

**MA Language Policy  
Briefing Document  
For communications with the UO Graduate Council**

**Date Submitted to Graduate Council:**

**Submitted by:**

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**Purpose:**

The purpose of this proposal is to update the existing policy on requiring a language other than English (LOTE) for the Master of Arts (MA) degree.

**Background:**

**Current MA Language Policy**

*The MA degree requires second year level of proficiency in a language other than English (LOTE) as required for the B.A. degree ([see B.A. requirements in the UO Catalog for details](#)). Competency may be demonstrated by either a standardized test or with adequate undergraduate course work. Language competence must be demonstrated within the overall seven-year limit for completion of a master's degree. The student's major department may establish a higher level of proficiency or a different method of determining that higher level. There is no language requirement for the MS and professional advanced degrees unless the department so specifies.*

Currently, Division of Graduate Studies staff verify the MA language requirement in the following ways:

- Reviewing transcripts (from UO or from other schools) to look for completion of 2<sup>nd</sup> year language coursework
- Requesting copies of language exam results from the UO Testing Center or from a UO department that administered a language exam
- Requesting proof of native language for students whose native language is not English
- Reviewing petitions for exceptions to our usual methods of meeting the language other than English (LOTE) requirement

**Proposed Policy Changes:**

**Proposed Changes to MA Language Policy – Option #1**

Option #1 retains the requirement that a student must have some proficiency in a language other than English, but eliminates the university-wide requirement of obtaining at least 2<sup>nd</sup> year proficiency. It instead allows graduate programs to determine the specific level of proficiency required for that program. This option would also (a) eliminate the Division of Graduate Studies from the requesting/reviewing of transcripts or other documentation of language proficiency and (b) instead, give

authority to departments to monitor compliance with their department's language requirement and to certify that the student has met the LOTE requirement as part of the degree clearance process.

The proposed text of the policy is as follows:

*The MA degree requires proficiency in at least one language other than English (LOTE). The level of proficiency and method of determining proficiency is determined by each graduate program. The graduate program must certify on the Statement of Completion of Requirements that the LOTE requirement has been met in accordance with the program's degree requirements. There is no LOTE requirement for the MS and professional advanced degrees unless the department so specifies.*

### **Proposed Changes to MA Language Policy – Option #2**

Option #2 eliminates the university-wide language requirement for the MA degree, and instead allows departments to determine whether a language other than English is required, and if it is, allows them to determine the level of proficiency required. The proposed text of the policy is as follows:

*There is no university-wide language requirement for master's degrees. Departments and programs have the option of requiring or not requiring one or more language other than English (LOTE). If one or more languages are required, the degree-granting unit is responsible for monitoring and enforcing that requirement.*

#### **Rationale:**

The rationale for changing the policy (either option #1 or option #2) is that the Division of Graduate Studies believes that graduate programs are in the best position to determine what language requirements are required to enhance and complement their students' graduate coursework and research. Either proposed option would provide graduate programs with greater flexibility to determine what level of language proficiency, if any, is most appropriate for their specific programs, and determine the best ways to assess their students' language proficiency. Additional considerations include:

- A Master of Arts does not universally signal that the program included a LOTE requirement. Many colleges and universities do not have a language requirement for the MA degree.
- Requiring two years of language work that may not be relevant to their graduate studies can be burdensome for students who may have come from undergraduate programs that did not require an LOTE, or only required one year of language.

### **Samples of MA Language Policies at Other Universities**

#### **University of Washington**

Language requirements set and monitored by individual degree programs. This is not explicitly stated on their website, but confirmed by email.

#### **Stanford University**

## Proposal submitted by Division of Graduate Studies

Language requirements set and monitored by individual degree programs. This is not explicitly stated on their website, but there are several references to language requirements being a departmental requirement. For example:

“In reviewing the program proposal or any subsequent amendment to it, the degree program confirms that:

- the course of study proposed by the student fulfills all degree program course requirements (for example, requirements specifying total number of units, course levels, particular courses, sequences, or substitutes)
- all other degree program requirements (for example, required projects, foreign language proficiency, or qualifying exams) are listed on the form”

### [Harvard University](#)

No language requirement specified by the Graduate School. Language requirement referred to as a program requirement:

“All GSAS programs have residence requirements, both financial and academic, and many programs have language requirements (see departmental requirements for your program).”

### [Columbia University](#)

No language requirement specified by the Graduate School. It is worth noting that the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences only offers Master of Arts degrees (not Master of Science); for example, even degrees in Statistics, Quantitative Methods in the Social Sciences, and Biotechnology are offered as MA degrees.

### [University of Texas – Austin](#)

No language requirement specified by the Graduate School.

### [University of Wisconsin Madison](#)

Each program sets its own language requirements. Some programs require competence in one or more languages before students can take preliminary examinations.

### [Indiana University](#)

Individual departments determine whether foreign languages or research skills or both will be required. Where such requirements exist, students must select the specific language(s) or research skill(s) from those approved by the major department and listed in its statement of departmental requirements.

### [Washington State University](#)

Departments and programs have the option of requiring or not requiring a foreign language or languages. If one or more languages are required, the degree-granting unit is responsible for monitoring that requirement.

### [University of Florida](#)

## Proposal submitted by Division of Graduate Studies

Each academic unit determines whether a reading knowledge of a foreign language is required. The requirement varies from one academic unit to another, and the student should check with the appropriate academic unit for specific information.

### [University of North Carolina](#)

Language and research skill requirements differ for each academic program. Students must acquire competence in those foreign languages needed for research or teaching in their disciplines. At an early stage, a student should consult the academic program advisor concerning what foreign languages, if any, will be required.

Graduate students must satisfy the foreign language requirement from a list of acceptable languages other than English as approved by their academic program.

Foreign Language Proficiency Assessments are offered as an alternative to special language courses offered on campus. For more information, see Foreign Language Proficiency Assessment.

Each academic program determines at what point a student must fulfill language or research skill requirements, provided that all such requirements are satisfied before a student graduates. The student's director of graduate studies will need to certify on the [Program Certification of Degree Requirements form](#) that all such requirements have been met.

### [University of Michigan](#)

Programs may specify additional requirements including graduate-level coursework, reading knowledge of a foreign language, work-experience or practicums, preparation of a thesis, or research essay, and/or a final oral or written examination.

### [University of Colorado Boulder](#)

There is no campus-wide foreign language requirement. The decision regarding the foreign language requirement for each graduate degree is the responsibility of the Graduate Faculty of each graduate degree program.