March 4, 2014

MEMORANDUM

TO: Bonnie Thornton Dill
   Dean, College of Arts and Humanities

FROM: Elizabeth Beise
       Associate Provost for Academic Planning and Programs

SUBJECT: Proposal to Modify Master of Arts in Classics- Non-Coursework Requirement
         (PCC log no. 13040)

The proposal to modify the Master of Arts in Classics- Non-Coursework Requirement
has been administratively approved. A copy of the approved proposal is attached.

The change is effective Fall 2014. Please ensure that the change is fully described in the
Graduate Catalog and in all relevant descriptive materials, and that all advisors are informed.

MDC/
Enclosure

cc: Marilee Lindemann, Chair, Senate PCC Committee
    Sarah Bauder, Office of Student Financial Aid
    Reka Montfort, University Senate
    Erin Howard, Division of Information Technology
    Pam Phillips, Institutional Research, Planning & Assessment
    Anne Turkos, University Archives
    Linda Yokoi, Office of the Registrar
    Alex Chen, Graduate School
    Alene Moyer, College of Arts and Humanities
    Lillian Doherty, Department of Classics
We propose to replace the examinations currently required in our M.A. program with new forms of assessment designed to test skills rather than knowledge of content.
Proposal for a change in the form of assessment for the M.A. degree in Classics

We want to replace our current M.A. exam, which measures student knowledge of content, with a series of components designed to measure skills.

I. Old requirements (wording from department website, http://classics.umd.edu/academicprograms/graduate/requirements)

"By their penultimate semester of study, degree candidates are required to pass a three-hour sight translation examination in Latin, or, if the degree is in both Latin and Greek, a sight translation examination in each of the languages. These examinations, which are offered each semester, consist of a passage of prose and a passage of poetry in each language. Students are expected to take these examinations at the earliest possible opportunity upon entering the graduate program in order to practice their sight translation skills and to identify specific areas in which they need to strengthen these skills.

"Students who pass the sight translation exams in their first semester are allowed the option of writing an M.A. thesis in their second year; they must also demonstrate proficiency in reading one modern foreign language, ordinarily French, German, or Italian. All other students are required to pass a three-hour examination on the history of Latin or of Latin and Greek literature. Both the defense of the M.A. thesis and the history of literature exams ordinarily take place in the student's final semester of study."

II. New requirements and rationale for changes

A. Proficiency Exam: We want to replace the sight translation exam with a proficiency exam which will assess the comprehension of language and the ability to express that comprehension through translation, grammatical analysis, and the comprehension of subject matter. The exam will place before students a passage or pair of passages, one of poetry and the other of prose, and ask them to do several things within a defined timeframe:

1. Translate segments of the passage.
2. Answer grammatical questions about it.
3. Answer questions designed to measure their comprehension of the meaning and form of the passage
4. For poetry, identify the metrical form and scan it.

B. Analysis of Scholarly Article: our program aims to teach students about research methods in our field. We want students to know where to find information, how to process and assess it; we also want them, as a prelude to their own scholarly contributions to research, to be able to assess the assumptions, methodology, conclusions and implications of published, peer-reviewed scholarly research. To measure these skills, we will give students a scholarly article and ask them to write an analysis of it over the period of approximately one week. The analysis will include:

1. Identification and description of the school of interpretation to
which this article belongs. What assumptions does the writer make, what methods does he/she use, how does the article gather and utilize primary evidence? On what prior scholarship does this article build?

2. Analysis of the article's argument: what is its thesis, how does it support that thesis with evidence and reasoning, and what conclusions does it draw?

3. Critique of the article: the student will offer his/her own critique of the article AND review the scholarly literature to find out how other scholars have subsequently utilized, refined or challenged the author's approach and conclusions.

4. The student will be asked to offer two lines of further research on this topic which might be attempted.

C. Commentary: Students will be asked to prepare a commentary on a passage of Latin from a major Latin author and will be given one week in which to do so. The commentary should include an introduction to the passage, which will put the passage in a literary and cultural context, discuss the author and the genre, and describe the interpretive issues which the passage raises. As part of their work on this commentary students will be asked to identify five of the most important scholarly contributions to the elucidation of the passage and to use these works in annotating the passage. Comments, keyed to lines and words in the passage, will address all of the following: language, vocabulary, meter, textual emendations, intertextuality, themes, literary devices and issues which arise from particular theoretical approaches to the passage. The final commentary will be presented in written form with the full text followed by comments.

D. Research Conference:
It is normal practice that students complete a research paper in their graduate courses. We will now ask students, in their first semester with us, to identify a special field within our discipline which will be the focus of some of their work: for example, art and archaeology, the classical tradition, gender studies, historical linguistics, etc. In order to foster greater coherence in each student's program and to develop research skills, we will ask each student to build on a paper from one of their courses which reflects their special field of interest and which they can further develop in light of other coursework in the program. This revised and augmented paper will be submitted for our assessment and each student will make a presentation about it as part of a research conference we will hold each spring. Students will have twenty minutes in which to present their papers (a common length at professional conferences) and then ten minutes to answer questions from faculty, other students, and guests. The conference is intended to promote research skills and to celebrate them at the end of the students' graduate program.

III. Transition to new assessment

Students enrolled in the program prior to the effective date of this change may complete their program under the old requirements if they wish.