

The students received the following instructions for the exam:

This is the exam for students who took the **Persian section** of MES4110 Readings of Middle Eastern Texts in fall 2025. Everything you need for the Persian exam is included in this document and all your answers will be written in Inspira (you do not need to write some answers on paper like the Arabic students).

You do not need to type in Persian or include special characters in your response. However, be sure to transliterate consistently when you write Persian words in Latin script.

Printed dictionaries are allowed during the exam.

The course page states the following regarding grades:

Grades are awarded on a scale from A to F, where A is the best grade and F is a fail. Read more about [the grading system](#).

Below you find the general, qualitative descriptions of the criterias used in the assessment of examinations.

A – Excellent

An excellent performance, clearly outstanding. The candidate demonstrates excellent judgement and a high degree of independent thinking.

B – Very good

A very good performance. The candidate demonstrates sound judgement and a very good degree of independent thinking.

C – Good

A good performance in most areas. The candidate demonstrates a reasonable degree of judgement and independent thinking in the most important areas.

D – Satisfactory

A satisfactory performance, but with significant shortcomings. The candidate demonstrates a limited degree of judgement and independent thinking.

E – Sufficient

A performance that meets the minimum criteria, but no more. The candidate demonstrates a very limited degree of judgement and independent thinking.

F – Fail

A performance that does not meet the minimum academic criteria. The candidate demonstrates an absence of both judgement and independent thinking.

Per both the instructions and discussions in class, the exam asks students to focus more on the content of their answers than to formatting and mechanics. As long as the students transliterate consistently, meaning that they use the same Latin letter for the same Persian letter or sound throughout, then the technical/mechanical aspect of the answers can be considered good. Only in cases where transliteration problems or poor proofreading distract from the answers' content should the grader consider the answer satisfactory or lower than satisfactory.

On the test, the students were provided with the beginning of a passage from Sa'di's *Golestan* that we read, translated, and discussed in class. They were asked to write answers to the following prompts:

1. Identify the text. What book does this excerpt come from? Who is the author? When was it written? What importance has the book held in Persian language and history? What are some of the central themes or ideas in the book?

A good answer will correctly identify that the excerpt comes from the *Golestan* by Sa'di and that it was written in the 13th century. A very good answer will also note that it was completed in 1258 and that it has held an extremely prominent position in Persian language and culture since the time of its writing and through to today. A very good answer should note that the text served as a model of good prose and an exemplary work on ethics. An excellent answer would also mention that the *Golestan* played such a prominent role in Persian civilization that it was used as the foreign service exam for British officials working in the East India Tea company in the nineteenth century. A very good answer will mention some of the books' central themes like prudence (*maslihat*), the common good, wisdom, and the virtues of poverty and contentment. An very good answer might mention that the book has eight chapter and an excellent answer could name some or all of the chapters, either in translation or Persian.

2. Situate the passage. What is the story that this excerpt was taken from? Summarize the entire story. What part of the story is this? Provide a detailed summary of this passage without translating word for word.

A good answer will identify this passage as the beginning of the story of the boxer in the chapter on contentment in the *Golestan*. A very good answer might mention that it is chapter three. An excellent answer might give the full title of the chapter, either in the Persian (*dar fazilat-e qenā'at*) or a translation like "The Superiority of Contentment." A good summary should give a sense of the entire story. It should mention that a young boxer wants to travel the world to make his fortune, that his father advises him against doing so, that he sets out anyway and faces a series of hardships and misfortunes, and that he narrowly survives but returns home anyway, no richer than before. A very good to excellent answer will fill in more details from the various parts of the story.

After a general summary, a good answer will identify this passage as the dialogue between the young boxer and his father, wherein the father advises his son again travel as he is not one of the five types of people who benefit from leaving their town or village. A very good to excellent answer will provide details from each paragraph in the passage so that a reader with minimal to no Persian can follow what is happening in the text. Although the prompt does not require “word for word” translation, an excellent answer will give an exact sense of what the Persian states in at least three paragraphs.

3. Analyze the language. Is this a work of prose, poetry, or both? Explain and clarify with examples from the passage. Be as specific and provide as much technical explanation, including Persian terms, as possible.

A good answer will explain that the Golestan is considered a work of prose, but there are many lines of verse interspersed throughout the text. A very good answer will note that the specific mode or style of prose is called *sajʿ*, which means a rhyming and rhythmic prose that does not follow a set metrical pattern. An excellent answer will provide the Persian terms for prose (*nasr*) and its corollary, prose (*nazm*), and explain that *nazm* really denotes verse, i.e. ordered or metered language. An excellent answer might also mention that the specific form of the Golestan is called prosimetrum in English and Norwegian.

In terms of examples, a good answer will correctly indicate some sentences that do not follow a set metrical pattern and therefore are considered prose. It will likewise point correctly to at least one line of verse as an example of poetry. A very good answer will show some rhyming language as an example of *sajʿ*. An excellent answer could show the specific metrical pattern of a line of verse.