

UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA AT CHAPEL HILL

**DEPARTMENT OF CLASSICS**

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**LATIN FAQs**

**Latin is a dead language, right? What's the point of studying it?**

Communication skills: learning Latin gives you a better understanding of the grammar that underlies English and other European languages, especially the Romance languages that come from Latin (Spanish, French, Italian); it will also enhance your understanding of English vocabulary, since so many of our words derive from Latin. Studying Latin will significantly improve your skills in reading, analysis, and writing.

**What kinds of things can I read and study if I take Latin?**

Because Latin was a living language for some 2,000 years, knowledge of Latin allows you to read an amazing range of literary, historical, philosophical, and scientific works in their original form, from Vergil's *Aeneid* to Einhard's biography of Charlemagne, from Caesar's conquest of Gaul to Augustine's conversion to Christianity, from Thomas Aquinas' *Summa of Theology* to Isaac Newton's *Mathematical Principles of Natural Philosophy*. Even today, Latin continues to be all around us: E Pluribus Unum, Esse Quam Videri, Lux Libertas.

**Can I use Latin to satisfy the general education language requirement?**

Yes! The Department of Classics offers at least one section, and usually more, of LATN 101, 102, and 203 every semester. If you have high enough scores on a national standardized test (AP, SAT II, IB), you might be able to place out of the language requirement altogether; you can find further information on our website (Home → Undergraduate → Placement in Latin and Greek Courses).

**How much homework will there be?**

Regular engagement is essential to acquiring a new language, and homework is assigned daily in Latin. This means, however, that each assignment is comparatively low-stakes. Grades on homework generally align more closely with your effort than with the accuracy of your submissions. The amount of time needed to complete assignments will vary, but as a rule you should expect at least one hour of study for every hour in class.

**Are there opportunities for extra help if I feel like I need it?**

Yes! Our chapter of Eta Sigma Phi, the national undergraduate Honors Society for Classical studies, holds weekly peer tutoring sessions in the department. They also have weekly reading groups that are open to students of all levels; these can help with vocabulary recognition and sentence structure. Our department faculty are also more than happy to meet with students during their office hours.

**How long does it take before I can hold a conversation?**

Although oral work may be a part of the learning process at various stages, the main emphasis of our Latin classes – in contrast with modern language classes – is not on speaking, but on reading. A primary goal is to read ancient literature and textual artifacts (e.g. inscriptions).

**I took Latin in high school. What Latin class should I take at UNC? Is there a placement test?**

Depending on their background, students who had Latin in secondary school can place into anything ranging from LATN 101 to courses at the 300 level. If you took a national standardized test (AP, SAT II, IB), your score should provide a good indication of what course you should enroll in. The department also offers an online placement test. You can find further information on our website (Home → Undergraduate → Placement in Latin and Greek Courses).

**I already took the online Latin placement test. Am I stuck in the class I was placed in?**

No! The results of the online placement test simply provide an initial recommendation. If you have questions about your placement or would like to consider other options, please contact our Director of Undergraduate Studies or the Directors of our Elementary and Intermediate Latin Program (contact information on our website: [Home](#) → [About Us](#) → [Administration & Contacts](#)).

**I enjoyed Latin in high school, but I'm planning to major in another subject. Is there any reason to keep taking Latin in college?**

Yes! If you have room in your schedule, why not keep taking courses in a subject you enjoy? Many of our students who are majoring in other subjects say that they enjoy the variety in their schedule that Latin provides and that it allows them to use a different part of their brain. Students in large departments appreciate the intimate class size and friendly atmosphere of the Classics Department, where their teachers and classmates know them by name. Some of them add Latin as a second major or minor, which can be a big plus when you're applying for jobs or graduate/professional programs; it sends a signal that you have not only good language skills but also a real breadth of interests and experience.

**Would I be able to complete a major or a minor in Latin?**

Yes! We offer a full range of majors and minors in Latin, Greek, Classical Archaeology, and Classical Civilization. If you've had Latin in high school, you may be able to enroll in higher-level courses and begin fulfilling the requirements right from the start; in these cases, it can be pretty easy to add Latin as a minor or a second major. If you're starting Latin in college, you could do a major in Classical Civilization or, with more of a push, Latin. For more information about our different degree tracks and their requirements, see our website ([Home](#) → [Undergraduate](#) → [Majors and Minors](#)).

**What kinds of courses in Latin can I take at Carolina?**

In addition to our elementary and intermediate sequence (LATN 101-203), we regularly offer a wide range of courses at more advanced levels, usually three every semester. Frequently taught courses include Vergil, Ovid, Cicero, Roman historians, Roman comedy, Latin love poetry, and medieval Latin. For a complete list of our course offerings in Latin, see the Academic Catalogue ([catalog.unc.edu](#) → [Courses A-Z](#) → [Latin](#)).