

UCLA POSTBACC PROGRAM : FAQ

- Do I need to have studied Latin and Greek in order to be eligible for admission to the Classics program?

Yes. In order even to be considered for admission, all students *must* have studied Latin and Greek, at least a year of each -- and this year must cover *all* of Latin and Greek grammar. We know that some schools now take a third semester in order to finish grammar; if that is the case at your school, you must complete that semester in order to have the minimum to enter the program.

Why: All postbacc students participate in our regularly scheduled undergraduate offerings. The program requires coursework *above* the elementary level. Our Latin and Greek sequence covers all of grammar in the first year (Latin 1-2-3, Greek 1-2-3), or in intensive summer study (Latin 16, Greek 16) and begins the second year with an intermediate course: Latin 20, Greek 20, both offered in the fall only. If you cannot do the work in Latin or Greek 20, you will be re-placed into elementary language, and it will take you two years to earn the post-baccalaureate certificate.

- I've got three years of college Latin but no Greek. Can I apply?

Yes; your admission would be contingent on your successful completion of intensive summer Greek in the summer before you arrive here (we'd need to see your final grade). And vice versa (three years Greek, no Latin). This is not an unusual pattern in applicants to our postbacc program; bear in mind that summer intensive + a year of intermediate/advanced is not enough for most PhD programs *in Classics*. It's enough in some other fields (see below). Why: In an intermediate/advanced year here, you would move from intermediate courses in fall/winter quarters (grammar review + beginning to read) to author course(s) in spring and possibly in winter as well, for highly motivated students who earn an A or better in fall quarter and are approved to do a double courseload in winter quarter. Even so, that still leaves you with a maximum of three author courses. See below on expectations in PhD programs.

- Is the same true for the Latin-only program?

[This program will resume in fall 2017.]

Yes. And you should know that, if one year of Latin, or a summer of intensive Latin taken at UCLA or an equivalent program, is all you have, it may take you four quarters to complete the requirements for the certificate. The Latin-only program requires six courses at the post-elementary level, and, if elementary is all you have, in the fall quarter you would be able to take *only* Latin 20, which is a pre-requisite for Latin 100 in the winter, which in turn is a pre-requisite for higher-level Latin courses. Students who do extremely well in Latin 20 are sometimes allowed to take Latin 100 plus a 100+ Latin course in the winter quarter, but that would still in all likelihood leave you at the end of year 1 with only five post-elementary courses. If this issue applies to you, please email the program director to find out if Latin 110 (Prose Comp.) will be offered during the year you would be in the program. This course is offered in alternate years;

with this course, Latin-only students with only a year of prior Latin would be able to complete six post-elementary courses in three quarters.

- I've read a lot of Latin and Greek on my own. Doesn't that count?

Unfortunately, no. What you need are courses, on a transcript, and with satisfactory grades. Sometimes students read on a tutorial basis with a highly qualified person; that person has to write us to attest to your skill level compared with other students s/he has taught. But this is still not as good as a regularly-scheduled, graded course

Why: Unfortunately, we can't just take your word for it; in any case, in independent study, there is no one to point out mistakes or suggest something you might have missed. Even students who have been tutored are generally less prepared for the pace at UCLA than students who have participated in classes that involved other students.

- I did take Latin, but it was some years ago; I took Greek last year (not currently). Am I eligible?

Maybe, but this poses problems. In our experience, you will be very unhappy in even intermediate coursework if you took elementary language -- or even quite a bit of language -- but are not currently enrolled in language coursework. We find that any lapse in study leads to significant loss in skill. Students with gaps in their training, if admitted, are generally admitted only on the condition that they commit to some kind of formal review work.

And all admitted students will be urged in the strongest terms to review languages rigorously the summer before starting the program. Language courses at UCLA are quite demanding, and, if what you want is to move on to graduate work, the last thing you want on your record is a low grade in an undergraduate course. We want all students who arrive here in the fall to be ready to meet a high standard.

If you are reading this with considerable lead time, and have a lapse in your language training, resume language study now!

- My main interest is in Art History/ Philosophy/ History ... Will I be able to pursue those interests at UCLA, and will the postbacc seminar help me with my applications?

Yes, but ... As you can see from the certificate requirements, this program is mainly designed to improve students' languages, and all students in the Classics program are expected to take Latin and Greek every quarter, sometimes more than one course in one or both. (Students generally take three or four courses per quarter.) Many students do find space to take courses in related departments; many use their extra space to take an elementary modern language (French, German, Italian), which are prerequisites for admission to many graduate programs in History as well as in Classics.

The required postbacc seminar, given every fall, is aimed at coaching students through the application process for MA and PhD programs in Classics, and at providing students with basic skills that many Classics students need but lack (ability to scan verse; rhetorical analysis; how to read an apparatus criticus; familiarity with research tools in the field). We usually have multiple students interested in applying to programs in History, and when this is so we do some preparation specifically for graduate work in History, where these programs are located in History Departments (all the Archaeology programs in which we place students are located in Classics departments). Department faculty will sometimes provide counseling on placement in Art History and Philosophy. We usually also have a visit from an experienced secondary-school Latin teacher, for those interested in this noble and pleasant calling.

- My reason for enrolling in the UCLA Post-Baccalaureate Program is that I want to apply to top Classics PhD programs in the US and Canada; I would then be writing applications during my first quarter in the program. Is that a workable plan?

Not always. *If you already* have three years of one language and two of the other, then, yes, that's not unreasonable.

Many students do not fully realize -- and why would they? -- that the amounts of language specified on grad program websites are *minimum amounts*. In fact, successful candidates at highly-competitive programs usually have a great deal more language than the minimum specified, along with at least one modern language.

If you have only two years on entrance at UCLA (elementary plus one year of intermediate/advanced), please realize that you would then be applying to programs before you had any grades at all from UCLA: fall quarter grades usually post in February; grad apps are due between December 1 and February 1. You would be able to say only what you were *planning* to take in winter and spring quarters; you would have to get letters from your current Latin/Greek professors attesting to your advanced reading ability. Students who do exceptionally well in advanced undergraduate work in the fall quarter are sometimes invited, in late November, to enroll in graduate seminars in winter quarter; that's the kind of thing you would need.

Please look at the pre-requisites for some of the competitive MA programs that often place students into top PhD programs; you'll see that *they* often ask for 3-2 as a basic requirement for entry.

Again, candidates successful in applying to the most competitive PhD programs have often:

- done 4+ years of each language, sometimes 8+ of Latin;
- written an honors thesis of 30+ pages, with professional-level bibliography;
- acquired one or more modern languages;
- taught Latin for a year or so;
- already taken graduate-level courses.

Why two years of language isn't enough of a basis on which to apply to top-ranked PhD programs, or, indeed, to most PhD programs: First-year students at places like UCLA are required to take graduate seminars and surveys that presuppose a very extensive background in reading classical texts. In survey, for example, the amount of reading assigned is 600-1000 lines of verse *per week*. If your previous experience is entirely in courses where you read 100 lines of

verse per week, and if you have no familiarity with most of the authors on the reading list, you'd be lost. In that case, your best option is to improve your skills in a postbacc program, then to try for the best MA program for your level, and to move from there into a PhD program.

Exceptions: PhD programs in some allied departments, like History and Art History, may indeed only require two years of prior language work. The question then is, what else do they want? The answer to that often is, quite a bit, and often quite complex; you'll need to look at individual websites. Our program focuses mainly on language.

- So can I stay in the program a second year?

Yes; about a third of the students who start each fall stay for a second year, for one reason or another. You can stay on even if you have done all the work to earn the certificate in the first year; you just postpone taking the certificate.

Typical reasons for staying for a second year:

- did not complete the certificate in first year, due to language skill level
- arrived with one language at intermediate level though the other was very advanced
- arrived with both languages at intermediate level
- material-culture people getting languages up to speed

- What kind of letters of recommendation do I need for the UCLA postbacc program?

Your letters should testify to your ability to translate Latin and Greek accurately, to your experience and skill in writing about language and culture, and to your potential for working well in a group of scholars.

- Do I need to include a writing sample?

Not necessarily, but it doesn't hurt. If you do not send a writing sample, please note that we are judging your writing skill from your personal statement, on which see below.

- What should I say in my personal statement?

Naturally we want to hear about what you have read and what you want to go on to do. The main point is how you say it. All the advanced-level language courses we have require substantial writing; we do not have the facilities to teach basic writing skills. If your personal statement or writing sample shows that you have basic problems, that will disqualify you.

The personal statement is also a dry run for the grad app statements you will soon be writing. Please take it very seriously; allow yourself time to do a good job, then go back and check what you've done.

What to say: just tell us about what you've studied, and lay out specifically what your goals are for your time at UCLA, as best you can. From our website, try to get a sense of who teaches what in the department, and of how UCLA's strengths match your needs.

- What else can I usefully do to prepare?

Graduate school in Classics is pre-professional work; students are training not only to study ancient texts, but to write about them as part of a community of scholars. A good application is one that shows a student has engaged with work in the field -- has read scholarship that appeals to the applicant intellectually, or has a favorite book or scholar. Ask your professors to make you up a reading list. If you are interested, for example, in ancient sexuality, but have not yet read any scholarship on the subject, the time to start reading is immediately, since you will never carry conviction in an application if you are only vaguely familiar with the state of the question.

- Do I need to present GRE scores with my application?

No, but one very useful thing you can do in the summer before entering the program is to take the GRE and see how you do. In order to be competitive, you will need at least a score of 163 on the *verbal* section of the test (if you hope to become an archaeologist, you will need to have also a score of at least 164 on the quantitative section as well). You also need to do well on the writing sample, although that is not as much of a deal-breaker. As the GRE is now set up, you can get an approximate score immediately after finishing the test, and delete the results if they are not what you want. Yes, it's expensive to take the GRE a second time, but this score is very important, and most people do improve on a second try. So you can see why it's important to study for this test, making use of all available practice materials and testing.

- Does the program offer financial aid?

The department does not offer financial aid of any kind. The whole financial side is handled by the University Extension (UNEX); look on the program description pages of their website for contact information. They do offer loans, though not scholarships.