Classics, Chin 590 (5)
- Studies in the History of Chinese Thought, Chin 591, 592, 593 (5,5,5)
- Seminar in Chinese Poetry, Chin 573 (5, max. 15)
- Seminar in Chinese Fiction, Chin 582 (5, max. 15)
- Seminar in Modern Chinese Literature, Chin 583 (5)
- Seminar in Six Dynasties Literature, Chin 590 (5)

**Group II -- Linguistics and Philology**

- Structure of Chinese, Chin 443 (5)
- Chinese Historical Phonology, Chin 542 (3)
- Introduction to Chinese Philology and Textual Criticism, Chin 557 (5)
- Studies in Chinese Phonology, Chin 531, 532, 533 (3,3,3)
- Seminar on Chinese Linguistics, Chin 540 (3)
- Seminar on Chinese Grammar, Chin 541 (3)
- Chinese Dialectology, Chin 544 (3, max. 9)
- Seminar on Chinese Lexicology and Grammatonomy, Chin 558 (3)

3. Taking the M.A. General Examination

When the language exams have been taken and passed, and the required course work is completed, the student should prepare for the General Examination, which is a written test, consisting of two two-hour exams to be taken in the same week. The purpose of this test is to demonstrate the student’s general competence, that is, the aforementioned “broad picture” view. At the latest during the quarter prior to the exam date, the student should meet with the advisor to discuss exam preparation. In preparation for this meeting, the student should compile a list of classes taken and readings completed, so as to give the advisor a good idea of what the student already knows and what needs more work. On the basis of this information, an effective strategy for exam preparation can be devised.

The first part of the M.A. Examination in Chinese will cover Chinese literature; the second part will focus on language (linguistics and philology) and texts. The examination should normally be taken no later than Autumn Quarter of the third year.

4. Writing a thesis or two research papers

Officially, it is only after passing the General Examination that the student will proceed to work on a thesis, but it is advisable for the student to start thinking about a topic of specialization and start working on it as soon as is practical. Alternatively, if the advisor approves, students can submit two in-depth research papers in lieu of one thesis.
The M.A. thesis should make an original contribution to existing research in a given field and present it in a coherent form with the conventional scholarly apparatus. In this department, demonstrating the ability to work with primary sources in the language of specialization is a requirement of the thesis.

In practical terms this means that the graduate student will go through a study process to familiarize him- or herself with the publications in the field of specialization, the major questions that are being (and could be) researched, and the methodological approaches to answering such questions. The end product of this process, the thesis itself, demonstrates the mastery of these materials and approaches. The M.A. thesis differs from the Ph.D. thesis in that it is narrower in scope, and it typically is comparable to a lengthy article rather than a book.

As soon as the General Examination is passed, the student should make a time schedule to organize the writing of the thesis. The student should meet regularly with the advisor to discuss progress and submit chapters of the thesis for comment. A final draft should be submitted to the other member of the examination committee as soon as possible, no later than three weeks before the last day of the quarter in which the student seeks to graduate.

5. Graduating

Once the thesis is nearing completion, the student should apply for the Master's degree at the Graduate School office. Note that this has to be done within the first two weeks of the quarter in which the degree is expected to be conferred. The final revised version of the thesis has to be submitted to the Graduate School on the last day of that quarter.

Department of Asian Languages & Literature
University of Washington
225 Gowen Hall
Box 353521
Seattle, WA 98195-3521

Phone: (206) 543-4996
asianll@uw.edu

Source URL: https://asian.washington.edu/hows-and-whys-guidelines-ma-chinese