

M.A. Examination Grading Guide

KU Department of Spanish & Portuguese

This is not a numerical rubric, but rather a holistic description of what *outstanding*, *very good*, *adequate*, and *unacceptable* answers to the M.A. examination will typically look like. Any given answer to an examination question may not match any of these descriptions exactly.

A passing examination on any of the four sections of the examination will require a combined score of 4 (for two questions), but with no answer in the “unacceptable” range. Students of superior ability might have scores of 6-8, but most students can realistically expect a score of 4 or 5.

4. Outstanding:

The student has demonstrated *detailed* and *thorough* knowledge of the sections of the M.A. reading list tested on this particular part of the exam, in all genres. He or she has chosen appropriate examples to answer particular questions, without being artificially limited by gaps in familiarity with significant texts on the list. Knowledge of individual works reveals awareness of formal and technical aspects, not merely plots and themes. The student demonstrates an excellent grasp of literary history, the chronology of movements, and the relations among authors and works.

The student has shown the ability to write eloquently, in Spanish prose free of grammatical or stylistic problems, and produced well-organized essays. Typically, the student will have written a longer-than-average answer, going well beyond what is necessary to merely pass the exam. He or she has answered thoughtfully, without simply repeating standard knowledge about the works discussed, and has demonstrated informed, in-depth knowledge of theoretical and scholarly discourses at a subtle and sophisticated level. Creative or unexpected ideas about the texts will be well-supported by detailed examples.

3. Very good:

The student has demonstrated that he or she has read and studied the sections of the M.A. reading list tested on this particular part of the exam, in all genres. The choice of texts is adequate to answer the questions, but may reveal some minor unevenness in preparation in particular genres and periods. There may be some minor inaccuracies in the descriptions of individual texts, but the student has enough resources to choose the best works to answer the question well.

The student writes well in Spanish. He or she has marshalled more than enough ideas and evidence to answer the questions, but may have offered less relevant details about works merely in order to demonstrate competence. Even if the student has slightly misinterpreted a question, there is no doubt as to whether he or she has the knowledge necessary to pass the exam. Typically, the answer will be substantial in length (given the time constraints) and insightful, without major missteps.

2. Adequate:

The student has studied the M.A. reading list and can situate works in their historical context adequately. The student can make obvious connections and comparisons between works. Some choices in answering questions may be motivated by unevenness in knowledge of genres or periods. Some inaccuracy in the description of individual works may be in evidence, along with some forgivable overgeneralizations about literary history. There may be some limitations in the ability to analyze literature *as literature*, beyond the level of plot and theme, but the student is aware of basic narrative, dramatic, and poetic techniques and conventions. The student might demonstrate detailed knowledge of a particular work, but have difficulty relating it to larger trends.

The student's prose may have some stylistic or grammatical issues, but ideas are clearly expressed. The student has answered the questions at a minimal level, following the instructions, but sometimes has simply offered standard information about the work rather than addressing the specificity of the question. Typically, the student demonstrates adequate knowledge of literary history, but limited analytical abilities or awareness of critical debates in the field. The student may have made errors of fact in characterizing individual works, but not so many as to fail the entire question.

1. Unacceptable:

The student's familiarity with major subsections of the list is in doubt. The student may have trouble finding enough to say about specific texts to answer the questions adequately. The student does little but provide plot summaries or other basic information, with limited analytical content. The answer may contain a significant number of oversimplifications, inaccuracies and/or major misunderstandings of texts, authors, and time periods.

There may be problems in clarity and accuracy of writing in Spanish or organization, or that have contributed to a failing grade on this section of the examination. Answers are typically too short and do not adequately answer the questions as posed.