

Graduate handbook
for graduate studies in Linguistics
at the University at Buffalo
(Version 1.2)

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Chapter 1

Requirements

The department of Linguistics at the University at Buffalo offers both an M.A. and Ph.D. in Linguistics and, jointly with the Computer Sciences and Engineering department, an interdisciplinary M.S. in Computational Linguistics.

1.1 Terminal M.A. in Linguistics

1.1.1 Course requirements for the M.A.s in Linguistics

Students in the terminal M.A. in Linguistics must successfully complete 30 or 33 credit hours, depending on the particular M.A. specialization they choose.

M.A. specialization in General Linguistics (33 credit hours)

- *Core courses:* Syntax 1 (LIN515); Phonetics (LIN531); Phonology 1 (LIN532); Semantics 1 (LIN538);
- *Core Electives:* 5 out of the following courses (or any class substituted with approval of the Director of Graduate Studies): Discourse Pragmatics (LIN504); Morphology (LIN510); Psycholinguistics (LIN517); Language and Culture (LIN521); Typology and Universals (LIN525); Phonology 2 (LIN533); Role and Reference Grammar; Head-driven Phrase Structure Grammar; Historical Linguistics (LIN539); Semantics 2 (LIN543); Sociolinguistics (LIN595);
- *Electives:* 2 other 500 or 600-level courses.

M.A. specialization in Sociolinguistics and Contact Linguistics (30 credit hours)

- *Core courses:* The following 7 classes (or any class substituted with approval of the Director of Graduate Studies): Bilingualism (LIN505), Morphology (LIN510); Syntax I (LIN515); Phonetics (LIN531); Phonology I (LIN532); Semantics I (LIN538); Sociolinguistics (LIN595);
- *Electives:* 3 courses out of the following (or any class substituted with approval of the Director of Graduate Studies):

1. *Electives from Linguistics*: Discourse Pragmatics (LIN504), Psycholinguistics (LIN517); Language and Culture (LIN521); Typology and Universals (LIN525); Child Language Development (LIN533); Historical Linguistics (LIN539); Introduction to Dialectology (LIN561); Dialectology Practicum (LIN569); Language and Cognition (LIN582); Language policy and language planning (621); Sociolinguistic Methods (LIN647); Japanese Language and Culture; German Language Contact;
2. *Electives from other departments*:
 - (a) *From Romance Language and Literature*: Second Language Acquisition; History of the French/German/Spanish Language; Language and Gender; Spanish Dialectology; Spanish Sociolinguistics;
 - (b) *From Learning And Instruction*: Language Teaching Methods

M.A. Specialization in Germanic Linguistics (30 credit hours)

(Entering students with little or no background in linguistics may also be required to take Phonology I (LIN532).)

- *Core courses*: History of the German Language (GER515) or History of the English Language (GER558); Structure of Modern German (GER608) or one 3-credit independent study on a Germanic topic; Phonetics (LIN531); Syntax I (LIN515); Semantics I (LIN538); Historical Linguistics (LIN539);
- *Electives*: 4 courses from among the following (or any class substituted with approval of the Director of Graduate Studies): Discourse Pragmatics (LIN504); Morphology (LIN510); Typology and Universals (LIN525); Phonology II (LIN533); Role and Reference Grammar; Head-driven Phrase Structure Grammar Semantics II (LIN543); Psycholinguistics (LIN517); Sociolinguistics (LIN595); One 3-credit independent study on a Germanic topic.

1.1.2 MA Exam

Students who enter the Linguistics program as a Master's student additionally take the M.A. Exam (or, exceptionally, the faculty may ask a student to write an M.A. project). The exam will be given once each semester; the exact date will be fixed each year, but students can expect to take the exam during the last few weeks of the semester (November in the Fall, and April in the Spring).

The exam consists of questions in the areas of linguistics represented by our basic 500-level courses: Syntax, Semantics, Phonetics, Phonology, Historical Linguistics, Linguistic Anthropology, Morphology, Psycholinguistics, Typology, Discourse-Pragmatics, and Sociolinguistics. (If a student wishes to answer a question in Neurolinguistics, or in Language Acquisition, or in some other area, s/he should see the Director of Graduate Studies to see if it is possible to arrange for such a question.) Students must answer three questions. The exam takes 3-hours.

The questions will be drawn from material covered in the corresponding 500-level course for example, the Morphology question will be based on topics covered Lin 510). The faculty who teach these courses will make up the question, and the faculty who has made up the question will also grade it.

The student must receive a passing grade on two of the three questions. If a student receives a "pass" on only one of the three questions, s/he will be given the opportunity to choose a fourth area and answer the question in that area.

1.2 Ph.D. in Linguistics

1.2.1 Course requirements for the Ph.D. in Linguistics

Ph.D. students are required to successfully complete 72 credit hours, as indicated below:¹

- *Core courses*: Syntax 1 (LIN515); Phonology 1 (LIN532); Phonetics (LIN538); Semantics 1 (LIN538); an advanced Syntax course (currently, Typology and Universals, Role and Reference Grammar, or Head-driven Phrase Structure Grammar); Semantics 2 (LIN543);
- *Specialization courses*: 4 additional courses/seminars in the student's area of specialization (see below for details and guidelines);
- *M.A. supervision course*: Linguistics 600;
- *Breadth*: 4 other 500 level courses;
- *Method courses*: 2 Methods courses (2 semesters of Fields Methods; 2 semesters of Quantitative Methods; 2 semesters of Computational Methods). Students should consult the DGS to determine which Methods courses are more appropriate given their intended specializations.
- *Electives*: 5 other 500 or 600 level courses.

The remaining 6 credits are "free". Students may decide to do an Independent Study with a particular faculty member (so long as the faculty agrees to direct the Independent Study), or may wish to take courses in other departments. (Students in the Cognitive Science track will be able to take up to 5 courses in other departments.)

1.2.2 Research papers

Qualifying Paper

The qualifying paper is required of students who have been admitted to the Doctoral program in the Department of Linguistics, and it must be completed *before* the student can be passed onto Phase 2 of the program (i.e., the phase during which students conduct their Ph.D. thesis research).

The QP is intended to give the student experience in carrying out a research project that goes beyond what is normally required of a course paper; however the project certainly can evolve out of a course paper. The paper should have the format, basically, of a journal submission. The paper should be about 9,000-12,000 words in length.

¹A student who is admitted to the Ph.D. program may decide, some time during the first or second year, that they do not wish to get a Ph.D., in which case they can complete the course requirements of the M.A. specialization they choose and take the M.A. exam.

Early in their second year of graduate study, the student should choose a faculty member who will advise the student while he or she is working on the QP. (The faculty member may be, but does not have to be, the same faculty who will direct the student's dissertation.) The role of the advisor is to guide the student as he or she is carrying out the research and the writing. The student, together with the advisor, select a second committee member (or "reader"), who will read and comment on the QP. Once the QP has been approved by the advisor, the Director of Graduate Studies will assign a third committee member (or "reader"), and the other members of the QP committee will then read the QP and provide feedback or simply approve the paper if no additional revisions are necessary.

When the committee has approved the QP, the three faculty sign the approval form. Only after all three faculty have signed the form, return the form to the DGS, and (s)he will also sign it. Then the form goes to the graduate secretary, so that she can enter the information into our student database and file the form in the student's file.

Students are required to make an oral presentation of their QP research at the end of their fifth semester *at the latest* and to finish their QP by the end of the sixth semester *at the latest*. Upon completion of a student's QP, the faculty as a whole will determine whether (s)he should be passed onto Phase 2 of the Ph.D. program.

Second research paper

Students are required to write a research paper in another field than their QP (i.e. a truly original research paper in another area, typically for a seminar in that other area). Students who wish to have a particular term paper count as their second research paper are urged to consult with the faculty member before or when turning in the paper for the seminar (so that appropriate revisions can be incorporated right away). Retroactive approval of a seminar paper (which cannot occur more than one semester after the course was completed) may be more difficult. If the instructor says it can, (s)he will sign the approval form and the student will then return the form to the DGS who will also sign it. Then the form goes to the graduate secretary, so that (s)he can enter the information into our student database and file the form in the student's file.

1.2.3 Dissertation proposal and dissertation defense

The dissertation proposal is not intended to be a "paper" in the sense that the QP is. Rather, the dissertation proposal should be viewed as a very long abstract. It should include a statement of the topic (or hypothesis, or claim), the context for the research (why should other linguists be interested in the research; how does it fit into previous research), the methodology and nature of the data or evidence that the student hopes to collect or find, and, perhaps, a preview of the conclusions the student hopes to present or the contribution the dissertation will make. Generally, the proposal should not be any longer than 20 pages; however the dissertation advisor ultimately determines the form of the proposal.

The proposal defense is simply a meeting of the committee members and the student so that everyone is clear about the nature of the topic, the scope of the research, and the methodology. Typically, no one "fails" a proposal defense, since the primary goal is to clarify and comment on the research before the research is begun. The student should be aware, however, that the proposal defense *may* result in significant changes in the research plan.

Once the proposal defense has taken place, the committee members sign the form, the form is returned to the DGS so that he or she can sign it, and then, as usual, the form goes to the graduate secretary.

1.3 Transfer Credit and Course waivers

1.3.1 Transfer Credit

Students who come into our graduate program in Linguistics having taken graduate courses previously at another institution may ask to have certain credits TRANSFERRED to UB. The procedure for transferring credits involves submitting a letter specifying which courses they wish to receive credits for. Usually a syllabus and transcript is also required. The number of credits which can be transferred is determined by a departmental committee whose chair is currently Dr. Dryer and the DGS. Once each year, Dr. Dryer will circulate a memo asking students to submit materials for consideration as transfer credit. Students should observe this request at the first opportunity after entering our program, ideally in the first semester.

1.3.2 Course waivers

Students who come into our graduate program in Linguistics having taken graduate courses previously at another institution may ask to have some of the *Core Courses* WAIVED. Students should request to have core courses waived as soon as possible after entering our program, ideally in the first semester. In order to waive a core course, a student must consult the faculty member teaching the equivalent course at UB that semester, or if the course is not being offered that semester, the faculty who most recently taught the course. The instructor may ask the student for a syllabus of the previous course in order to determine what topics were covered, the textbooks and readings required, how the student was evaluated, and discuss some of the topics covered with the student. Once a student has consulted with the relevant faculty, the student should ask the faculty to sign the Course Waiver Form. Then the student should return the signed form to the Director of Graduate Studies, who will also sign it and place it in the student's file in the main office.

1.4 Areas of specialization

Ph.D. students are required to take 4 courses in their main specialty aside from the relevant core courses and are expected to choose their two methods courses in accordance with their specialization. Students *need not* choose their area of specialization early in their graduate career. The faculty only expects students to have taken these four additional courses by the time students finish their course work (i.e., complete their 72 credit hours). Below is a list of specializations and current courses that fall within each area. Note that this list of courses is intended only as *guidelines*, and additional classes may be added to these lists upon approval by the DGS. Note also that some courses are more frequently taught than others. Students should ask the DGS when courses can be expected to be taught next.

1.4.1 Phonetics and Phonology

LIN502 Phonology practicum
LIN531 Phonetics
LIN532 Phonology 1
LIN533 Phonology 2
LIN539 Historical Linguistics
LIN556 Acquisition of Phonology
LIN558 Prosodic analysis of natural discourse
LIN612 Advanced seminar in Phonology
LIN670 Advanced Phonetics

1.4.2 Morphosyntax

LIN510 Morphology
LIN515 Syntax 1
LIN525 Typology and Universals
LIN535 **Syntax 2**
LIN537 The Syntax of Romance
LIN604 Discourse and Syntax
LIN608 Approaches to the Lexicon
LIN614 Current syntactic theory
LIN616 Advanced Morphology
LIN625 Role and Reference grammar
LIN626 Functional morphosyntax
LIN630 Structure of a non-Indo-european language
LIN631-633 Linguistic description of an American language

1.4.3 Semantics and Pragmatics

LIN504 Discourse pragmatics
LIN506 Meaning and communicative behaviors
LIN507 Conversational analysis
LIN521 Linguistic Anthropology
LIN538 Semantics 1
LIN543 Semantics 2
LIN548 Formal semantics
LIN580 Introduction to cognitive linguistics
LIN581 Cognitive foundations of language
LIN582 Language and cognition
LIN606 Empirical semantics
LIN636 Semantics of space, time, and force
LIN637 Cognitive structure of language
LIN723 Advanced discourse analysis

The last two areas of specialization are interdisciplinary and may involve substantial work in other departments.

1.4.4 Psycho/Neurolinguistics

LIN514 Corpus linguistics

LIN517 Psycholinguistics

LIN555 Language acquisition

LIN592 Neurolinguistics

LIN603 Cross-linguistic study of language development

LIN641 Topics in psycholinguistics

1.4.5 Computational Linguistics

LIN514 Corpus linguistics

LIN567 Computational linguistics

LIN667 Advanced topics in computational linguistics

LIN624 Computational Psycholinguistics

Chapter 2

Graduate Policies

2.1 Grades for courses

- The passing grade for all strictly *required* classes (the *Core courses* for both MA and Ph.D. students and the *Methods courses* for Ph.D. students) is **B**. The overall GPA of *all* graduate students must be at least 3.0.
- All final papers for incomplete grades must be handed in before the first day of classes of the Fall semester. This applies regardless of whether the incomplete is for a Fall or Spring semester course.¹ **The student must turn in his/her paper to both the instructor *and* to the Graduate Secretary (Jodi Reiner).**

2.2 Deadlines

The target time for completing a Ph.D. is between 5 and 7 years. Our new requirements are designed to help students graduate within that time frame. Note that the UB-wide mandated maximum number of years to complete an MA/MS is 4 years and 7 years to complete a Ph.D. The Graduate School is willing to consider petitions for an extension of the time limit to complete an MA/MS or Ph.D., but there is no absolute guarantee they will grant what you ask for, although they have been quite reasonable in the past.

To help students along the way, we have set up additional deadlines. Failure to meet these deadlines will be a factor (although, not the sole factor) when deciding upon (continued) funding. The maximum

- Students will make a presentation of their Qualifying Paper research in a Linguistics Colloquium in their fifth semester of study *at the latest*;
- Students will finish their Qualifying Paper during their sixth semester of study *at the latest*;
- Students will defend their Thesis proposal by the end of the eighth semester of study;

In planning the completion of the Qualifying Paper and Thesis, it is also important for students to:

¹In certain cases, *the instructor* may additionally request the student to sit in the next time the course is offered and therefore waive the deadline for completion of the incomplete until the end of the semester in which the class is next taught.

1. let the committee members know by the beginning of the semester they intend to graduate the approximate date by which they will hand them the QP or Thesis, as they might have deadlines of their own and need to plan the time to read and comment on the QP or thesis;
2. keep in mind that it can take up to 4 weeks for faculty members to read a QP and 6 weeks to read a thesis.
3. when students's principal advisor say their thesis is ready to go other members of the student's committee, they must file a copy of their thesis with the Graduate Secretary.
 - (a) There must be *at least four weeks* between the time students file their thesis with the Graduate Secretary and the date of the thesis defense;
 - (b) It is typical for members of the committee to request significant changes at the defense before the thesis can be filed with the graduate school. There must be *at least two weeks* between the thesis defense and when the final version of the thesis is filed with the graduate school.

Chapter 3

Funding

The faculty is fully aware of how stressful the lack of long-term funding support is for many students and that we wish there were more Teaching Assistantships or Lectureships available. You can also be sure that we take pains to accommodate students' requests for particular classes or semesters and that our decisions are carefully thought through (despite occasional mistakes).

3.1 TA-ships

The department has at its disposal only a limited number of TA ships and lectureships. Normally, unless needs dictate otherwise, there are about 18 TA-ships across the linguistics and language programs (typically, 7 TA-ships in linguistics proper). The department also has a certain number of lectureships (4 per year in Linguistics, a few additional ones in the language programs). (Again, at times one or two lectureships can be added when several faculty members are on sabbatical, for example.)

TA-ships and lectureships differ in many ways. Basically, the former comes with tuition waiver, health insurance, and higher pay. TA-ships are only available for four years. Finally, many TA-ships are not available for two reasons: (1) the University requires us to use free lines for recruitment (this is why we cannot make decisions on TA-ships and Lectureships until we know how many Dean's or Presidential fellows will accept our offers (April 15)), (2) students already on presidentials or Dean's fellowships continue on these lines until their four-year commitments are up. As a consequence of the fact that TA-lines are used for recruitment by the University, we cannot guarantee TA-ships or lectureships in Linguistics to (non-Dean or presidential fellows) continuing students for more than one year at a time (something which we do realize is nerve racking, but we have no control over that).

Decisions regarding funding of *all* TA-ships and lectureships, be they in Linguistics or in the various language programs are done collectively by the faculty as a whole, after much agonizing. Because it is a collective decision, not a decision that rests with any particular faculty member, questions about TAships and lecturers should be addressed to the Chair. Two main considerations go into our funding choices: performance in the program and teaching abilities. Academic excellence, including timely progress through the program, is the most important criterion, but it must be tempered by our responsibility towards undergraduate education (the need for all non-native speakers to successfully pass the speak test is but one example of this responsibility).

Note that all non-US citizens who are not native speakers of English from countries that belong to the United Kingdom that are granted a TA-ship or RA-ship must pass the SPEAK test *prior* to the beginning of their teaching or research duties. To quote the Graduate School's *Policies and Procedures Manual*:

'all international students who have been awarded graduate, research, or teaching, assistantships (including Presidential Fellowships) must take the Speaking Proficiency English Assessment Kit (SPEAK) test upon arrival on campus. Registration for classes will only be possible after taking the SPEAK test.'

Tuition waiver forms are sent out during the late Spring semester before you are supported. At that time you are asked to provide the number of credit hours you will be taking during the next Fall and Spring semesters. It is *very* important that you contact the graduate secretary to correct the tuition waiver if you register for more than 9 credit hours. Otherwise, billing problems will ensue.

3.2 CAS dissertation fellowships

The Dean has in recent years offered dissertation fellowships in the amount of \$4,000. Every student who has defended his dissertation proposal and is writing his or her Ph.D. thesis is invited to apply. The Dean's office will favor students who are closer to finishing and are expected to graduate in the year the student would receive the fellowship (although, there is no penalty for failing to do so!) The applications must be handed to the Director of Graduate Studies, typically, at the end of March. The DGS, in consultation with the rest of the faculty ranks the applications and summarizes each student's dossier for the Dean. Decisions are made in mid-April or so. In recent years, two of our students have received the fellowship every year.

3.3 Occasional awards

The Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences also hands out occasional awards. Some are top-off awards, i.e. money that is added to the student's TA-ship stipend and that will be added any time the student receives a TA-ship. We have several students who have received the award in recent years. Sometimes, it is a one-time award that is not added to the TA-ship stipend and will not recur. This is the case with the so-called *Retention awards* that started in the academic year 2006-2007. For these awards, the Dean asks the Department to select the best students *who fit the criteria for the award*. The Chair and DGS consults with the rest of the faculty to decide on the awardees.

3.4 Summer research research funds

In the past few years, we have made available to students ad hoc funds for summer research projects that involve primary data collection (e.g., field research, psycholinguistics studies with subjects). A call for proposals is sent to students typically in the later part of the spring semester and awards (which, typically, range between \$50 and \$400) are made at the very end of the spring semester.