

2026 Pavia Summer School, Germanic: Questions list

The following questions are designed both for self-assessment and to guide further research. Because each topic is broad in scope, your responses should be comprehensive, nuanced, and well-substantiated.

1 General questions

- a) What is the attestation status of Early Germanic (and Proto-Germanic)?
- b) What do we actually know about the Germanic peoples and their language, and to what extent?
- c) What sources provide our knowledge of Early Germanic and its speakers?
- d) How is Germanic related to other language families?
- e) When and how did Germanic transition into a written language?
- f) Can Early Germanic be localized geographically? If so, where and on what grounds? How reliably?
- g) Which linguistic features of Early Germanic are attested, in what form, and how representative is the surviving evidence?
- h) How reliable is the reconstruction of Proto-Germanic, and how can it be verified?
- i) What are the defining grammatical features of Germanic?
- j) Which of these features persist in the medieval corpus languages?
- k) Which languages or language families shared borrowing relationships with Early Germanic?
- l) Were the contact languages genealogically related to Germanic?
- m) What is the chronology of these borrowing relationships across different languages?
- n) What linguistic criteria, if any, can be used to establish this relative chronology?
- o) How did contact with the Romans alter Germanic, and why was this contact situation so pivotal?

2 Chronology and dialect geography of the Germanic languages

- a) Which pre-documented Germanic dialects and dialect groups can be reconstructed, what is the underlying evidence, and how secure are these findings?
- b) How far can historical accounts of Germanic tribes (e.g., Caesar, Pliny, Tacitus) inform Germanic dialectology, and what methodological pitfalls do they present?
- c) Which key sound changes and structural developments (chiefly phonological and morphological) mark the transition from Proto-Germanic to later reconstructed branches or

intermediate stages?

3 Runic inscriptions and medieval corpus languages

- a) What modes of written transmission exist for early Germanic language stages?
- b) What are runes, how did they originate, and when do they first appear in the textual record?
- c) Are there comparable or related early writing systems?
- d) Where are the earliest runic inscriptions found, and where do later inscriptions occur?
- e) What is the nature and extent of the surviving runic corpus?
- f) Which medieval corpus languages are attested, and what is their spatial and temporal distribution?
- g) What were the socio-historical contexts and catalysts for bringing each language into writing?
- h) How do the date, nature, and location of textual evidence in one language compare with those of other Old Germanic languages?
- i) Genetic classification: Where does a given language lie within the spatio-temporal continuum, and can it be assigned to a specific dialect group or branch?
- j) What are the most crucial sound laws operating between Proto-Germanic and each attested language (aim to identify and briefly outline roughly 5, depending on the language)?