Prospective Graduate Student FAQs

How do I know if I’m qualified to apply?

A student must be able to read and speak either Danish, Norwegian, or Swedish at an advanced level and be comfortable reading the other Scandinavian languages. Students with advanced Finnish as their target language are also strongly encouraged to apply, but they must be able to read the modern Scandinavian languages in order to complete the required course work and reading exams. In addition to high linguistic ability, applicants should also have a strong academic record, showing preparation for study in Scandinavian literature or area studies, and a preliminary area of interest in Scandinavian studies. The admissions committee evaluates all elements within each application.

When do I apply to the Scandinavian Studies Graduate Program?

The deadline for graduate applications is December 15th of each calendar year, for admission in the following autumn quarter. Earlier application is advised for International Students.

Should I apply to the M.A. or Ph.D. program?

The M.A. is a prerequisite for acceptance to the Ph.D. program, and many of our students begin as M.A. students and continue through to the Ph.D. However, if you have completed advanced work in Scandinavian studies or one of the languages and literatures, or a related field, but do not hold a M.A. in Scandinavian studies, we will consider admitting you to the PhD program.

What should I include in my “Statement of Purpose?”

Your statement of purpose should outline the intellectual questions and reasons that lead you to want to study Scandinavian literature or area studies. You may wish to connect those questions and reasons to the academic training that lead you to Scandinavian studies. While you do not need to identify a specific area of specialty, it’s helpful for the admissions committee to know what kind of research and scholarly discussion interests you. You should also indicate why you are interested in studying at the University of Washington’s Scandinavian Studies Department, and what it is you think the department can do to help you develop as a student. Finally, your statement should be clear, well organized, and concise. It should not include needless autobiographical or personal anecdotes.

Who should I ask for Letters of Recommendation?

People who have supervised an applicant’s academic work generally make the best recommenders. A detailed description of an applicant's academic training, experience, and strengths is helpful to the committee in assessing an application, especially when the recommender is familiar with the field of Scandinavian studies and can comment specifically on an applicant's readiness for graduate study. Unfortunately, letters from work supervisors, business partners, and acquaintances often do not speak of the candidate's academic characteristics in a helpful way, and so are less useful than letters from academic recommenders.
Can my letters of recommendation come from non-academic recommenders?

Recommendation letters may come from anyone you choose, but the most helpful letters come from recommenders at academic institutions who can write about you and your record in detail.

The Application For Funding asks for a recording of me speaking in the target language. May I read?

Applicants may read, but we advise against it. The recording gives us material to assess your linguistic ease and range in your target language. It helps to hear you speaking spontaneously. It also gives us a sense of your readiness to teach the target language as a teaching assistant.

When will I know if my application has been accepted?

We evaluate new M.A. and Ph.D. applications, as well as continuing students' funding applications, during December. We send out decision letters by mid-February.

Can I reapply if my application is rejected?

Yes. Unsuccessful applicants may apply again with a new application the following or a subsequent year. The second application should show what you have done to remedy problems in the unsuccessful application, for example further language study. If your application is unsuccessful, and you would like to apply again, please contact the Graduate Program Coordinator. We are eager to help you, if you're determined to get a graduate degree in Scandinavian studies.

My interest is not in Scandinavian literature, but in Scandinavian art history. Can the department give me graduate training in that field?

No. The department faculty's primary expertise is in the literature and culture of Scandinavia and the Baltic. As an area studies department, our faculty also includes a political scientist, a historian, and a folklorist. The department cannot offer graduate training in fields outside the expertise of the faculty. Be sure to identify the faculty members who share your interest, and plan your work in areas where we have expertise. However, if you have an interest in literature and art history, or another field related to Scandinavian studies, you may apply to the Scandinavian Studies Department and complete the core of your work there, while taking graduate seminars in other departments. You may also include faculty from other departments in your graduate committee.

Is the department currently offering instruction in Old Icelandic (Old Norse)?

The department currently offers undergraduate courses in the Viking-Age Scandinavia and the Icelandic Sagas and on the graduate level offers courses (SCAND 500 - 501) in the study of Old Icelandic (or Old Norse) language and literature and related topics.

Department of Scandinavian Studies
University of Washington
318 Raitt hall
Box 353420
Seattle, WA 98195-3420