



# **Linguistics Graduate Program Handbook**

**Dept. of Linguistics and Germanic, Slavic,  
Asian, and African Languages**

**Michigan State University**

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## 2 About This Document

This is the handbook for the M.A./Ph.D. program in Linguistics at Michigan State University. It lays out its structure and the policies behind it, as well as providing more general information that might be useful to prospective and current students. If you have questions, please contact the Linguistics graduate secretary, Benjamin Lampe ([lampeben@msu.edu](mailto:lampeben@msu.edu)), or the graduate program director, Alan Munn ([amunn@msu.edu](mailto:amunn@msu.edu)). Of course, more information can also be found on the program's website (<http://linglang.msu.edu>).

### 3 Program Overview and Components

The linguistics section offers both an M.A. and a Ph.D. program. Applicants to the Ph.D. program need not already have completed an M.A. Students enrolled in the Ph.D. program do not routinely receive an M.A. along the way, but they may arrange to do so if they have fulfilled the requirements for the M.A. as well.

There are two tracks in the M.A. program:

- 'Plan A' involves writing a thesis.
- 'Plan B' involves taking an exam instead of a thesis.

The program offers extensive training in the core areas of theoretical linguistics—phonetics, phonology, morphology, syntax, semantics, and pragmatics—and in sociolinguistics, psycho- and neurolinguistics, and child language acquisition. Throughout our program, the focus is on the rigorous study of language as a science, and as one of the cognitive sciences in particular. We do not have programs that focus primarily on second language learning (there is an independent program at MSU in Second Language Studies); nor are we primarily focused on the question of how theoretical results can be applied in practice.

We have a longstanding lively culture of interaction in a robust intellectual community, including highly active research groups in most of the areas mentioned. We are also fortunate to have modern and well-equipped laboratories devoted to experimental and field research in language acquisition, sociolinguistics, and psycho- and neurolinguistics.

Many of our undergraduates and M.A. students go on to further study in Ph.D. programs, and have done so at the most prominent and selective programs in the world. Graduates of our Ph.D. program hold positions both in linguistics and in language-teaching departments across the globe and continue to do cutting-edge research in their fields. For more information on our graduates, consult the program's website (<http://linglang.msu.edu>), including that of our graduate student organization (<http://msulinguists.weebly.com/>).

### 4 Admission

#### 4.1 Requirements

*Admission to the M.A. program.* At universities in which grade-point averages are computed, applicants should have at least a 3.2 grade-point average in courses taken in the last two years of undergraduate study. Those whose average for these years is below 3.2 may be considered for provisional admission.

Applicants should have completed at least two years of foreign language study at the college level and an introductory course in linguistics. Students may be admitted without these requirements, but they must then enroll in LIN 401 in the first term in residence and, if feasible, in an appropriate language course. Language enrollment must continue until deficiencies are made up. Credits received in meeting the language requirement and for LIN 401 cannot count toward the M.A.

*Admission to the Ph.D. program.* Applicants must hold a bachelor's or master's degree (or a foreign equivalent) in linguistics or related field. Students coming from universities at which grade-point averages are computed should have a 3.5 grade-point average in all previous graduate work, but those whose average is below 3.5 may be considered for provisional admission. When students are accepted into the program, their previous work is reviewed and any necessary additional coursework is recommended.

*Admission to the dual B.A.-M.A. program.* If you are already a linguistics major at MSU, you may be eligible to enter an integrated, dual-enrollment B.A.-M.A. program in which some credits taken to fulfill your undergraduate requirements can be counted toward fulfilling the requirements for an M.A. as well. For more information, discuss this with the department's undergraduate advisor, the director of undergraduate studies, the director of graduate studies, or your senior thesis advisor.

## 4.2 Procedures

1. *Application form.* Complete the online application form (<http://grad.msu.edu/apply>). In the process, you will be asked to submit a 'personal statement' and a distinct 'academic statement'. You can fill these in on the form or submit them as a separate document. (If you do the latter, please indicate on the form that you will submit your statements separately.) These statements should reflect the following information:
  - *Personal statement.* This should include a summary of your academic and personal background, with a special emphasis on aspects of it that might be relevant to graduate work in linguistics. Of course, any previous study of the subject should be mentioned. You should indicate your reasons for wanting to pursue a graduate degree in linguistics.
  - *Academic statement.* This is a statement of purpose that characterizes your intellectual goals. It should indicate your specific area(s) of interest in linguistics and what you hope to focus on in the program. It's entirely appropriate to speculate

about potential topics of future research papers or even the topic of your thesis or dissertation. (If admitted, you will not be required to do precisely what you describe. Your plans may change.)

It is typically difficult to disentangle your background and personal intellectual history from your plans and goals, so the two statements may partly overlap. For applicants to the M.A. program, each of these statements should be 500–700 words; for applicants to the Ph.D. program, 700–1,000 words.

2. *Recommendation letters.* Ask three people who are well-acquainted with your qualifications for graduate study in linguistics to send letters of recommendation directly to the department. These may be submitted via the university's online recommendation-letter system or by post or email to the department.
3. *Transcripts.* Arrange for each college or university you have attended to send two official transcripts to the department. (If you have a degree from a Chinese university, arrange for a verification report of your academic records with the China Academic Degree and Graduate Education Development Center. The report must be mailed directly to the department by the CDGDC, rather than by you or any third party.)
4. *Graduate Record Exam.* Take the Graduate Record Examination (GRE) general test and have scores sent to the MSU Office of Admissions.<sup>1</sup>
5. *English-language test.* If you are an international student and not a native speaker of English, take the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) or the International English Language Testing System (IELTS) and have your score sent to the department.<sup>2</sup> The English-language testing requirement is waived if you have a bachelor's degree from a four-year US university or if you have a master's degree from one of the approximately 60 members of the Association of American Universities (<http://aau.edu>). It may be waived in certain other circumstances, including if you have received an M.A. from an English-speaking institution outside of the AAU. Nevertheless, even if you have previously done work in an

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<sup>1</sup> There is no fixed minimum score you must achieve, but scoring below the 50th percentile would significantly reduce the probability of your admission. All portions of the test—including the analytical and quantitative—are taken into account. It may help to know that MSU's 'institution code' is 1465, and our 'department code' is 2903.

<sup>2</sup> The minimum TOEFL score for regular admission to the program is 100. The minimum IELTS score its designers characterize as acceptable for 'linguistically demanding' programs is 7.5. Applicants with slightly lower scores may be granted provisional admission. Tests must be taken within two years of the date of application.

English-language environment, it may increase your probability of admission if you can clearly demonstrate your English skills with a good test score because it would put to rest any doubts the admissions committee might otherwise have about your English ability.

6. *Writing sample.* If you are applying to the Ph.D. program, submit a sample of written work such as an M.A. thesis or research paper. This must be written in English. You may provide more than one paper if you wish. (Applicants to the M.A. program may submit a writing sample as well, but are not required to do so.)

### 4.3 Deadlines

The official deadline for admission for fall semester is December 15. However, you will be eligible for additional funding opportunities if you submit your application before November 30.

Although students normally begin their course of study in the fall semester, it is technically possible to start in the spring semester as well. This is strongly discouraged except in truly exceptional circumstances. If you think you might need to pursue this possibility, email the graduate program director to discuss it. The deadline for spring admission is September 15.

### 4.4 Funding

A few fellowships, scholarships, and other funding opportunities are available for incoming students (including notably teaching assistantships in Asian languages). Applicants should indicate in their applications if they wish to be considered for such appointments. However, they are encouraged to seek outside funding for their graduate studies as well. Internal funding absolutely cannot be presupposed.

## 5 Degree Requirements for the M.A.

### 5.1 Overview

1. Fulfillment of all requirements of the university and College of Arts and Letters for the M.A. degree.
2. Completion of at least 30 credits in linguistics courses, including (each of the following is 3 credits):
  - LIN 424 Introduction to Phonetics and Phonology
  - LIN 434 Introduction to Syntax
  - LIN 437 Semantics and Pragmatics
  - LIN 824 Phonological Theory I

- LIN 834 Syntactic Theory I
3. At least sixteen of the credits earned for the M.A. degree must be in courses numbered 800; LIN 401 may not be taken for graduate credit.
  4. Thesis and oral examination (see below, Plan A) or a written examination in a chosen area of linguistics (see below, Plan B).

By the fifth week of the third semester of enrollment, the student should select a guidance committee with three faculty members, the majority of whom, including the chair, must be members of the core faculty of the linguistics program. For details, see the section on guidance committees below.

Those enrolled in the M.A. program must maintain a 3.2 grade-point average and not receive a grade below 3.0 in more than two courses. They must receive a minimum grade of 3.0 in the four courses listed in (2) above. Students whose grade and/or grade-point average falls below the standards at the end of a semester will be allowed to stay in the program for the next semester, excluding summer, to make up the deficiencies. Students will be dismissed from the program if their academic performance falls below the standards for two semesters.

## 5.2 Plan A: M.A. by Thesis

1. *Thesis proposal.* In consultation with the guidance committee the student prepares a thesis proposal. Normally the proposal should be submitted not later than the term in which the student is to complete course requirements. For guidelines and procedures associated with proposals, see the relevant section below.
2. *Thesis.* Upon approval of the proposal by the guidance committee, the student will prepare a thesis. The thesis is a formal research paper normally at least 50 pages in length. It may be an expansion of a research paper prepared by the student for a course. The thesis should not emphasize topics which only peripherally demonstrate the student's linguistic abilities, or topics that involve mechanical skills. The thesis should demonstrate the student's knowledge of linguistic theory and ability to deal with problems that arise in the application of linguistic theory.
3. *Thesis credits.* The student must enroll in a total of exactly 4 credits of LIN 899 (thesis research).
4. *Oral examination.* The student will defend the thesis in an oral examination of at most two hours. The examination may include topics



from the general area of linguistics of the thesis. The defense may be open to the public, upon agreement between the student and the guidance committee. Students must be enrolled for at least 1 credit during the semester the student is defending his/her thesis, including the summer semester.

### 5.3 Plan B: M.A. by Exam

Each Plan B student must pass a three-hour written examination in a particular area of linguistics. The student, in consultation with the guidance committee chair, selects an area for the examination and prepares a bibliography of works in that area. The guidance committee approves the student's selected area and bibliography and prepares the examination based on the bibliography. It evaluates the examination on the scale High Pass/Pass/Low Pass/Fail. A student preparing for an M.A. exam may enroll in LIN 898, but at most three credits of LIN 898 count toward fulfilling degree requirements. Normally, the examination is taken before the end of the term in which the student will complete course requirements. Students who fail the examination may retake it at most once within one additional semester.

## 6 Degree Requirements for the Ph.D.

Candidates must fulfill all requirements of the University and College of Arts and Letters for the Ph.D. degree. Candidates must create a GradPlan on [GradInfo](#) and enter all courses required to complete the PhD, (see below).

1. *Coursework.* In preparation for the comprehensive examination (that is, writing the two papers that constitute it), candidates typically will complete a minimum of three semesters of coursework in linguistics. The student's committee will assist in selecting coursework. Those students lacking equivalents in previous studies must complete the following courses (each of which is 3 credits):
  - LIN 431 Introduction to Morphology
  - LIN 437 Semantics and Pragmatics
  - LIN 824 Phonological Theory I
  - LIN 825 Phonological Theory II
  - LIN 834 Syntactic Theory I
  - LIN 835 Syntactic Theory II
2. *Additional courses.* Ph.D. courses shall include two additional 800-level courses exclusive of LIN 890, at least one of which is designated LIN. Additional courses may be required by the student's committee.

3. *Comprehensive examination papers* (henceforth 'comp papers'):

- Two research papers of publishable quality in two different areas of linguistics and, for each paper, an oral examination of up to two hours, which may include a brief summary presentation by the student.
- At least one of the papers must be in phonetics, phonology, morphology, syntax, semantics or pragmatics.
- Working with the committee chair, the candidate prepares a brief proposal for each research paper. See the proposal guidelines section below for details.
- The committee must meet with the candidate to discuss and approve each proposal.
- If either paper is found unsatisfactory by the committee (i.e. if either paper receives a Fail grade on the evaluation scale of High Pass, Pass, Low Pass, Fail), a new paper may be proposed, submitted and defended at most once. If the student would like to challenge the outcome of the evaluation, he/she should follow the procedures given below under 'Conflict Resolution'.
- Both of the comp papers must be completed before the submission of the dissertation proposal. It is a University regulation that all of the comprehensive examination (in our case, both papers) must be completed by the end of the fifth year of enrollment in the Ph.D. program. However, students are expected to have completed their first paper by the end of sixth semester (for full time students) and their second paper by the end of their eighth semester.

4. *Language requirement.* Candidates must:

- Satisfy the language requirement for admission to the M.A. degree (two years' college-level foreign language study) **and**
- Present evidence of structural knowledge of a language outside the Germanic, Romance, and Slavic families by:
  - i. completing at least the first semester of a first-year course in such a language (students may enroll in 2 credits of LIN 890 (Independent Study) for this purpose), **or**

- ii. completing LIN 881 (The Structure of a Non-European Language), **or**
- iii. presenting a record of study or evidence of knowledge of such a language at least equivalent to that specified in (i) or (ii).

The same language may be used to satisfy both requirements. Candidates shall fulfill this requirement before beginning the comp papers.

5. *Dissertation proposal.* A dissertation proposal is prepared following satisfactory completion of the comp papers. For guidelines and procedures associated with proposals, see the relevant section below.
6. *Dissertation.* Upon approval of the proposal by the guidance committee, the student will prepare a dissertation. The dissertation is a book-length scholarly work which is based on original research and which makes a significant contribution to knowledge in linguistics. Each student must register for a minimum of 24 credits of doctoral dissertation research (LIN 999), but no more than 36. Students must present a bound copy of the completed dissertation to the department. Students must be enrolled for at least 1 credit during the semester the student is defending his/her dissertation, including the summer semester.
7. *Ph.D. dissertation defense.* With the approval of the student's guidance committee, a dissertation defense of 3 hours will be scheduled, at which the student will respond to questions from the Committee. This defense will be open to the public.
8. *GradPlan.* GradPlan is the web-interactive system for Ph.D. students to create and store their Ph.D. Degree Plans and subsequent graduate program activities. To create your GradPlan or log-in to your GradPlan follow this link: <https://gradplan.msu.edu>. All PhD candidates are now required to create and manage their own GradPlan. GradPlan replaces the Report of the Guidance Committee, Record of Comprehensive Exam, and the Dissertation Final Defense form. PhD Candidates are required to enter all courses required to complete the PhD. Candidates are also required to enter their IRB number, their committee members and the title of their dissertation (this title should match the title given on ProQuest.) Final acceptance of the dissertation by the Graduate School and the final degree certification by the department, college and Office of the Registrar are all set up for final approval and stored electronically in GradPlan. We encourage you to make sure that your Grad Plan is as complete as possible when you submit your dissertation to ProQuest. The Graduate School sign off is done after your dissertation has been accepted and delivered for publication to ProQuest. The Department/College sign off is done after the Graduate School signs off. More information, samples of completed

GradPlan's and other helpful links can be found by visiting the following Graduate School links: <https://grad.msu.edu/etd/grad-plan>  
<https://grad.msu.edu/gradplan>

Those enrolled in the doctoral program must maintain a 3.5 grade-point average and must not receive a grade below 3.0 in more than two courses. They must receive a grade of 3.0 or higher in each of the courses listed in 3 above. Students whose grade and/or grade-point average falls below the standards at the end of a semester will be allowed to stay in the program for the next semester, excluding summer, to make up any deficiency. Students will be dismissed from the program if their academic performance falls below the standards for two semesters.

## **7 Advising and the Guidance Committee**

### **7.1 Before You Have Chosen an Advisor**

The director of graduate studies (DGS) serves as the academic advisor for all new students until they form their guidance committees. The DGS will normally schedule extra office hours before and during registration. When students meet with the DGS they will have the opportunity to ask questions about the requirements of the program. New students holding teaching assistantships who need to determine their academic schedules before registration may schedule an earlier appointment with the DGS. All students are encouraged to see the DGS during scheduled office hours or by appointment prior to early enrollment, early registration, or registration for each academic term until they have formed a guidance committee. Thereafter, the student and the guidance committee chair will agree upon the necessity of term-by-term advisement.

### **7.2 The Guidance Committee**

By the fifth week of the third semester of enrollment, the student should select a guidance committee. It is generally a good idea to begin by selecting a chair, and to discuss with your chair who the other members of the committee should be. The chair of the committee is the student's principal advisor and professional mentor. An M.A. committee has at least 3 members; a Ph.D. committee has at least 4. The majority of the members, including the chair, must be members of the core faculty of the linguistics program. After obtaining the agreement of the prospective committee members, the student submits their names to the graduate secretary for approval and appointment by the department chair.

For Ph.D. committees, when the committee is formed it will meet with the student and prepare a report stating:

- The areas of the comp papers.
- Coursework required to prepare for the comp papers.
- The tentative subject of the dissertation.

The responsibilities of the guidance committee are:

- To advise the student about general program requirements and to provide counsel and recommendations regarding coursework.
- To supervise and guide the preparation of proposals, comp papers, theses, and dissertations, and to evaluate the results.
- To conduct and evaluate oral defenses.

In most cases the student will work most directly with the chair of the committee. The amount of participation of other members depends upon the nature and content of the student's program. Students may seek advice on degree requirements from any member of the linguistics faculty.

Changes in the membership of the guidance committee are approved by the department chair upon consultation with faculty members involved and may be initiated by the student at any time.

### **7.3 Guidelines and Procedures for Proposals**

Before writing a comp paper, M.A. thesis, or dissertation, the student is expected to write and defend a proposal. Some guidelines:

- The proposal assures the student and the committee that the contemplated paper, thesis, or dissertation is a sound and feasible project. It should convince readers that the paper will be a worthwhile piece of research and that its goals are not too extensive or too vaguely defined to be accomplished in a reasonable amount of time.

- The proposal should include:
  - A statement of the topic or problem to be investigated.
  - A summary of relevant previous research and scholarship on the topic.
  - A presentation of the theoretical foundations, sources of data, and methods of analysis to be employed.
  - A statement of the nature of expected conclusions and their significance.
  - A proposed title and preliminary outline of the paper, thesis, or dissertation.
  - A list of references.
  
- The proposal should be typed according to accepted standards of form for work in linguistics (e.g. the Linguistic Society of America's style sheet).
  
- Excluding the references, the typical lengths of proposals are:
  - M.A. thesis proposal: 8–12 pages.
  - Comp paper proposal: 3–6 pages.
  - Dissertation proposal: 10–15 pages.

Procedures:

- When a draft has been approved by the committee chair, it will be submitted to the rest of the guidance committee members.
- After the guidance committee has had at least two weeks during the regular academic year to read the proposal, the committee chair will ascertain whether the committee finds the proposal sufficiently promising or rejects it.
- If the committee finds the proposal sufficiently promising, it will meet with the student to discuss the proposed research.
- If it does not, the student will have one opportunity to resubmit.

## 8 Academic Performance and Funding Eligibility

For the purposes of providing information to students on their academic progress and professional potential, and to the faculty for consideration in their decisions on awarding financial aid and in evaluating programs, the faculty review annually the progress of all graduate students in linguistics.

### 8.1 Procedures

1. The review takes place annually before March 1.
2. The review is based on factors and standards described below.
3. Departmental staff responsible for graduate student records prepare a report for all graduate students, reflecting performance on each of the factors listed below.
4. The DGS for linguistics examines the initial reports, consults with chairs of guidance committees paying particular attention to the unsatisfactory reviews, and meets with the entire faculty to complete the review.
5. For each student, a report of the annual review becomes part of the departmental records and a copy is provided to the student. Students may challenge the results of the annual review consistent with the procedure on conflict revision below.

### 8.2 Standards

Five factors of student progress are considered:

1. Grade-point average.
2. Number of deferred grades.
3. Rate of program completion.
4. Course-load.
5. Achievement in the field of linguistics.

These are described below. In their decisions, the faculty take into account special circumstances of individuals, such as illness or family responsibilities. Students should make sure their advisors know about any special circumstances and/or achievements in the field.

1. *Grade point average.* Courses counted for the GPA are those recognized by the department and the University as applicable to the graduate degree. A GPA of 3.5 is satisfactory and 3.8 highly satisfactory.
2. *Deferred grades.* Grades should not be deferred without the strong justification of factors such as extended illness of student or instructor. More than two deferred grades received in the previous 12 months will be

looked on unfavorably. The required work must be completed and a grade reported within 6 months with the option of a single six-month extension. If the required work is not completed within the time limit, the DF will become U-Unfinished and will be changed to DF/U under the numerical and Pass-No Grade (P-N) grading systems, and to DF/NC under the Credit-No Credit (CR-NC) system. This rule does not apply to graduate thesis or dissertation work.

3. *Rate of program completion.* The following schedule shows time limits for satisfactory progress, in number of semesters of enrollment in the program (excluding summers). Importantly, one must progress slightly faster than this to maintain funding eligibility (see below).
  - a. Forming a guidance committee: 3 semesters
  - b. For M.A. students:
    - i. Thesis proposal: 4 semesters
    - ii. Completing thesis or exam requirements: 6 semesters
  - c. For Ph.D. students:
    - i. Coursework and first comp paper: 6 semesters
    - ii. Second comp paper: 8 semesters
    - iii. Dissertation proposal: 9 semesters
    - iv. Dissertation defense: 12 semesters
4. *Course load.* Except during the first term of residence, students enrolled for only 400-level courses should enroll for more than the minimum satisfactory number of credits per term. Satisfactory course load is computed as follows:
  - a. Full-time M.A. student:
    - i. Without a graduate assistantship: 9 credits
    - ii. With a half- or quarter-time assistantship (i.e., a full or partial assistantship): 6 credits
    - iii. With a three quarter-time assistantship (i.e., more than a full assistantship): 3 credits
  - b. Full-time Ph.D. student:
    - i. Most students: 6 credits
    - ii. Students who have completed both comp papers or are doing department-approved off-campus dissertation fieldwork: 1 credit
    - iii. Students with a three quarter-time assistantship: 3 credits



5. *Achievement in the field.* These are professional accomplishments beyond course and program requirements, such as publications, presentations at linguistics conferences, grant submissions to national funding agencies, teaching awards, etc.

### 8.3 Funding Eligibility and Grounds for Funding Decisions

1. *Time limit.* Departmental assistantships are awarded for a maximum of five years, with a maximum of two years at the M.A. level. Assistantships offered by department faculty and other units of the University, and other financial support to the student's study and research, such as grants and fellowships, are counted toward the time limits.
2. *Rate of program completion.* As a general requirement, students must be making satisfactory progress in the program with respect to GPA, course load, and number of DF grades. Funding eligibility is also linked to the milestones in program completion above. Funding eligibility is determined for each year of enrolment in the program. Although the limits on total years of funding are fixed, students may be eligible for funding in their 3rd year (M.A. program) or 6th year (Ph.D. program).
  - b. M.A. students:
    - i. To be eligible for funding in their second year, an M.A. student must have formed a thesis committee.
    - ii. To be eligible for funding in the third year, an M.A. student must have an accepted M.A. Thesis proposal (Plan A) or an M.A. Exam reading list. (Plan B).
    - iii. M.A. students beyond the third year are ineligible for funding.
  - c. Ph.D. students:
    - i. To be eligible for funding in their third year, a Ph.D. student must have formed a committee and filed the report of the committee.
    - ii. To be eligible for funding in their fourth year, a Ph.D. student must have successfully completed at least one of the two comp papers.
    - iii. To be eligible for funding in their fifth year, a Ph.D. student must have completed both comp papers.
    - iv. To be eligible for funding in the sixth year, a Ph.D. student must be actively working on their dissertation, having completed both comp papers and their dissertation proposal.

v. Ph.D. students beyond the sixth year are not eligible for funding.

3. *Selection and standards.* In addition to the criteria described above, which determine basic eligibility for funding, students must have maintained a satisfactory course load; have a GPA of at least 3.5 in LIN courses, exclusive of LIN 490 and LIN 890; and have a grade of at least 3.0 in all required courses. If at the end of a semester a graduate assistant fails to meet these standards, the graduate assistant will receive a warning and be allowed to hold the graduate assistantship for one additional semester. If at the end of the additional semester the graduate assistant has failed to meet the standards, the graduate assistantship will be withdrawn. To be eligible for teaching assistantships for LIN and IAH courses, students must have completed appropriate coursework. Those who achieve the highest standards in the faculty's annual review of students are favored for departmental financial support (primarily through teaching assistantships). However, other factors are taken into consideration, such as teaching experience and other evidence of teaching effectiveness. A student's prior evaluation as a GA as reflected by the mid-semester and end of semester GA evaluation forms (and SIRS forms, in the case of TAs) will also be used to determine whether a student merits further funding. Students should not depend on departmental financial support. Changes in the department's budget and reductions in enrollments may result in discontinuation of teaching assistant positions from term to term. Students seeking continuing departmental support who have applied for other sources of funding will receive positive consideration for having done so.

#### **8.4 Dismissal From the Program**

There are four grounds for dismissal from the program. These are explained in more detail below.

1. Unsatisfactory GPA.
2. Unsatisfactory program completion.
3. Failure of comp papers or M.A. Plan B exam.
4. Non-acceptance of M.A. thesis/Ph.D. dissertation.

Violations of academic integrity may also result in dismissal. This is covered in a separate section of the handbook.

1. Unsatisfactory GPA.

*M.A. students.* Those enrolled in the Master's program must maintain a 3.2 grade-point average and not receive a grade below 3.0 in more than two courses. They must receive a minimum grade of 3.0 in the required courses. Students whose grade and/or grade-point average falls below the standards at the end of a semester will be allowed to stay in the program for the next semester, excluding summer, to make up the deficiencies. Students will be dismissed from the program if their academic performance falls below the standards for two semesters.

*Ph.D. students.* Those enrolled in the doctoral program must maintain a 3.5 grade-point average and must not receive a grade below 3.0 in more than two courses. They must receive a grade of 3.0 or higher in each of the required courses. Students whose grade and/or grade-point average falls below the standards at the end of a semester will be allowed to stay in the program for the next semester, excluding summer, to make up any deficiency. Students will be dismissed from the program if their academic performance falls below the standards for two semesters.

2. Unsatisfactory rate of program completion.

The milestones for satisfactory program completion are listed in 'Standards' above. Students who have not completed the relevant milestone will receive a warning in their annual review letter. For most milestones, if a student has not completed the milestone by the next annual review, he or she may be dismissed from the program at the discretion of the linguistics program core faculty. Thus, the following constitute *absolute deadlines* (excluding summers) at which point dismissal is possible:

- Forming a guidance committee: 4 semesters
- For M.A. students, completing thesis or exam requirements: 8 semesters
- For Ph.D. students:
  - a. Coursework and first comp paper: 8 semesters
  - b. Second comp paper and dissertation proposal completed: 10 semesters
  - c. Dissertation defense: 12 semesters

Dismissals due to program completion are not automatic, and are made at the discretion of the program core faculty at the Annual Review of Graduate Students. A student's overall progress in the program is considered in making a dismissal determination.

If a student is dismissed from the program due to program completion, they may request an extension to complete the relevant milestone. The request for an extension must be given to the DGS before the end of the semester in which the dismissal letter is sent. A request for an extension must include the following:

- A justification of why the extension is needed.
- A clear timeline for completion of the milestone.
- A letter from the committee chair supporting the extension.

3. Failure of exam or comp papers.

*M.A. Plan B exam.* A student who fails the M.A. exam may retake the exam at most once and within one additional semester. If the student fails again, he or she will be dismissed from the program.

*Ph.D. comp papers.* A student who is given a failing grade on a comp paper may propose a new paper which must be proposed, submitted and defended. This can only be done once for each comp paper. If a resubmitted paper also receives a failing grade, the student will be dismissed from the program.

4. Failure of M.A. thesis or Ph.D. dissertation.

If a thesis or dissertation is defended and failed, the student is dismissed from the program. If the examining committee requires revisions, they must state in writing a date by which the revisions must be satisfactorily completed, and whether the entire committee or just the committee chair needs to approve the revisions. If the revisions are not completed by the agreed-upon time, the student is dismissed from the program.

## 8.5 Summary of Requirements Concerning Rate of Program Completion

For M.A. students:

<b>Milestone</b>	<b>Funding eligible</b>	<b>Satisfactory</b>	<b>Risk of dismissal</b>
<i>Committee formed</i>	≤2 semesters	≤3 semesters	>4 semesters
<i>Thesis proposal or exam reading list</i>	≤4 semesters	≤4 semesters	
<i>Thesis or exam</i>		≤6 semesters	>8 semesters

For Ph.D. students:

<b>Milestone</b>	<b>Funding eligible</b>	<b>Satisfactory</b>	<b>Risk of dismissal</b>
<i>Committee formed</i>	≤4 semesters	≤3 semesters	>4 semesters
<i>Coursework and first comp paper</i>	≤6 semesters	≤6 semesters	>8 semesters
<i>Second comp paper</i>	≤8 semesters	≤8 semesters	
<i>Dissertation proposal</i>	≤10 semesters	≤9 semesters	>10 semesters
<i>Dissertation defense</i>			>12 semesters

## 9 Other Funding and Work-Related Policies

See above under ‘Funding Eligibility’ for discussion of that issue.

1. *TAs hip levels.* TAs are appointed at 3 levels of compensation:
  - Level I: TAs with less than one year of experience as a graduate assistant or full support fellow.
  - Level II: TAs with a Master’s degree or equivalent (30 graduate credits) and/or two semesters of experience as a graduate assistant or full support fellow.
  - Level III: TAs with at least 6 semesters of experience as a graduate assistant or full support fellow with a Master’s degree or equivalent. Any TA who meets this requirement will be appointed at Level III.
2. *Tuition waivers for GAs.* Tuition waivers for GAs are 9 credits for Fall and Spring semester appointments and 5 credits for Summer appointments.
3. *Contract.* Other policies and procedures may be found in the MSU/Graduate Employees Union (GEU) contract, which is publicly available online.
4. *Supervision.* Guidelines for supervision of graduate assistants:
  - Graduate assistants (both TAs and RAs) meet with their supervising faculty members before the beginning of the semester to assure that they fully understand and accept their responsibilities. For TAs, this includes adhering to the University’s Code of Teaching Responsibility. Responsibilities of half- time and quarter-time graduate assistants should require an average of 20 and 10 hours per week, respectively, for the 18 weeks of the appointment.

- Graduate assistants will be provided, by their supervising faculty, with the materials and information needed to perform their duties. For TAs, this will include textbooks; for all graduate assistants, this will include any needed technology access, or other project-related supplies.
  - Faculty supervisors of teaching assistants will provide explicit training for the course that TA will be teaching or assisting with. In the Fall and Summer semesters, this training will take place in the week immediately before the first week of classes. Training for the Spring semester will take place at the end of the Fall semester. Training may consist of one or more sessions over a period of 1 to 3 days. Unless the supervisor determines that a particular TA does not need to participate in the training, participation is mandatory.
  - At the midpoint and end of each semester, the graduate assistant will receive a written evaluation of the work performance to date. These reports will be copied to the DGS. Faculty supervisors and graduate assistants will discuss and attempt to correct problems that are reported in these evaluations.
5. *Other financial resources.* Teaching assistantships in other departments may be available to linguistics graduate students, although these appointments may require coursework which will not contribute to progress towards a linguistics degree. There are also a number of research awards (e.g., dissertation research or completion) available outside the department, some locally sponsored. It is each student's responsibility to investigate these opportunities thoroughly. Departmental staff in charge of graduate studies can direct students to sources of such funding. Chairs of guidance committees and other faculty should also be consulted about such opportunities.
6. *Travel support.* Students who present papers at academic conferences or who need to travel in connection with their research may apply for financial assistance. The department has a very limited amount of such funds available, often depleted early in the academic year. The department will, however, assist students in requesting such financial support from other offices of the university (e.g., the College and the Graduate School), although it will usually not be possible to finance numerous trips or even single trips completely. The recommendation of the chair of the student's guidance committee is usually the first step in such requests. The necessary paperwork is available from the graduate secretary.

## 10 Conflict Resolution

1. In case of a conflict with a faculty member including the DGS, a student should consult with the associate chair for graduate studies, who may meet with one or both of the individuals involved. Following that the department chair should be consulted if necessary. Conflicts which cannot be resolved at the department level should be reported to the associate dean for graduate studies. At the request of the student the case can go before the Department Grievance Board. Students may also file a formal grievance at the College level following the 'Arts and Letters Procedures for College Graduate Hearing Board'. Students may also contact the university ombudsman for help in resolving conflicts.
2. The Graduate School offers workshops and useful information on conflict resolution.
3. Changes in the membership of the guidance committee are approved by the department chair upon consultation with faculty members involved and may be initiated by the student at any time. (Such changes are not normally interpreted as an indication that a conflict with a faculty member has occurred.)

## 11 Academic Integrity

1. Students and faculty are expected to be familiar with and to abide by the MSU Graduate School's Guidelines for Integrity in Research and Creative Activities (<http://grad.msu.edu/researchintegrity>).
2. Generally, in linguistics the two most serious kinds of violations of academic integrity are falsification of data and plagiarism. Falsification of data is changing or making up data and presenting these data as though they were the result of an experiment, questionnaire, or fieldwork collection project. Plagiarism is the use of another's work, ideas, or writings (including things found on the internet) without proper attribution. If you are in doubt as to when you need to cite a source, and the form your citation should take, you can ask your advisor.
3. Program policies concerning academic integrity:
  - a. Any violation of academic integrity by a student will be handled according to University regulations and may be considered grounds for a penalty grade of failure for the course in which it occurred. Such a penalty grade will be accompanied by a report to

- the student's academic dean, in writing, of the relevant circumstances.
- b. Any suspected instance of a violation of academic integrity by a graduate student in linguistics will be reported to the DGS, before any other action is taken.
  - c. If it is established that a violation has in fact occurred, and if it is the first violation for that student, the student will be given a warning, in writing, that any subsequent occurrence may result in dismissal from the program.
  - d. The DGS will keep a permanent record of all occurrences of violations of academic integrity by graduate students in linguistics.
4. Graduate students who carry out research involving human subjects, and who might at any future time publish any part of the results of such research, must comply with the policies and procedures of the University Institutional Review Boards (IRBs). Prior approval of the relevant IRB is required for such research. The regulations may be found at the Human Research website (<http://humanresearch.msu.edu>). Note that M.A. theses and doctoral dissertations are considered publications.
  5. Students may be interested in using software available from the university to check manuscripts for unintentional plagiarism (accidentally reproducing passages of someone else's prose). This includes the 'Ithenticate' (<http://tech.msu.edu/ithenticate>) package.

## 12 University Resources

In addition to those mentioned elsewhere in the handbook, the university offers a number of resources that may prove useful. It is likely that some of the links provided below will not be up-to-date, but the information can usually be found with a simple Google search.

- GradInfo (<http://gradinfo.msu.edu>), a system that reflects information about the student's current academic status, including guidance committee membership.
- GradPlan (<http://gradplan.msu.edu>), a system that allows doctoral students to lay out their program of study and make notes of requirements as they are completed.
- The University Academic Programs (<http://www.reg.msu.edu/AcademicPrograms>) site, which contains official descriptions of courses and academic programs. In many cases, more complete and up-to-date information on a particular course may be gained by simply finding its syllabus online.



- The Graduate Employee Union contract is publicly available and best found by searching for it.
- The ProQuest (<http://proquest.com>) service is an organization independent of the university that indexes theses and dissertations and makes them available online. It has an 'open access' option in addition to the traditional one, but only the latter makes it possible to collect royalties. Students have the option to open the document to searches using Google, Google Scholar and Google Books.
- A guide to Graduate Student Rights and Responsibilities (<http://grad.msu.edu/gsrp>).
- If you will be traveling abroad for research:
  - Check with the MSU Travel Clinic (<http://travelclinic.msu.edu>). They will let you know of any health risks or immunizations.
  - If the Graduate School provides you with travel funding, they will also provide a MEDEX emergency card.

**Appendix A:  
Report of the Guidance Committee  
Form**

**Appendix B:  
Annual Progress Report for Plan A  
Master's Students**

**Appendix C:  
Annual Progress Report for Plan B  
Master's Students**

**Appendix D:  
Annual Progress Report for Ph.D.  
Students**

**Appendix E:  
Record of Comprehensive Exams  
Form for Ph.D. Students**

**Appendix F:  
Record of Dissertation Completion  
Form for Ph.D. Students**

# Appendix G: Travel Funding Request Forms



# Appendix H: Emergency Funding Request Form