

## A brief overview of policies regarding the graduate program in linguistics

This document provides details about policies and procedures in use in the Department of Linguistics in matters relating to its graduate program. Further details can be found in the graduate catalog at: <http://catalog.utexas.edu/graduate/>

**New student orientation.** The Department holds an orientation for entering graduate students in the days before registration opens for new graduate students. (The date of this orientation varies each year, as it is keyed to registration and the official beginning of the Fall semester.) Entering graduate students register for classes after this orientation, and after confirming their choices with the Graduate Advisor (GA).

**The Graduate Studies Committee (GSC).** The GSC includes all tenured and tenure-track faculty members in the Department of Linguistics, and is chaired by the Graduate Advisor. The GSC meets at the beginning and the end of each long semester (that is, the Fall and Spring semesters), and on an *ad hoc* basis as needed at other times during the academic year. The GSC determines the department's policies pertaining to the graduate program, and decides how these policies should be applied to our students. The GSC evaluates the progress of all students at the end of their first year in the program, and as needed over the course of their time in the program. The GSC votes on a number of issues, including extensions of candidacy; transfers from the MA to the PhD program; readmitting students who petition to return to the program after an absence; changes in policy; when necessary, removing students from the program.

Specific details concerning the function of the GSC and the Graduate Advisor's office in particular can be found at: <http://www.utexas.edu/policies/hopppm/01.C.02.html>

**Registration for courses.** At some point near the middle of each long semester, the Graduate Coordinator sends out a message announcing that a pre-registration period is about to begin, and students have a "window" within which they can sign up for courses.

- (a) The "bar" on registration. Students who have not yet advanced to candidacy have a bar on their registration prior to the beginning of each new term, for each of the long semesters and for the summer. To have the bar removed (by the Graduate Coordinator), students must have their courses approved by the GA; students cannot register until this has been done. The reason for the approval process is to ensure that students have a Program of Work (PoW) that will meet the requirements of both the Graduate School and the Department of Linguistics when the time comes to apply for an MA and/or apply for candidacy. As soon as students know who they will work with, they should work closely with their personal advisors in structuring their PoW and in selecting courses. The PoW consists of the proposed courses, both in the major area and in supporting work (the minor area), plus the thesis/report topic (MA students) or the dissertation topic (PhD students).
- (b) The procedure for obtaining the GA's approval in the Department of Linguistics. To create a record, students are required to send the GA a list of proposed courses in an email copied to the Graduate Coordinator, with a brief explanation of how the courses chosen contribute to the student's PoW. The courses already taken should

be listed as well. Typically, students are asked whether they have discussed their selections with their advisors, and courses are often not approved until it is known that the advisor has been consulted. Once an approved list is agreed on, the GA will ask the Graduate Coordinator to remove the registration bar. (A separate bar must be removed for summer registrations.)

- (c) Students who have advanced to candidacy and who are registering only for dissertation hours or dissertation hours and the research course do not need to obtain permission to register.
- (d) Pre-registration. Students will have an opportunity to register during a pre-registration period at the end of each long semester. Students who do not register during the pre-registration period will be able to register at a later time.
- (e) The continuous registration requirement. PhD candidates must be registered continuously for dissertation hours up to and including the semester in which they intend to graduate. They are not required to register for dissertation hours during the summer except for a summer term in which they intend to defend the dissertation, or graduate (but see (f) below). MA students must be registered for thesis/report hours during the semester in which they graduate.
- (f) In a summer semester in which a student is appointed to a student job title, that student must be registered.

**Full-time status.** Full-time enrollment is 9 credit hours. Students who have not entered doctoral candidacy are expected to be enrolled full time. International students who have not entered candidacy must be enrolled full-time in order to maintain their visa status. Students who are academically employed or on a fellowship must be enrolled full time to remain eligible for employment or the fellowship.

A student who has entered doctoral candidacy does not need to enroll full-time, only to maintain continuous registration in dissertation hours (a minimum of 3 hours). An international student who has entered doctoral candidacy does not need to enroll full-time, and can maintain visa status by enrolling in 3 hours of dissertation. However, to be academically employed or on a fellowship, a student in doctoral candidacy still needs to be enrolled full-time.

A student who is conducting research outside the US may substitute ISR (Independent Study and Research) status for full-time enrollment or continuous enrollment in dissertation hours. However, if the student is academically employed the student must enroll for nine hours; if on a fellowship, the student may use ISR if a petition to be away from UT is submitted and approved by the graduate school.

**Expectations regarding academic performance.** Students are routinely told in written offers of support that ongoing funding depends on satisfactory performance both academically and in their work as employees.

- (a) For the Graduate School, satisfactory academic performance means maintaining a B average (a GPA of 3.0). Here is the language used in the 2015-2017 graduate catalogue:

“To continue in the Graduate School beyond the first semester or summer session, the student must make satisfactory progress in fulfilling any admission conditions that were imposed, meet any requirements made in writing by the Graduate Studies Committee, maintain a graduate grade point average of at least 3.00, and receive the approval of the Graduate Studies Committee.”

“A graduate student whose cumulative graduate grade point average falls below 3.00 at the end of any semester or summer session will be warned by the Office of Graduate Studies that his or her continuance in the Graduate School is in jeopardy. The student must attain a cumulative graduate grade point average of at least 3.00 during the next semester or summer session he or she is enrolled or be subject to dismissal; during this period, the student may not drop a course or withdraw from the University without the approval of the graduate adviser and the graduate dean.”

(b) The expectation in the Department of Linguistics is that students will maintain an A/A- average. The evaluation of “satisfactory” is based on this expectation, although there is some flexibility in evaluation. An occasional course grade of B usually will not, by itself, result in an evaluation of “not satisfactory”.

(c) We have not adopted a standard rubric for evaluating satisfactory job performance; the definition depends on the job and supervisor. Student evaluations of teaching are considered when students who have taught for us apply for renewed funding.

**First year evaluations.** Students’ progress during the first year is discussed at the year-end GSC meeting in the spring. A student’s progress is evaluated as “satisfactory”, or as “not satisfactory”. In cases where a student’s performance is evaluated as “not satisfactory”, reasons are provided and additional requirements may be imposed. One requirement is that students who earn Cs in core courses are required to repeat that course, or take the undergraduate counterpart of the course.

**On-going evaluation.** All students are evaluated on an annual basis (at the end of the Spring semester) or as needed. Any problems with the student’s progress are noted and conveyed to the student.

**The Forum for Doctoral Candidates (LIN 397).** This is a 3 hour course that is taken on a credit/no credit basis in the 5<sup>th</sup> semester by PhD students who are writing their Qualifying Paper. Over the course of the semester, students present their work to the class, with updates as the semester progresses, and they receive feedback from other participants. In addition to this primary function, the course includes sessions on practical topics, such as how to prepare a CV, how to write a conference abstract, how to produce a polished handout or slides for a talk, and the publication process.

**Supervised Teaching (LIN 398T).** In order to be employed as an Assistant Instructor (which requires a student to have completed 30 hours in the program or have an MA degree), a student must first have taken LIN 398T, which is offered only in the Fall. This course counts toward the PoW.

**Qualifying paper.** The Qualifying Paper is intended to be a work demonstrating a student's potential for conducting original and creative research. The QP is due in draft form at the end of the 5<sup>th</sup> semester. The expectation is that students will have completed and passed their QPs by the end of the third year. Timely completion of the QP is required to maintain satisfactory progress toward the degree. The QP is evaluated by two members of the Linguistics GSC. (Note: this is not the same as the requirement for evaluating MA reports and theses, where the second reader can be external.) Students are asked at the beginning of the doctoral forum who their readers will be, but officially, the assignment of readers for QPs is at the GA's discretion.

- (a) Procedure: When a student has a final draft of the QP, s/he submits it to the Graduate Coordinator, who distributes the QP to the assigned readers along with an evaluation form.
- (b) Evaluation of the QP. Readers evaluate the QP according to the following categories: Pass, Pass contingent on oral defense, Revise (with date for submission of revisions), Fail.
- (c) The relation between the QP and the MA thesis or report. The informal standard is that the QP is expected to be at least as high in quality as an MA thesis. Therefore, once a student's QP has been accepted by the readers, s/he is encouraged to format the QP according to the Graduate School's requirements and submit it as an MA thesis or report. (This is only possible for students who do not already have an MA in linguistics.) This leads to the informal expectation that students in the PhD program usually write the QP before submitting it as an MA paper, which practically means the MA takes three years to obtain. For students who have a reason to finish the MA earlier, however, it can be done in two years, with an MA thesis or report that is completed before the QP is written.

**Applying for the MA.** To apply for the MA, students must, in the semester in which they apply, complete or have already completed the PoW requirements for the MA (36 hours); an MA thesis or report; and the 3 hour course LIN 398R (for students submitting the MA report), or the 6 hour sequence 698 (for the MA thesis).

- (a) Required courses (the required courses are the same for MA and PhD students):

LIN 381M – Phonetics	LIN 380L – Syntax I
LIN 380K – Phonology I	LIN 380M – Semantics I
LIN 385 – Field Methods	
- (b) 21 hours of coursework beyond the required courses, which includes:
  - 6 hours in a minor area.
  - Thesis/report hours (see below).
  - 6 hours of research equivalencies (381K, 381L, any 389, 395, any advanced course or non-core area course) in the primary area of interest.
  - 3-6 hours (depending on whether the thesis or report option is chosen) of research equivalencies, which are usually taken in the primary area but may include additional coursework in the minor area or other supporting work as recommended by the student's advisor and approved by the GA.

- (c) MA thesis and report credits. The MA thesis is officially considered to be a two-semester project. In conjunction with writing the thesis, MA students take the 6 credit sequence LIN 698 in consecutive semesters. If a student writing an MA thesis has not completed the thesis in two semesters, s/he registers for LIN 698B until s/he has completed it, and must be registered for this course during the semester (Fall, Spring, or Summer) in which s/he intends to graduate. Similarly, if a student writing an MA report has not completed the document in one semester, s/he registers for LIN 398R up until and including the semester in which s/he graduates.
- (d) Quality. The distinction between an MA report and thesis is difficult to define, beyond the official distinction between a one and two semester project. Many faculty members make no further distinction. It is clear that the MA thesis is expected to represent original, creative research. In the case of PhD students earning the MA *en passant* in the Department of Linguistics, we advise them to take the report option, because it allows room in the PoW for 3 extra credits that can be used to take an additional research equivalency towards the PhD requirements.

**Readers for MA theses and reports.** The MA thesis or report must have two readers. One is the student's primary advisor, who must be a member of the Linguistics Department's GSC. The other reader can be an external reader (and thus need not be a member of the department's GSC).

#### **Requirements for the PhD.**

- (a) The PoW requires 54 hours. These include the same required courses as those for the MA:
- |                         |                        |
|-------------------------|------------------------|
| LIN 381M – Phonetics    | LIN 380L – Syntax I    |
| LIN 380K – Phonology I  | LIN 380M – Semantics I |
| Lin 385 – Field Methods |                        |
- (b) In addition to the required courses, PhD students must complete 39 hours of approved coursework. These include:
- 6 hours in a minor area (must be a coherent set of courses approved by the student's advisor and the Graduate Advisor) within linguistics or a closely related field.
  - Doctoral Forum, LIN 397 (taken in the 5<sup>th</sup> semester).
  - 18 hours of research equivalencies, one each semester for the first three years (and optionally in following years).
  - Supervised Teaching, LIN 398T, is required in order to be an AI (Assistant Instructor) and can count in the PoW.
  - 9-12 additional hours (depending on whether the student takes Lin 398T) of research equivalencies in the primary or supporting areas, and which may include MA report or thesis hours.
- (c) A research paper in each of the first two years (see below).
- (d) The qualifying paper (see above).
- (e) A minimum of 6 dissertation hours (3 in each of two semesters).

- (f) A dissertation prospectus, which must be defended before the student's dissertation committee. The prospectus defense is not open to the public.
- (g) The dissertation.

**Major and minor areas.** Students declare a major area immediately upon arrival (usually they will have declared it on their applications). The minor area must be approved by the GA by the end of the first year.

**Advancing to candidacy.** To advance to candidacy, students must have (i) completed a PoW consisting of 54 approved credit hours (see above); (ii) completed a research paper in each of the first two years; (iii) completed the Qualifying Paper requirement; (iv) established a dissertation committee, and (v) completed the on-line application for candidacy. As part of this application, students write a brief (one or two page) description of the proposed dissertation research. A portfolio consisting of the research papers and the qualifying paper should be submitted to the GA by when each is due (first year, second year, third year), with a copy to the Graduate Coordinator.

**The research papers.** Students are expected to complete a research paper in each of their first two years. These may be papers written as part of the research equivalencies the student takes in each semester, or may be additional to any specific requirements of the research equivalencies. They are expected to be of good seminar paper quality (first year) or substantial seminar paper quality (second year) and to demonstrate that students are preparing themselves in their research area or in supporting areas. The research papers should be written under the supervision of a member of the GSC and must be approved as fulfilling the requirement by the Graduate Advisor.

**The dissertation proposal/prospectus.** The Department of Linguistics requires that PhD students produce and defend a detailed dissertation proposal by the end of the first year in candidacy, and preferably by the end of the first semester in candidacy. Not meeting this requirement is grounds for the GSC to consider whether the student should be allowed to continue registering for credits as a student in the doctoral program in linguistics. There is no firm standard as to the length of the proposal, and this is left to the discretion of the student's advisor. The purpose of the requirement is to ensure that students make timely progress in their dissertation research, to provide an opportunity for committee member to give feedback at an early stage, and to allow committee members to decide whether they agree both on the scope of the dissertation project and on the candidate's plan for completing that project. The dissertation prospectus should be detailed enough for the above to be possible. The student defends the proposal before the committee. Off-campus committee members are not expected to attend, but are given the prospectus for their comments. They may attend electronically if they wish to. The defense itself is a conversation between the student and the committee members with the purpose of providing the student with committee guidance near the beginning of the dissertation research.

**Extensions of candidacy.** The GA is sent notices requesting extensions of candidacy following the anniversary of a student's second year in the status of PhD candidate, and every year thereafter. All extension of candidacy requests will require a positive vote of the GSC. Both the College of Liberal Arts and the Graduate School are considering imposing limits on extensions of candidacy.

**Extensions beyond 7 years for international students.** Any request to extend an international student beyond 7 years total in the program requires a justification on the basis of illness or some other catastrophic delay in completing the graduate work. The justification is requested of the dissertation advisor by the International Office.

**Time expectations for the doctoral program.** Students are expected to finish their doctoral programs within five to seven years. Normal progress through the program proceeds according to the following timetable.

- First three years: coursework
- First and second year paper requirements approved in corresponding year
- Qualifying paper: approved by end of third year
- Admission to candidacy: by the beginning of the fourth year
- Prospectus submitted to department: during seventh semester and no later than end of fourth year
- Dissertation research and writing: there are two paths here, (1) for students who will be doing substantial fieldwork, experimental work, or any research which takes considerable time, especially off campus, and (2) for those whose research is done on campus and does not require substantial extra time. Group (1) is expected to use the fourth year for research and to defend in the sixth year, while Group (2) is expected to defend in the fifth year. Note that departmental funding offers are normally for five years, so any student who contemplates taking more time to finish will need to obtain outside funding.
- It is recognized that any number of factors may delay a student somewhat in keeping to this timetable, and an extension of one year in the completion of the doctoral degree would not be considered grounds for dismissal. Students should not count on receiving departmental funding for such extensions, however. The total time required for the PhD is therefore 5-7 years.

**Milestone Agreement.** As of Fall 2013, all students must sign a Milestone Agreement which indicates that they have been advised as to the requirements for obtaining the PhD and have been provided with the expected timelines for the attainment of their academic milestones and graduation. This will be done on-line. You must log on to the Program of Work display in the Graduate Degree Planner and certify that you have seen the milestones information. This must be done during the first semester. The agreement:

Milestones, Linguistics

UT Austin Milestones	Expected Time of Achievement
Review degree requirements and milestones agreement with adviser	First semester
Successful completion of all exams (oral and/or written) needed to advance to candidacy	n/a
Complete all required, formal coursework	End of 3 <sup>rd</sup> year
Advancement to candidacy	Beginning of first semester in 4th year
IRB (human testing) approvals, if needed	End of 2 <sup>nd</sup> year (for QP), end of 3 <sup>rd</sup> year (for dissertation)
IACUC (animal testing) approvals, if needed	n/a

Dissertation completed, successfully defended, and approved by committee	End of year 5, 6, or 7 (depending on type of research)
Student completes and files all paperwork required for graduation	End of year 5, 6, or 7 (depending on type of research)
Dissertation/treatise (or equivalent) accepted by Graduate School	End of year 5, 6, or 7 (depending on type of research)
Exit interview completed and submitted to Survey of Earned Doctorates	End of year 5, 6, or 7 (depending on type of research)
Other program specific requirements: First Year Evaluation	End of 1 <sup>st</sup> year
Other program specific requirements: First and Second Year papers	In 1 <sup>st</sup> and 2 <sup>nd</sup> years
Other program specific requirements: Qualifying paper	End of 3 <sup>rd</sup> year

### **The dissertation committee and oral defense.**

- (a) Who can chair a dissertation committee? The dissertation committee may be chaired by a single supervisor, or by two co-chairs. The primary chair must be on the GSC of the Department of Linguistics.
- (b) What are the requirements for constituting the committee? The standard number of committee members is 5. A minimum of 3 must be on the Linguistics GSC, and at least 1 must be external (not on the Linguistics GSC). If the external member is from another university, the student must obtain a signed no-expense form and current CV from the member. The department does not pay for external members to attend the defense; many external members participate electronically.
- (c) Getting approval for the oral defense: The student must get all committee members (including the supervisor) to agree to a date and time for the defense, but participation in the defense can be either in person or electronic. The student then works with the Graduate Coordinator to arrange a room for the defense. The student fills out a Request for Final Oral Exam form (found on the OGS website) and obtains dated signatures from all attending members (although the supervisor or GA may sign in place of unavailable members). An exception can be made for one committee member (not the supervisor) to be absent from the defense, but the GA or supervisor must sign for the member who will not attend, averring that the absent member has agreed to read and evaluate the dissertation.
- (d) Getting the dissertation to the committee. Dissertation candidates are required to provide the members of their committee with the defense draft of the dissertation one month before the scheduled date for the defense.
- (e) Deadline to submit the Request for Final Oral Exam: The Request for Final Oral Exam must be submitted to the Graduate School, on a pink paper form, at least two weeks in advance of the defense date.

- (f) Rules for the defense. **Traditional Option:** Four people must be physically present for the defense, and while others may participate electronically this does not count as physically present. In cases where it is impossible for four committee members to be physically present, but where three people from the committee are present, the GA or Department Chair can attend the defense and be the fourth body. In this case, a fourth member of the committee must attend and participate via phone or video conference. **Virtual Option:** The student and supervisor, minimally, participate physically in the defense. ALL members of the committee who are not physically present participate electronically. Students, in conjunction with their supervisors and committee members, must choose which option they will follow when they submit their request for the final oral examination.

### Transfers

- (a) Within-department transfers from the MA to the PhD programs. It is possible for an MA student in good standing to transfer to the PhD program in linguistics. The procedure is that a faculty member petitions the GSC on behalf of the student. Normally, this petition is made at the point at which it is clear that the student has produced an acceptable draft of the MA thesis/report. The GSC will vote for or against the transfer, based on the faculty member's support and the student's performance in the department so far. The timing of requests for transfer must be coordinated with admissions, which takes place in late January – very early February. If students apply for transfer after admissions decisions are made, there normally will be no funds left to be able to offer them support.
- (b) Transfers to Linguistics from other graduate programs at UT. Such students must apply as new students to the program in December and be considered along with other applicants to the program.

**Removing a student from the graduate program.** If a student is judged not to be in good academic standing in the program, the department may--after appropriate notification to the student--decide not to remove the bar on the student's registration in future semesters. The effect of this is that the student would no longer be able to register for courses as a graduate student in Linguistics. This action requires a vote of the department's GSC. The GSC also formally recommends to the Graduate School that the student's candidacy be terminated.

**Courses for transfer credit.** This has generally been at the discretion of the GA. Sometimes we allow students credit for Linguistics Summer Institute courses, or courses from other programs, but these are usually counted only as electives, not as substitutes for courses that meet critical requirements of the department and the graduate school. For a student seeking a Master's degree, no more than 6 hours of transfer courses may be counted.

**Credit/No Credit (CR/NC).** Students may use 6 hours of CR/NC for the MA and 9 hours for the PhD, which must be specified at the time of registration. Core courses may not be taken on a CR/NC basis, except LIN 397 (Doctoral Forum), which must be taken on a CR/NC basis and which is not counted against the 9 hours of CR/NC coursework allowed for PhD students.

**Conference Courses.** Conference courses may be taken with the Graduate Advisor's approval. They count as research equivalencies toward the 54 credits required for the

PoW and must be taken for a grade unless they are taken as one of the allowed CR/NC courses. It is expected that students will take seminar classes when offered and will take conference courses when no formal course is offered on the subject to be covered.

**Financial Aid.** Financial aid - TA, AI, University Fellowships. The department sometimes has aid beyond the five years that are awarded in the initial offers. Normally the Chair distributes such aid, often in consultation with the Graduate Advisor. Such continuing student aid is based on your work in the program and the availability and suitability of whatever aid the department might have. In addition continuation of aid that has been awarded is subject to satisfactory performance in the program. And finally, even if you have been awarded multiple years of aid, the Chair may urge you to seek outside funding so as to free up departmental aid for other students and to enable the department to admit or support more students. External aid may also give you valuable experience.

**Research and IRB approval.** All research (including—but not limited to—research for the QP, for a master's thesis, and for a doctoral dissertation) that involves working with human subjects **MUST** be approved by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) before it is carried out; see: <http://www.utexas.edu/research/rsc/humansubjects/about.html>

IRB approval must be obtained no matter whether the planned research is to be conducted within or outside the United States. Research at a foreign study site may require additional approvals from the local government or from local institutions.

Please be aware that prior IRB approval is **ALSO** needed for ANY human subjects research that is done as part of an in-class assignment if the data is to be used in a conference paper, publication, thesis, dissertation, report, or presentation outside of the class for which it is assigned.

Forms can be found at the following website:  
<http://www.utexas.edu/research/rsc/humansubjects/forms.html>.

Exempt and expedited review typically takes 4 weeks or longer; any other category takes even longer. Consult with the chair of the departmental IRB committee before filling out the forms and be sure to leave enough time. In particular, you must keep this timeframe for human subjects approval in mind when planning travel to a field site. Note that IRB approval forms must be submitted with your dissertation and you will not be able to graduate if you did not obtain prior approval.

**International Research.** Research in some countries or regions with safety concerns requires approval from the International Oversight Committee (IOC). See their website for a list of countries requiring approval and for the forms to request travel approval:  
<https://world.utexas.edu/risk/ioc>

If your research takes place in a restricted region, you must provide travel approval in order to graduate.

**Departmental Committees.** The following departmental committees have various roles with regard to student affairs or activities:

- (a) Colloquium: all the untenured faculty plus two student representatives.

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- (b) Cube commission: two student representatives.
- (c) Fellowship: 5-6 faculty members; makes aid recommendations, including professional development awards, continuing fellowships, nominations to special University or Graduate School fellowships.
- (d) Graduate Student Recruiting (Admissions): 6 faculty members; rank orders admissions applications. Chair uses these rankings to make initial financial aid offers.
- (e) Human Subjects: Faculty chair, faculty member, student member.
- (f) Graduate Studies Committee (GSC): All tenured or tenure track faculty in the department; see first page for responsibilities.