Linguistics, Ph.D.

Language Sciences at UW–Madison is an interdisciplinary hub that houses the Ph.D. program in Linguistics. Students in this program earn a master of arts degree along the way to the Ph.D.—no stand-alone M.A. program is offered.

The Linguistics Ph.D. program focuses on research in formal theories of language (encompassing cross-linguistic studies in syntax, phonology, and morphology) and the documentation and revitalization of American Indian languages. Our program combines strong theoretical groundwork with opportunities in a diverse range of experimental and innovative research methodologies. Participating faculty come from Language Sciences itself as well as from related cognitive science and language departments across campus. In addition to core areas of linguistic theory, our faculty have expertise in first and second language acquisition, psycholinguistics, historical linguistics, dialect studies, and the linguistics of particular languages or cultural areas, such as Spanish and Latin American, East Asian, and Germanic. Students have access to courses, faculty advising, and research opportunities in all of these areas. Students work closely with their graduate advisors in establishing their own areas of specialization and in working out a coherent program within this larger framework.

The ideal candidate will have a Bachelor’s degree in Linguistics, a foreign language, or a related cognitive science, and a strong desire to use scientific methods of inquiry to push the boundaries of our understanding of how human language works.

Visit the Language Sciences Research page (https://langsci.wisc.edu/research/) for more information about the diverse linguistics research labs at UW–Madison. Language Sciences also maintains a phonetics laboratory for teaching and research in experimental and acoustic phonetics.

Admissions

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/).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Requirements</th>
<th>Detail</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fall Deadline</td>
<td>December 23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spring Deadline</td>
<td>The program does not admit in the spring.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summer Deadline</td>
<td>The program does not admit in the summer.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GRE (Graduate Record Examinations)</td>
<td>Required.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

English Proficiency Test

Every applicant whose native language is not English or whose undergraduate instruction was not in English must provide an English proficiency test score and meet the Graduate School minimum requirements (https://grad.wisc.edu/apply/requirements/#english-proficiency).

Other Test(s) (e.g., GMAT, MCAT)

n/a

Letters of Recommendation

Required

3

The department admits only students whose goal is the Ph.D. degree in linguistics. Admission to the Ph.D. program does not require an undergraduate degree in linguistics. Admission is based on the applicant’s personal statement, three letters of recommendation, Graduate Record Exam (GRE) scores, TOEFL scores if applicable, and transcripts of prior academic work. The personal statement is considered carefully to ensure that the applicant’s goals are compatible with the program offered by the department.

The department admits new Ph.D. students for fall term only. The deadline for receipt of all materials is December 23.

Funding

Graduate School Resources

Resources to help you afford graduate study might include assistantships, fellowships, traineeships, and financial aid. Further funding information (https://grad.wisc.edu/funding/) is available from the Graduate School. Be sure to check with your program for individual policies and restrictions related to funding.

Program Resources

All students admitted to the Linguistics Ph.D. program are offered a full funding package, which typically consists a fellowship for the first year, and some combination of teaching, project, or research assistantships in subsequent years. Students who enter the program with a Master’s degree and relevant teaching experience may be eligible for teaching assistantships in the first year of graduate study. Fellowships and assistantships include tuition remission as well as a stipend, and access to benefits including health insurance.

Fellowships: Fellowships are administered through the Graduate School, and all new applicants to the Linguistics Ph.D. program are automatically considered, including both domestic and international applicants. Advanced Opportunity Fellowships are also available for students from underrepresented populations who are U.S. citizens or permanent residents.

Teaching Assistantships: Language Sciences currently supports teaching assistantships for LINGUIS 101 Human Language, usually awarded to graduate students after their first year of study. Our students frequently serve as teaching assistants in other departments as well, such as English or foreign language departments, depending on the student’s academic experience and particular skill set.

Project and Research Assistantships: Students awarded a project or research assistantship work closely with a particular professor to aid in their research. The availability of these positions varies from year to
year, and will typically be most appropriate for students who are more advanced in the program.

**Outside Grants and Scholarships:** Graduate students may apply for their own funding directly as well, such as Foreign Languages & Areas Studies (FLAS) Fellowships ([https://flas.wisc.edu/Languages.html](https://flas.wisc.edu/Languages.html)) and National Science Foundation Grants ([https://www.nsf.gov/funding/pgm_summ.jsp?pims_id=5408&org=SBE&](https://www.nsf.gov/funding/pgm_summ.jsp?pims_id=5408&org=SBE&)). These programs are most appropriate for students who are advanced in the program. The student's faculty advisor will work with the student to determine whether an outside grant is available that matches the student's research program.

**REQUIREMENTS**

**MINIMUM GRADUATE SCHOOL REQUIREMENTS**

Review the Graduate School minimum academic progress and degree requirements ([http://guide.wisc.edu/graduate/#policiesandrequirementstext](http://guide.wisc.edu/graduate/#policiesandrequirementstext)), in addition to the program requirements listed below.

**MAJOR REQUIREMENTS**

**MODE OF INSTRUCTION**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Face to Face</th>
<th>Evening/Weekend</th>
<th>Online</th>
<th>Hybrid</th>
<th>Accelerated</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Mode of Instruction Definitions**

- **Evening/Weekend:** These programs are offered in an evening and/or weekend format to accommodate working schedules. Enjoy the advantages of on-campus courses and personal connections, while keeping your day job. For more information about the meeting schedule of a specific program, contact the program.
- **Online:** These programs are offered primarily online. Many available online programs can be completed almost entirely online with all online programs offering at least 50 percent or more of the program work online. Some online programs have an on-campus component that is often designed to accommodate working schedules. Take advantage of the convenience of online learning while participating in a rich, interactive learning environment. For more information about the online nature of a specific program, contact the program.
- **Hybrid:** These programs have innovative curricula that combine on-campus and online formats. Most hybrid programs are completed on-campus with a partial or completely online semester. For more information about the hybrid schedule of a specific program, contact the program.
- **Accelerated:** These on-campus programs are offered in an accelerated format that allows you to complete your program in a condensed time-frame. Enjoy the advantages of on-campus courses with minimal disruption to your career. For more information about the accelerated nature of a specific program, contact the program.

**CURRICULUM REQUIREMENTS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Requirements</th>
<th>Detail</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Minimum Credit Requirement</td>
<td>54 credits</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minimum Residence Credit Requirement</td>
<td>32 credits</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**REQUIRED COURSES**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Credits</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>LINGUIS 310</td>
<td>Phonology</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LINGUIS 322</td>
<td>Morphology</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LINGUIS 330</td>
<td>Syntax</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LINGUIS 340</td>
<td>Semantics</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LINGUIS 510</td>
<td>Phonological Theories</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LINGUIS 522</td>
<td>Advanced Morphology</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LINGUIS 530</td>
<td>Syntactic Theories</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LINGUIS 800</td>
<td>Research Methods and Materials</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Seminars**

Take 3 seminars (must be 3 credits each) from the following (may repeat the same course number for credit):

- LINGUIS 977 Seminar
- LINGUIS 978 Seminar
- LINGUIS 979 Seminar

Total Credits 33

**POLICIES**

**GRADUATE SCHOOL POLICIES**

The Graduate School's Academic Policies and Procedures ([https://grad.wisc.edu/acadpolicy/](https://grad.wisc.edu/acadpolicy/)) provide essential information regarding general university policies. Program authority to set degree policies beyond the minimum required by the Graduate School lies with the
degree program faculty. Policies set by the academic degree program can be found below.

**MAJOR-SPECIFIC POLICIES**

**PRIOR COURSEWORK**

**Graduate Work from Other Institutions**

With program approval, students are allowed to count no more than 9 credits of graduate coursework from other institutions. Coursework earned five or more years prior to admission to a master's degree or earned ten years or more prior to admission to a doctoral degree is not allowed to satisfy requirements.

**UW–Madison Undergraduate**

No credits from a UW–Madison undergraduate degree are allowed to count toward the degree.

**UW–Madison University Special**

With program approval, students are allowed to count no more than 9 credits of coursework numbered 300 or above taken as a UW–Madison Special student. Coursework earned ten years or more prior to the doctoral degree is not allowed to satisfy requirements.

**PROBATION**

Probation is a warning to a student who is not making satisfactory progress in the graduate program of the linguistics department. Departmental probation for grades or failure to make satisfactory progress lasts for one academic year (two consecutive semesters), while probation for an unsatisfactory prelim paper or unfinished Incompletes lasts for one semester.

If a student on probation clears up the problem that led to probation within the time period allotted, nothing else happens, and the student can continue with the program.

If the student does not resolve the problem (e.g., raise the GPA or successfully complete a prelim), the student is dropped from the program at the end of the probationary period.

**ADVISOR / COMMITTEE**

Every graduate student must have an official faculty advisor. New students are usually assigned to the chair by default, unless they come with the intention of working with a particular faculty member. By the end of the first year, students must decide whom they would like to work with, and must ask that person if they are willing to serve as advisor. If the faculty member agrees, the student is responsible for having the faculty member sign the blue advisor agreement form, and for making sure that it is placed in the student’s file. All permanent faculty members in the department (including affiliated faculty but excluding visiting faculty) may serve as advisors. Faculty from other departments may not serve as official advisors, even though they may co-chair committees.

Every faculty member has the right to refuse to become a student’s advisor. Every graduate student has the right to choose any faculty member as advisor, so long as the faculty member agrees. Students should also feel free to change advisors at any time, without fear of offending a faculty member. If a student changes advisors, a new advisor agreement form must be signed and filed, and the previous advisor must be notified by the student in writing.

The advisor guides the student in the choice of appropriate courses, in the planning of prelims and the dissertation, in choosing prelim committees and the dissertation committee, and in other professional matters. Students are reminded, however, that the fulfillment of departmental requirements is ultimately the student’s responsibility.

Each semester, the student must consult in person with the advisor about courses for the following semester. Registration is blocked until this is done, and is only unblocked when the student turns in the relevant form to the department, signed by the advisor.

**CREDITS PER TERM ALLOWED**

15 credits

**TIME CONSTRAINTS**

The first prelim paper must be completed by the fourth semester, the second prelim paper must be completed by the eighth semester, all language and course requirements must be completed by the end of the semester in which the second prelim paper is defended, and a dissertation proposal must be submitted and defended within two weeks of the defense of the second prelim paper.

**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://facstaffprovost.wisc.edu/)
- Dean of Students Office (https://dosso.students.wisc.edu/) (for all students to seek grievance assistance and support)
- 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://employedisabilities.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 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)

Students should contact the department chair or program director with questions about grievances.

**OTHER**

The department does not usually have guaranteed financial aid packages to offer prospective graduate students. Most students find support of some type, usually as a TA or PA in our department or some other
program. Full-time enrollment is assumed in order to satisfy requirements on satisfactory progress as defined in the graduate student handbook.

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.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

1. Articulates research problems, potentials, and limits with respect to theory, knowledge, or practice within the field of linguistics.
2. Formulates ideas, concepts, designs, and/or techniques beyond the current boundaries of knowledge within linguistics.
3. Creates research that makes a substantive contribution to the understanding of human language.
4. Demonstrates breadth within their learning experiences.
5. Advances contributions of the field of linguistics to society.
6. Communicates complex ideas in a clear and understandable manner.
7. Fosters ethical and professional conduct.

PEOPLE

Faculty: Professors Rainy (director), Ellis Weismer, Kaushanskaya, Li, Louden, Macaulay, Macdonald, Purnell, Saffron, Salmons, Seidenberg, Wanner; Associate Professors Armstrong, Lupyan, Rao, Tejedo-Herrero, Vieira; Assistant Professor Cho; Lecturer Shields.

For more information, see the People page (https://langsci.wisc.edu/people/) of our program website.