

SECOND LANGUAGE ACQUISITION, PHD

Second language acquisition (SLA) is the systematic study of learning, using, and sometimes losing any form of language beyond the mother tongue. SLA is a burgeoning research field because today there are more people on the planet who use at least two languages than there are monolinguals. For individual learners and for every community in diaspora, second language acquisition is an experience that challenges their knowledge of language, their understanding of different cultures, and their personal identities. The experiences and challenges surrounding SLA are studied by scholars whose training is in a variety of fields—linguistics, psychology, sociology, education, anthropology, and communication arts—a variety that makes the study of SLA richly interdisciplinary.

The PhD Program in Second Language Acquisition at the University of Wisconsin–Madison is a rigorous interdisciplinary academic program that embodies the university’s mission to foster the study of globally important issues. In their coursework, students in the program learn from and collaborate with experienced and distinguished faculty in many departments and, through their original dissertation research, students generate and contribute new knowledge to the field. Students develop a thorough understanding of the scope of SLA as a field of inquiry, and develop and refine research skills that will serve them as they define and pursue their own research agenda. A PhD in SLA opens the door to scholarly and professional careers as university faculty, directors of foreign language programs, educational policy makers, and multilingual specialists.

ADMISSIONS

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Please consult the table below for key information about this degree program’s admissions requirements. The program may have more detailed admissions requirements, which can be found below the table or on the program’s website.

Graduate admissions is a two-step process between academic programs and the Graduate School. **Applicants must meet the minimum requirements (<https://grad.wisc.edu/apply/requirements/>) of the Graduate School as well as the program(s).** Once you have researched the graduate program(s) you are interested in, apply online (<https://grad.wisc.edu/apply/>).

Requirements	Detail
Fall Deadline	December 15
Spring Deadline	The program does not admit in the spring.
Summer Deadline	The program does not admit in the summer.
GRE (Graduate Record Examinations)	Not required.
English Proficiency Test	Refer to the Graduate School: Minimum Requirements for Admission policy: https://policy.wisc.edu/library/UW-1241 (https://policy.wisc.edu/library/UW-1241/).
Other Test(s) (e.g., GMAT, MCAT)	n/a

Letters of Recommendation Required 3

The PhD Program in Second Language Acquisition requires a master's degree in English, TESOL, English as a Second Language, a language other than English (LOTE), applied linguistics, linguistics, or education – and in specific cases (such as with a relevant undergraduate degree or graduate minor), in psychology.

The master’s degree should prepare applicants for doctoral studies in a multidisciplinary field focused on how additional languages are acquired. Familiarity with the fundamentals of language study from a theoretical and empirical perspective is expected. Some knowledge of issues pertaining to language learning and teaching is preferred. Graduation requirements for our program require written and oral proficiency in English and another language.

In addition to the application, three letters of recommendation, and unofficial transcripts, applicants must submit the following:

- A Statement of Purpose for Doctoral Studies in Second Language Acquisition at UW-Madison
- Curriculum Vitae
- An academic writing sample
- Responses to the program’s supplemental questions

Please refer to the Second Language Acquisition website (<https://sla.wisc.edu/admissions/>) for details about required application materials (<https://sla.wisc.edu/how-to-apply/#application-materials-checklist>) and submission methods. Additionally, general admission requirements stipulated by the graduate school (e.g., evidence of English proficiency for international students from some countries) apply.

FUNDING

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GRADUATE SCHOOL RESOURCES

[The Bursar’s Office provides information about tuition and fees associated with being a graduate student.](#) [Resources to help you afford graduate study might include assistantships, fellowships, traineeships, and financial aid.](#) [Further funding information is available from the Graduate School.](#) Be sure to check with your program for individual policies and restrictions related to funding.

PROGRAM RESOURCES

Students in the SLA program, depending on their qualifications, may receive financial support through several departments, programs, and institutes. Students with a background in foreign language or English teaching may work as graduate teaching assistants (TAs) in departments in which those languages are taught. Other students work as graduate project assistants (PA) for the Language Institute or other units on campus. In addition to these TA and PA positions, select SLA students receive university fellowships (including the Advanced Opportunity Fellowships) upon entry into the program or when working on their dissertations. If they meet the specific eligibility criteria, students may also compete, with the program’s support, in other grant and fellowship competitions, such as Foreign Language and Area Studies (FLAS) Fellowships. Additional funding opportunities are included in the

information for current students on the SLA website (<https://sla.wisc.edu/content/funding-resources/>).

REQUIREMENTS

MINIMUM GRADUATE SCHOOL REQUIREMENTS

Review the Graduate School minimum degree requirements (<https://guide.wisc.edu/graduate/#requirementstext>) and policies (<https://guide.wisc.edu/graduate/#policiestext>), in addition to the program requirements listed below.

MAJOR REQUIREMENTS MODE OF INSTRUCTION

Face to Face	Evening/ Weekend	Online	Hybrid	Accelerated
Yes	No	No	No	No

Mode of Instruction Definitions

Accelerated: Accelerated programs are offered at a fast pace that condenses the time to completion. Students typically take enough credits aimed at completing the program in a year or two.

Evening/Weekend: Courses meet on the UW–Madison campus only in evenings and/or on weekends to accommodate typical business schedules. Students have the advantages of face-to-face courses with the flexibility to keep work and other life commitments.

Face-to-Face: Courses typically meet during weekdays on the UW–Madison Campus.

Hybrid: These programs combine face-to-face and online learning formats. Contact the program for more specific information.

Online: These programs are offered 100% online. Some programs may require an on-campus orientation or residency experience, but the courses will be facilitated in an online format.

CURRICULAR REQUIREMENTS

Requirement Detail	
Minimum Credit Requirement	51 credits
Minimum Residence Credit Requirement	45 credits
Minimum Graduate Coursework Requirement	26 credits must be graduate-level coursework. Refer to the Graduate School: Minimum Graduate Coursework (50%) Requirement policy: https://policy.wisc.edu/library/UW-1244 (https://policy.wisc.edu/library/UW-1244/).
Overall Graduate GPA Requirement	3.00 GPA required. Refer to the Graduate School: Grade Point Average (GPA) Requirement policy: https://policy.wisc.edu/library/UW-1203 (https://policy.wisc.edu/library/UW-1203/).
Other Grade Requirements	Incompletes must be resolved by the end of the next fall or spring term in which the student is enrolled. In addition, all incompletes must be resolved before students may take any portion of the preliminary examination.

Assessments and Examinations Students must take preliminary exams within one semester of completing coursework.

The dissertation proposal must be approved by the student’s dissertation proposal committee no later than one calendar year after the student becomes a dissertator.

The last step in completing the PhD in Second Language Acquisition is the successful defense of a doctoral thesis or dissertation, followed by its deposit with the Graduate School.

Language Requirements Typically, the student must demonstrate an advanced level of academic oral and reading proficiency in two languages prior to taking preliminary exams. A plan for meeting this requirement is developed by the student and advisor during the student’s first semester in the Program. The plan must be approved by the advisor and the Second Language Acquisition steering committee by the end of the first academic year.

Graduate School Breadth Requirement Because of the broad, interdisciplinary nature of the Second Language Acquisition program course requirements, a doctoral minor or graduate/professional certificate is not required. A minor or certificate is optional, and, in some cases, may be strongly suggested. Students must submit a short statement (2-3 pages) at the end of their third semester, discussing how the courses that they have taken so far, as well as those that they plan to take in the future semester(s), inform their dissertation research and their envisioned career path.

REQUIRED COURSES

Code	Title	Credits
Core		
ENGL 318	Second Language Acquisition	3
ENGL 711	Research Methods in Applied Linguistics	3
Quantitative Research Methods		
Students must complete one of the following pre-approved courses.		3
ENGL 420	Topics in English Language and Linguistics	
ENGL 713	Topics in Contemporary English Linguistics	
ED PSYCH 760	Statistical Methods Applied to Education I	
ED PSYCH 761	Statistical Methods Applied to Education II	
SOC/ C&E SOC 360	Statistics for Sociologists I	
Qualitative Research Methods		
Students must complete one of the following pre-approved courses.		3
AFRICAN 926	Seminar in Research Methods in African Cultural Studies	
CURRIC 714	Research and Evaluation Paradigms in Curriculum and Instruction	

CURRIC 715	Design of Research in Curriculum and Instruction	
CURRIC/ COUN PSY/ ED POL/ ED PSYCH/ELPA/ RP & SE 719	Introduction to Qualitative Research	
CURRIC 916	Smr: Special Topics in Research & Evaluation in Curriculum & Instruction	
ENGL 703	Research Methods in Composition Studies	
Electives		
Students choose courses in consultation with advisor.		30
Dissertation		
Students must complete at least 9 dissertation credits or three semesters. In most cases, students complete four or more semesters. Students enroll in credits in their advisor's department. Departmental authorization likely needed to register. With advisor approval, students may replace three dissertation credits with another three credits of a graduate course that directly support the dissertation.		9
Total Credits		51

POLICIES

GRADUATE SCHOOL POLICIES

The Graduate School's Academic Policies and Procedures (<https://grad.wisc.edu/acadpolicy/>) serve as the official document of record for Graduate School academic and administrative policies and procedures and are updated continuously. Note some policies redirect to entries in the official UW-Madison Policy Library (<https://policy.wisc.edu/>). Programs may set more stringent policies than the Graduate School. Policies set by the academic degree program can be found below.

MAJOR-SPECIFIC POLICIES

PRIOR COURSEWORK

Graduate Credits Earned at Other Institutions

With program approval, students are allowed to transfer up to 6 credits of graduate coursework from other institutions. Coursework earned ten years or more prior to admission to the Second Language Acquisition Program is not allowed to satisfy requirements.

In addition, typically, students with prior graduate coursework at UW-Madison may only transfer up to 6 credits toward the Second Language Acquisition Program.

Undergraduate Credits Earned at Other Institutions or UW-Madison

Prior coursework from the undergraduate career may not be transfer.

Credits Earned as a Professional Student at UW-Madison (Law, Medicine, Pharmacy, and Veterinary careers)

Refer to the Graduate School: Transfer Credits for Prior Coursework (<https://policy.wisc.edu/library/UW-1216/>) policy.

Credits Earned as a University Special Student at UW-Madison

Prior coursework from the UW-Madison University Special student career may not transfer.

PROBATION

Those students not meeting satisfactory progress requirements (found in the Graduate Program Handbook) may be put on probation for a semester.

ADVISOR / COMMITTEE

Students are required to meet with their advisor at least once each semester to review their progress, select courses, and to discuss any outstanding issues or questions.

CREDITS PER TERM ALLOWED

15 credit maximum. Refer to the Graduate School: Maximum Credit Loads and Overload Requests (<https://policy.wisc.edu/library/UW-1228/>) policy.

TIME LIMITS

Students must submit plans for completing the emphasis requirement and the language requirement for approval by the steering committee within their first year of the program.

Students typically complete all of the coursework requirements within two years of enrolling in the Program. Students are required to complete all coursework and fulfill the language requirement before taking the preliminary examinations.

Students must take the preliminary examination within one semester of completing coursework.

Graduate School regulations require PhD candidates to defend their dissertation five years from the date of passing their preliminary examinations.

GRIEVANCES AND APPEALS

These resources may be helpful in addressing your concerns:

- Bias or Hate Reporting (<https://doso.students.wisc.edu/bias-or-hate-reporting/>)
- Graduate Assistantship Policies and Procedures (<https://hr.wisc.edu/policies/gapp/#grievance-procedure>)
- Hostile and Intimidating Behavior Policies and Procedures (<https://hr.wisc.edu/hib/>)
 - Office of the Provost for Faculty and Staff Affairs (<https://facstaff.provost.wisc.edu/>)
- Employee Assistance (<http://www.eao.wisc.edu/>) (for personal counseling and workplace consultation around communication and conflict involving graduate assistants and other employees, post-doctoral students, faculty and staff)
- Employee Disability Resource Office (<https://employee disabilities.wisc.edu/>) (for qualified employees or applicants with disabilities to have equal employment opportunities)
- Graduate School (<https://grad.wisc.edu/>) (for informal advice at any level of review and for official appeals of program/departmental or school/college grievance decisions)
- Office of Compliance (<https://compliance.wisc.edu/>) (for class harassment and discrimination, including sexual harassment and sexual violence)

- Office Student Assistance and Support (OSAS) (<https://osas.wisc.edu/>) (for all students to seek grievance assistance and support)
- Office of Student Conduct and Community Standards (<https://conduct.students.wisc.edu/>) (for conflicts involving students)
- Ombuds Office for Faculty and Staff (<http://www.ombuds.wisc.edu/>) (for employed graduate students and post-docs, as well as faculty and staff)
- Title IX (<https://compliance.wisc.edu/titleix/>) (for concerns about discrimination)

L&S POLICY FOR GRADUATE STUDENT ACADEMIC APPEALS

Graduate students have the right to appeal an academic decision related to an L&S graduate program if the student believes that the decision is inconsistent with published policy.

Academic decisions that may be appealed include:

- Dismissal from the graduate program
- Failure to pass a qualifying or preliminary examination
- Failure to achieve satisfactory academic progress
- Academic disciplinary action related to failure to meet professional conduct standards

Issues such as the following cannot be appealed using this process:

- A faculty member declining to serve as a graduate student's advisor.
- Decisions regarding the student's disciplinary knowledge, evaluation of the quality of work, or similar judgements. These are the domain of the department faculty.
- Course grades. These can be appealed instead using the L&S Policy for Grade Appeal (<https://kb.wisc.edu/lis/22258/>).
- Incidents of bias or hate, hostile and intimidating behavior (<https://hr.wisc.edu/hib/>), or discrimination (Title IX (<https://compliance.wisc.edu/titleix/>), Office of Compliance (<https://compliance.wisc.edu/eo-complaint/formal-investigations/>)). Direct these to the linked campus offices appropriate for the incident(s).

Appeal Process for Graduate Students

A graduate student wishing to appeal an academic decision must follow the process in the order listed below. Note time limits within each step.

1. The student should first seek informal resolution, if possible, by discussing the concern with their academic advisor, the department's Director of Graduate Studies, and/or the department chair.
2. If the program has an appeal policy listed in their graduate program handbook, the student should follow the policy as written, including adhering to any indicated deadlines. In the absence of a specific departmental process, the chair or designee will be the reviewer and decision maker, and the student should submit a written appeal to the chair within 15 business days of the academic decision. The chair or designee will notify the student in writing of their decision.
3. If the departmental process upholds the original decision, the graduate student may next initiate an appeal to L&S. To do so, the student must submit a written appeal to the L&S Assistant Dean for Graduate Student Academic Affairs within 15 business days of notification of the department's decision.
 - a. To the fullest extent possible, the written appeal should include, in a single document: a clear and concise statement of the academic decision being appealed, any relevant background on what led to

the decision, the specific policies involved, the relief sought, any relevant documentation related to the departmental appeal, and the names and titles of any individuals contributing to or involved in the decision.

- b. The Assistant Dean will work with the Academic Associate Dean of the appropriate division to consider the appeal. They may seek additional information and/or meetings related to the case.
 - c. The Assistant Dean and Academic Associate Dean will provide a written decision within 20 business days.
4. If L&S upholds the original decision, the graduate student may appeal to the Graduate School. More information can be found on their website: Grievances and Appeals (<https://grad.wisc.edu/documents/grievances-and-appeals/>) (see: Graduate School Appeal Process).

OTHER

Students in the Second Language Acquisition program are typically funded through campus teaching assistantships, project assistantships or through fellowships. Contact the program for more details.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT GRADUATE SCHOOL RESOURCES

Take advantage of the Graduate School's professional development resources (<https://grad.wisc.edu/pd/>) to build skills, thrive academically, and launch your career.

PROGRAM RESOURCES

Students in the SLA program benefit from a variety of professional development opportunities organized by students, faculty, and staff. A speaker series offers students the chance to interact with top scholars in the field. In addition, the program organizes workshops in such topics as designing research, publishing, and preparing to go on the job market. An annual graduate student symposium, organized in partnership with students in related programs on campus and other institutions, allows students to gain professional experience organizing a conference and presenting their research before audiences of peers and faculty members from the three institutions and across the country. In addition, Summer Research Partnerships provide opportunities for core faculty and students to work collaboratively on research projects. These collaborations have led to conference presentations and/or co-authored journal publications.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

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1. Demonstrate a strong overall understanding of the scope of the discipline of SLA (e.g., the theories on which research in the field is based; the types of questions that researchers in SLA address; and the variety of techniques used to answer these questions). Demonstrate an in-depth understanding of theories and research findings related to their focal areas of interest.
2. Develop an original research plan that advances a specific area of SLA. Retrieve, evaluate, and interpret academic publications, and use this information to identify a gap in the extant research and to develop theoretical frameworks and research designs for their own research projects. Learn to design realistic and feasible research projects and to prepare necessary protocols.

3. Collect data following relevant protocols and analyze/interpret the resulting data. Reflect on the procedures and results of their own projects to identify strengths, limitations, and implications.
4. Develop skills for disseminating their research in a variety of professional venues and domains through both presentations and manuscript preparation.
5. Participate in and communicate effectively as members of a professional community. Seek opportunities to engage in service to the program, the university and/or the wider community.