

STUDENT MANUAL FOR  
PREPARATION OF THE  
TRANSLATION THESIS PROPOSAL  
AND TRANSLATION THESIS

GRADUATE PROGRAM IN TRANSLATION  
UNIVERSITY OF PUERTO RICO  
RÍO PIEDRAS CAMPUS

## INTRODUCTION

The translation thesis is the final requirement for completion of the degree of Master of Arts in Translation. As such it represents the culmination of a student's work in the Graduate Program in Translation, reflecting the experience and skills gained in the many theoretical and practical courses taken within the Program.

The standard kind of thesis submitted by students is the translation thesis—an extended translation of a text, including the Translator's Preface, accepted by the university to meet the requirements of the thesis for the M.A. degree in Translation. This manual has been drawn up with this most common form of thesis in mind. The Graduate Program in Translation may consider alternatives to the translation of a text in order to meet the thesis requirement. Such alternatives may include relevant research into subjects of a theoretical, historical or pedagogical nature. Students who are interested in pursuing an alternative thesis, including sociological, linguistic research on translation, research on historical or theoretical problems in translation, or computer technology, or annotated specialized glossaries, should discuss the matter with their supervisors. Any changes in the thesis requirement will be communicated to the students in the form of an amendment to this manual.

Students should keep in mind that various factors are considered necessary in order to successfully complete this requirement, namely, careful selection of an appropriate text for translation; a professional and responsible approach to any relevant terminological or factual research (which shall also include matters of style and the conventions of the field or discipline from which the text has been chosen, and which may require consultations with the author of the source text, if possible); regular meetings, discussions and consultations with the thesis supervisor, and, as necessary, the thesis readers; sound consideration of the difficulties encountered during the translation and research process, and a judicious discussion of the solutions to these problems (to be presented in the Translator's Preface—formerly referred to as the Translator's Note); careful presentation and formatting of the thesis; and a reasoned and intelligent defense of the translation before an examining committee.

Successful completion of the thesis, and of the master's degree in Translation, will depend on the proper handling of the aforementioned factors. Success in the supervision of your thesis will depend on the agreements reached with the supervisor regarding frequency and duration of meetings, the amount of work to be completed for each session, as well as issues pertaining to style, terminology, research, theoretical approach, and presentation.

## STEPS IN THE PREPARATION OF THE THESIS

1. Selection of text
2. Selection of thesis advisor
3. Securing permission to translate
4. Preparation of a thesis proposal, with bibliography; submission of the proposal to the Graduate Committee; approval or suggestions for revision; possible revision.
5. Identification of possible thesis committee
6. Translation of the text; annotation; note-taking for the Translator's preface; expansion of the initial bibliography
7. Writing of the Translator's Preface
8. Recruitment of a thesis committee
9. Final polishing
10. Submission to the thesis committee (selection of committee required at this stage, if not before)
11. Defense

### SELECTING A TEXT

Selecting an appropriate text for the translation thesis will represent a challenge in itself. There is no single, certain way of locating a text and it is therefore advisable that you begin considering text options well in advance.

In general, whole works that have been published or that are of publishable quality are the best choice, but many such texts may be too long for the student to reasonably tackle. Portions of works and anthologies, even personally compiled anthologies may also be considered. In the latter case, getting author or publisher permissions may prove the greatest challenge. The student will need to present for examination approximately 12,000 – 15,000 words of translated text, plus a Translator's Preface. In achieving the target word count, you should keep logical breaks (chapters or sections in the original, for example). Generally, you should translate through the section in which your 12,000 words fall, to preserve original textual coherence. Your supervisor will assist and advise you in the period of text selection, but you must not expect your supervisor to find the text for you.

There are a variety of text selection approaches that have worked for students in the past. You should begin by considering what areas or fields are personally of greatest interest to you, which may also be an area or field in which you want to develop or even specialize in the long run. You may ask faculty members with whom you have worked if they have suggestions, not only of specific texts but of faculty elsewhere in the university who are knowledgeable in your areas of interest. Doctoral theses by UPR faculty members who have done their work in one language and now need a translation for publication represent one selection possibility. You may want to consult journals in your area of specialization, if you have one, find out about recent publications from the UPR press and other local or specialized presses, browse through local bookstores, or even research recent publications online.

Your search for the appropriate text may lead you to more than one possibility. When faced with such a choice, several factors should be kept in mind: Is the subject matter, treatment and style of more than common interest to you (since you will be “living” in the text for some time)? Can you obtain permission to translate? Does the text meet a need such that there is the possibility of publication? Will the text be of relevance to community or university-related issues? Strictly speaking, does it merit translation? If the text is specialized in nature, are you familiar with the related area or field, or are you willing to become thoroughly familiar with it in the time you have to complete your thesis? Does the text present any stylistic or linguistic obstacles that may unduly hinder the translation process?

Regardless of your choice, it is expected that you will thoroughly read the entire source text, that you will be adequately familiar with other texts written by the same author, as well as relevant related works written by other authors. The more extensive the knowledge you have obtained from reading such texts, the easier it will be to approach the task of drafting your Translator’s Preface.

### Supervision – Selection of an Advisor

Students will arrange to work on the thesis under the supervision of a particular faculty member of the Graduate Program in Translation. Selection of an advisor will be arrived at through the mutual consent and agreement of both student and faculty member. The student should first approach the faculty member he or she intends to work with, and once an agreement has been reached the faculty member will inform the Program. Once a proposal has been approved, students must register for thesis supervision under the faculty member's name, as if they were registering for an individual course. The student and the supervisor will jointly establish a working plan, and propose a tentative date for thesis completion. The working plan will include agreements on the pace of the translation process, a schedule of meetings (to include duration and frequency), as well as factors relating to research and revision processes. Students are expected to stick to their working plan, and advisors are not required to provide make-up sessions for any meetings the student may have missed.

Advisors are expected to provide the equivalent of 15 hours of individual supervision per semester to each thesis student. Inadequate preparation or missed sessions will affect the progress of the work. Students are advised that each semester the supervisor is required to report on the student’s progress, and will inform the Program of the work completed under supervision. Students should inform their thesis advisor of changes in circumstances or plans that may affect the progress of the supervision or completion of the thesis.

**The role of the thesis advisor is to help clarify issues, suggest resources, and indicate ways to tackle specific problems that may be encountered. The advisor is not there to solve the problems, or do the research or provide the terms for the student. Students are inevitably responsible for the text and its presentation, and it is the student who will be called on to defend his or her work. The responsibility for the translation remains with the student.**

The thesis is not intended merely as an abstract, contemplative academic exercise, but a project in which the student has the opportunity to demonstrate professional skills in applying what has been learned to the solution of particular problems, as well as an opportunity to prove dedication and commitment. As such, it is excellent training for the work students may encounter professionally upon completion of the degree.

When a student anticipates that he or she will be ready to graduate during a given semester, the completed translation, including Translator's Preface and bibliography, should **be submitted to the thesis advisor eight weeks before the defense date**. This will allow the advisor to have adequate time to consider any final revisions. After incorporating any suggestions the advisor may have, the student should **submit the thesis to the thesis committee no later than six weeks before the anticipated defense date**.

### Securing Permission to Translate

In order to secure permission to translate a text you will need to contact the relevant right holders of the work in question (author, heirs, publishers, etc.). Unless you plan to publish your thesis, any rights falling to you as translator will apply only to your translation, and will be considered purely academic in nature. By completing a translation you will not hold rights over any other subsequent translations that may be published. If you wish to publish your thesis you should discuss this matter with the right holders, in order to reach an arrangement that is satisfactory for all parties.

## THESIS PROPOSAL

Prior to beginning work on your thesis, you must submit a Thesis Proposal for approval by the Graduate Studies Committee of the Translation Program. The proposal must be submitted by the end of the first semester after registering for the thesis. The proposal has two principal aims: it assures the student that the project is, in the Committee's judgment, a worthy and feasible one, and it assures Committee members that the student is sufficiently serious, dedicated and clear about the project to undertake it successfully. With this in mind, the Thesis Proposal must represent an unequivocal indication of the student's professionalism. The Thesis Proposal must be filed in electronic format using a PDF file and must also include an electronic copy of the text that will be translated. If these conditions are not met, the proposal will not be accepted.

The proposal should be organized in essay form, and should include the following points:

- full reference to the material to be translated, a discussion of the nature and value of the text (why it merits translation), a brief discussion or summary of the entire text from which your selection has been drawn (including sections not translated), the language of the translation, the proposed length of the translation, information about the author, and any special reference materials to be used;
- an indication of the form and status of the text, including notice of any previous translations, and a copy of the authorization to translate, if applicable;

- the name of the person who has agreed to supervise and, if applicable, any special indications as to the approach (theoretical or practical) in which the translation process is to be carried out; and
- the difficulties anticipated in the translation process, and a thorough analysis of such difficulties.

A work plan showing the various tasks for completing the thesis should be submitted as part of the proposal. The work plan usually takes the form of a table that includes a chronological list of the various activities or tasks with a respective due date for each. The list of activities should begin with the completion of the proposal and end with the thesis defense.

Both the thesis proposal and the Translator's Preface must be in the **same target language** as the translation itself.

### Length of Thesis Proposal

The thesis proposal is intended to roughly summarize the text in question, give an introduction to the author and other relevant works, provide the student's reasons for choosing the text, the merits and status of the work, and the student's approach to translating the text. An initial, scholarly bibliography is also to be included. In order to appropriately tackle all these factors, students should envision producing a proposal in the range of **ten pages or more**, including bibliography.

### Progress Report

At the end of each semester, the Translation Program provides each thesis student with a progress report form, which is to be filled out by both the student and supervisor, indicating the progress made on the thesis, or reasons for delays or interruptions. The completed form becomes part of the student's record.

Reasonable progress or lack of progress will be duly reported. "Reasonable progress" may also depend on the difficulty of the translation and on the student's particular circumstances (i.e. work or family responsibilities), however students are advised that the university has set certain time limits within which the thesis must be finished (the present limit for completion of all degree requirements is six years from beginning to end). These time limits are determined at the campus level and may change over time. Students should inquire about time limits currently in effect.

### Changes in Work or Supervision

If the student does not make reasonable progress or does not comply with the working plan, if the quality of the work is insufficient, or if it is advisable that arrangements be made for another supervisor, the supervisor may request to be relieved of the supervision.

A student may apply to the Graduate Committee to change topics or supervisors. In either case, the request is to be made in writing and should be supported by appropriate reasons for the change.

## TRANSLATOR'S PREFACE

The introduction to each translation thesis is a piece of original writing by the translator. The Translator's Preface should be written in essay form, and should provide a careful consideration of the particular text translated, the approaches taken by the student and the solutions arrived at in the course of preparing the thesis. The preface is not intended as an opportunity to display a student's general knowledge, but to show that one can apply what one knows to the specific subject matter. The preface should provide a clear sense of what is relevant to the particular work, and should demonstrate the student's ability to set out and argue the pertinent issues in a sober and scholarly manner. It must be written in the same target language as the translation itself. Because each original text is different, each Translator's Preface will have a character of its own, but all Notes must contain certain information or details.

The Translator's Preface consists of many of the same elements that appeared in the proposal, now refined and perfected. As such it should provide a synopsis of the work you have chosen, your reasons for choosing the work, some notes about the author of the original text, a summary of why the work is of importance from the translation perspective (this may include cultural, linguistic, theoretical or purely practical aspects), and, most importantly, what specific translation problems were encountered along the way. Each text presents its own special difficulties and challenges, and these should constitute the true subject of the note. The student should also discuss any reference texts or other related materials that may have been of particular importance to the translation process.

It is not advisable to wait until you have completed the translation to begin the note. It is best to begin taking notes as you proceed, or to write up short, paragraph-length discussions of the problems as they arise, while they are still fresh in your mind. If you do so, and if your Thesis Proposal was submitted in essay form, then the work of preparing the note will be a matter of careful selection and organization of the materials to be included in the final version. What will remain will be any observations or clarifications as the work as a whole has taken shape in the mind of the translator. This may be especially important if the student is not providing footnotes to clarify any textual ambiguities. The Translator's Preface will probably be the first thing the examiner reads, and will therefore create an initial impression, as well as a focus for the translation itself.

Your supervisor is not obliged to correct the Translator's Preface in detail, but will discuss the ideas and the solutions with you. Your research, translation and reading, and the discussions with your supervisor, will normally be more than sufficient for writing the note.

**The Translator's Preface is generally ten to forty pages in length.**

## TRANSLATION THESIS

Translation theses may vary considerably in nature and form given the wide range of original texts that have been chosen for translation. With this in mind, the Translation Program has not set down intractable rules as to the form of the translation thesis. Consideration is given to the nature of the original and the related field, and a determination is made to follow some guide to form in that field or, if no such guide is available, some reasonable model in the field, perhaps the original text itself where appropriate, or some standard work in the field. Students should consult general style guides ~ such as the MLA Style Manual, or the University of Chicago Manual of Style. When available, field-related style guides should also be consulted, since the style or format of your translation may vary according to the field. Your supervisor may be able to provide more information about such guides. What is important is awareness of form, and consistency in practice. Considerations of register, dialect, writing style, and target audience should also be seriously considered. It is wise to decide issues of form and style early on and discuss these with your supervisor.

### Format

The thesis must be typed (using a word processor, for a number of considerations of a practical nature) on standard letter-size paper of durable quality (Bond paper may be considered for the final copy). The standard font used is Times New Roman 12 point, or another serif equivalent. When using a word processor, remember that you should be judicious in the use of non-standard graphics, inserts, special formatting and other typographical devices, and only use these when necessary or applicable, since they should never distract from the content. The pages of the translation thesis must be numbered and the margins appropriate for binding. The materials are also normally placed in a particular sequence.

Margins should be 1" with the exception of left margins, which should be 1 ½" (to facilitate binding).

It may be necessary to annotate your translation at one or another point in the work (for clarification, explanation, etc.). This issue should be carefully considered and also discussed with your supervisor. If you need to provide annotations, you should use endnotes or footnotes and identify your annotation in parentheses, as follows:

<sup>1</sup> i.e. 'fry' and 'put in the pot,' terms used to refer to seduction, as well as cooking (translator's note).

If you are planning to publish your thesis, there may be some advantage to using endnotes rather than footnotes, since traditional methods of publishing handle the typesetting of such matter separately from the text. Also, if the original text itself contains footnotes you should consider using endnotes, in order to avoid any possible confusion with the author's original

notes. In some cases it may be advisable to avoid annotation altogether. This aspect should be discussed with your supervisor.

The Translation thesis may be thought of as a book divided into two parts: (1) The introductory matter for the thesis (Translator's Preface, Acknowledgements, Glossary [when necessary], Bibliography, etc.), which are paginated with lower-case Roman numerals, and (2) the actual translation, which is paginated with Arabic numerals.

In the past, the Translation Program has asked that students indicate the pagination of the original on the pages of the translation, in order to facilitate supervision and examination. The practice, which began when all theses were typed, was to place the page number of the original in the right margin of the translation, so that each page carried not only its own number, most often at the bottom of the page, but also a sequence of original-text page numbers running down the right margin. This may be achieved by using text box insertions (Microsoft Word) or by extending right margins when required. Consult with your thesis advisor for clarifications on this issue.

Please note that the first page should be left blank. Although this page is counted in numbering the pages, it should not bear any pagination. The second page will begin as lower-case Roman numeral *ii*.

A final draft of your thesis must be provided to all thesis readers. This final draft should be in some sort of provisional binding (plastic, etc.). A copy of the source text original must also be provided to all readers.

## THESIS DEFENSE

### Planning

Given the fact that most students may have other responsibilities or obligations, such as a family or job or both, particular attention should be given to planning the various stages of your thesis. You should try to work out a feasible schedule for completing your thesis with your supervisor, and this schedule should take into account unanticipated events. The Translation Program does not process the official documents until you have handed in the required number of signed copies of the completed thesis, properly bound.

The following is a rough breakdown of how much time will be needed for the final stages of your translation, once a date has been established for thesis defense:

1. Establish a date for the defense;
2. Four weeks should be anticipated to set the last possible moment for your defense;

3. A final draft should be submitted to your readers six weeks prior to the established defense date, in order to provide adequate time for any last-minute revisions or corrections;
3. To this at least one additional week should be anticipated to allow for your advisor to view the complete, final document and to ensure that you have time to attend to any last-minute detail.

In general, you will need to present your final work to your advisor eight weeks before the hand-in date, and the copies to the examiners six weeks before the hand-in date. This means that you should also take into consideration the official university calendar, as well as any other faculty-related matters that may affect scheduling, plus any additional research that you may need to undertake in order to properly complete your work.

### The Examining Committee:

The Examining Committee usually consists of three people, though there may be more. The first is your supervisor, who serves as the president of the committee, the second is another member of the faculty of the Program, or regular Program collaborator. The third may be selected from another department in the University, or even from outside the academic community. This third member is often someone with particular disciplinary expertise. All members of the committee must meet the requirements of the university for examining at the Master's level. The student's supervisor is responsible to make the arrangements for the examination. It is advisable to consider possible examiners, and discuss the matter with your supervisor, well in advance.

A final draft will be submitted to all members of the committee for their review, according to the schedule referred to above.

### The Defense

Examiners are required to carefully read your translation in all its parts, consider its presentation, as well as the translation, and propose questions regarding any problems you may have encountered, the approach you have followed, and the solutions you provide. They will evaluate your work and also submit corrections whenever needed. If you have done your work properly, and have prepared yourself thoroughly, the defense should be considered a conversation with experienced colleagues about the text and the translation. This does not mean that the process is not taken seriously. It is expected that you will review your work prior to the defense and that you will present yourself as an "expert" on the work in question.

The Translation Program will announce the date and time of the defense to its students and faculty. The thesis defense is considered a public activity. It is common for fellow students and program personnel, friends and family to attend the initial part of the defense, in which the work is discussed and questions are asked of the examinee. However, none of the spectators may speak or otherwise make their views known at any time during the course of the examination. When the discussion between the committee and the examinee has been completed, non-committee members and the examinee will be asked to leave the room while the committee deliberates. All

will be invited to return to the examining room when the committee has completed its deliberation, at which time, the president of the committee will announce the results of the examination.

The committee decides whether the thesis receives a Pass or Fail. If the thesis is approved, it will also receive the notation Good, Excellent, or Outstanding (Bueno, Notable, Sobresaliente). A passing grade may also hinge on the student making final changes or corrections, even after the defense itself. Recommendations may also be made for publication.

In order to graduate, the student has until the end of the semester to turn in the required copies of the thesis. The student will submit two blank disks for electronic filing, a copy of the cover page with his and his advisor's signatures, and an unprotected copy of the thesis on a PDF document via e-mail. One electronic copy will be kept by the PGT and another will be kept at the Seminario Multidisciplinario José Emilio González, and will be available for consultation by students or faculty. A single paper copy will also be filed and will be available at the Colección Puertorriqueña of Lázaro Library.

Sample Pages:

Thesis Proposal:

Graduate Program in Translation College of Humanities University of Puerto Rico Río Piedras Campus	
Thesis Proposal	
TRANSLATION TITLE (a translation of <u>Original Title</u> by Author)	
by Student's Name	
Date	
<u>[signature]</u> Typed name Advisor	<u>[signature]</u> Typed name Student ID Number

Thesis:

Graduate Program in Translation  
 College of Humanities  
 University of Puerto Rico  
 Río Piedras Campus

TRANSLATION TITLE  
 (a translation of Original Title  
 by Author)

by  
 Student's Name

presented in partial fulfillment  
 of the requirements of the  
 M.A. Degree in Translation

Spring Semester 2005

[signature]                      [signature]  
 Typed name                      Typed name  
 Advisor                              Student ID Number

Page ii (unnumbered)

TRANSLATION TITLE  
 Student's Name, Year

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TRANSLATOR'S PREFACE

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Page v

You may add a dedication page or other similar matter (Acknowledgments) . If you do so, be sure to continue the pagination the standard way for preliminary matter, i.e., with small Roman numerals.

Here ends the preliminary matter and the form of pagination changes from Roman numerals to Arabic numerals. This is where the translation itself begins.

[The rest of the preliminary matter follows the  
Translator's Preface]

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

P

Continue the pagination in small Roman numbers until you complete the preliminary matter

TRANSLATION TITLE  
Author  
Translated by Student's Name

This is page 1, though unnumbered

[Translation of the copyright page of the original]

2

Page 2

[Here begins the preliminary matter of the original]

3

This is page 3

[Here follows the text of the original]

4

Continuation of pagination in Arabic numerals