

MA Portfolio and Comprehensive Exam: French and Spanish College Teaching Tracks

The culminating experience for your degree is the MA Comprehensive Exam, which combines a **written MA portfolio** with an **oral presentation**, followed by questions from the graduate faculty on topics related to your presentation and courses. The comprehensive exam lasts approximately one hour and is completed in the last semester of your enrollment at Appalachian. These guidelines will help you collect and draft materials for your portfolio and prepare for your oral presentation.

A. Content and Format of the MA Portfolio. Candidates for the College teaching track should prepare a program-based portfolio that contains at a minimum the following components:

1. Program overview and courses taken.

In this first section, please provide the committee with a list of all your MA coursework, both taken at Appalachian State and, if applicable, at any other institutions. You should list courses chronologically and give a brief (3-5 sentence) summary of the content of each course.

2. Revised papers and projects from FRE or SNH content courses.

This section should include several major projects from the content courses you took in Spanish or French. You should include at least five papers or final projects written in French or Spanish. At least three of these should demonstrate your skills in research, analysis, and academic writing as well as your linguistic proficiency.

Each entry should include the original final project as you submitted it to your professor, as well as the feedback you got from the professor (either written directly on the draft, or in another format), and then a final revised version in which you have incorporated changes based on the feedback given. It is essential that the final revised versions you include in the portfolio show that you have responded to the feedback you received, in terms of both content and language usage.

You can organize this section either chronologically or by topic.

3. Statement on Second Language Acquisition and Teaching.

This is a statement of your understanding of how languages are learned by adult-aged students, based on insights from second language acquisition theory and what are considered best practices for language teaching. This statement should show that you understand key ideas and concepts in these areas, as well as how to best employ them in the language classroom.

While no minimum or maximum length is specified, an adequate SLA statement will generally be between 1200-2000 words (4-6 pages double-spaced)

4. Insights from Higher Education Classes

In this section you will reflect on what you learned from your Higher Education classes and/or internships. This section should contain at least one project from a higher education course as well as a short (400-600 word) reflection on important ideas and concepts that you learned in these courses. Recent graduates have reported that completing this section helped them be well prepared for job interviews at the college level.

5. Sample Teaching Materials.

You should include at least 2 items that show how you have incorporated, or how you plan to incorporate, the skills and understandings you have gained in your MA coursework into language teaching. For those students who have served as TAs or have taught elsewhere during their time in the program, these materials will typically come directly from your own classes. For students who have not taught during their time in the program, these materials can be ones you developed as part of one of your courses, including LLC 5590.

B. Content and Format of the Oral Presentation. The content of your oral presentation is largely up to you, but you should keep the following guidelines in mind as you prepare:

- Your presentation should last 20-25 minutes; you should practice beforehand to make sure that what you want to say fits roughly within this time frame.
- One portion of your presentation should be given in French or Spanish (as appropriate); this section typically lasts 5-8 minutes.
- While you may use notecards to help you organize your thoughts, you should speak freely in your presentation rather than reading from a prepared script.
- You are encouraged to prepare a PowerPoint or similar presentation to help organize your presentation.
- Your presentation should include the following key elements:
 - Brief Introduction and reflection on your course of study (2-3 minutes)
 - Discussion of your SLA statement (app. 4-5 minutes)
 - Identification and discussion of 1-2 overarching themes from your FRE or SNH content courses. It is strongly suggested that you identify 2 themes or ideas, and that at least one include a discussion of issues related to the cultural and literary productions of the French or Spanish-speaking world. The committee will be looking for you to make “big picture” connections between the courses you have taken. (app. 10-12 minutes)
 - Brief discussion of your teaching materials; this can also be integrated into your discussion of key themes (app. 2-3 minutes)
 - Discussion of your HE coursework (app. 3-4 minutes)

C. Other Important Details regarding Comprehensive Exams:

1. Format and Submission:

Your MA portfolio is a written project, but it is not an MA thesis as defined by the Graduate School, so you do not need to worry about following thesis guidelines. One copy for our archives (e.g. a 3-ring binder) is sufficient. Students interested in submitting the portfolio in an alternate format, including an all-online format, should consult with the director of graduate studies.

2. Timing of your MA Exam:

You should complete your MA exam near the end of your last semester of study, but in advance of the deadlines as set by the University Registrar. Exam results are due in Registrar's Office by Reading Day each term—which is **before** the regular period of final exams. Please schedule your MA presentation early enough to allow for the final documents to be processed and checked by the Registrar. You should contact the members of your MA committee early in the semester you plan to graduate to schedule your oral presentation, and provide them with a reminder of the date as it approaches.

If you need additional time, you can take your exam at the beginning of the following semester and delay graduation to the end of that semester. In this case, the university will charge you the equivalent of one credit hour for the term in which you take your exam.

3. Submitting your Written Materials: Committee members need to receive the written materials for your comprehensive exam at least 10 days (2 weeks is optimal) before the date of your oral presentation, to give everyone time to read and prepare questions and comments. Once you submit your portfolio for faculty to read, you may not add additional materials or remove the portfolio from the department.

4. Who attends your MA Comprehensive Exam?

The professors who have agreed to serve on your MA committee, as indicated on your Program of Study, will attend your oral presentation. The Department Chair and the Graduate Program Director will attend if they are not already members of the committee, and all other members of the Graduate Faculty will be invited.

In addition to these individuals, you are welcome to invite other guests to your presentation. We especially encourage you to include other graduate students in your invited audience, too.