



Department of Linguistics and Germanic,  
Slavic, Asian, and African Languages  
**MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY**

## **Linguistics Graduate Program Handbook**

Revised September 2021

## About This Document

This is the handbook for the B.A.-M.A., M.A. and Ph.D. programs 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 Academic Program Co-ordinator, Ben Lampe ([lampeben@msu.edu](mailto:lampeben@msu.edu)), or the Director of Graduate Studies for Linguistics (DGS), Suzanne Evans Wagner ([wagnersu@msu.edu](mailto:wagnersu@msu.edu)). More information can also be found on the Linguistics program website (<https://lilac.msu.edu/linguistics/>)<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> This document was compiled and updated with the welcome assistance of Josh Herrin of the handbook subcommittee; and members of the Linguistics faculty.

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# 1 Program Overview

The Linguistics graduate programs offer extensive training in theoretical linguistics— phonetics, phonology, morphology, syntax, semantics, and pragmatics—and in sociolinguistics, neurolinguistics, and child language acquisition. Throughout our program, the focus is on the rigorous study of language as a science, and particularly as one of the cognitive sciences. 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 phonology, language acquisition, sociolinguistics, semantics-pragmatics 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. Increasingly, our Ph.D. graduates have pursued careers in sectors beyond or adjacent to academia, including technology, educational administration, data science and more.

## 1.1 Terminology

In this document, it will be helpful to know these definitions of faculty roles:

- **core Linguistics faculty** A professor who is fully or jointly appointed in Linguistics. In the case of joint appointments, the faculty member's Linguistics appointment is 51% or greater.
- **main advisor** A Linguistics professor who chairs your MA or PhD guidance committee. Must be a core faculty member.
- **Comp Advisor** A professor who leads the supervision of a PhD qualifying paper ('comp' paper). They must be an internal member of your committee, but they need not be a core faculty member.
- **Academic Co-ordinator and graduate secretary.** Traditionally the Linguistics program has had its own graduate secretary: A member of the department's office staff whose responsibilities include administrative handling of MA and PhD Linguistics student affairs. From 2020-21, these duties have been transferred to an Academic Co-ordinator, who oversees administrative tasks for all of the graduate programs in the department. Throughout this handbook, 'graduate secretary' should be understood loosely to mean 'Academic Co-ordinator, graduate secretary, or whichever department staff member currently has responsibility for the Linguistics graduate programs'.

## 2 Program 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. We also offer a dual-degree BA-MA degree for Michigan State undergraduate students.

## 2.1 The MA program

Applicants to the MA need not have majored in Linguistics at the bachelors degree level. Students may achieve an MA in Linguistics through the following routes:

- Dual degree BA-MA (sections 3.1.4 and 4.4 )
- MA Plan A by thesis (section 4.2)
- MA Plan B by exam (section 4.3)

The student's program of study must be approved by the student's main academic advisor. The Director of Graduate Studies serves as the student's main advisor upon entry to the program and helps the student to select an MA advisor.

Achievement of an MA in Linguistics involves the following components:

- Identification of an MA advisor and guidance committee (section 6.1.4)
- Completion of required coursework (section 4.1.5)
- Completion of 30 credits (see section 4.1.4 for more details)
- Successful defense of an MA thesis (Plan A) *or* Passing an MA exam (Plan B) (sections 9.1 and 8 respectively)

## 2.2 The PhD program

Applicants to the Ph.D. program need not already have completed an M.A. in Linguistics or any other field. 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 (see section 4).

The student's program of study (e.g. course selection and schedule, comprehensive exam plans) must be approved by the student's main advisor. The Director of Graduate Studies serves as the student's main advisor upon entry to the program and helps the student to select a PhD main advisor.

Achievement of a PhD in Linguistics includes the following components:

- Identification of a doctoral main advisor and guidance committee (section 5.1.1)
- Establishment and maintenance of a GradPlan (section 5.1.2)
- Completion of required coursework (section 5.1.5)
- Completion of required Doctoral Research credits, LIN 999 (section 5.1.4)
- Completion of two comprehensive exams (section 5.1.6)
- Completion of required Responsible Conduct of Research & Scholarship (RCR) training (section 5.1.7)
- Successful defense of a dissertation proposal (section 5.1.8)
- Successful defense of a dissertation (section 5.1.9)

# 3 Admission

Applying for graduate admissions at Michigan State is fairly de-centralized. You are required to apply for admission through an online application process, available at <https://grad.msu.edu/apply>; however, most

of the requirements for admission are set by the graduate program itself. University requirements and procedures are laid out in the MSU Academic Programs website, under “[Graduate Education: Admissions](#)”, and they are explained where relevant in this handbook.

Before you begin an application for admission into a graduate program in Linguistics, you should check that you meet the eligibility requirements for admission, detailed in section 3.1 below. If you are unsure about whether you meet a requirement, or have other questions about eligibility, please contact the Academic Co-ordinator, Ben Lampe, [lampeben@msu.edu](mailto:lampeben@msu.edu).

Applications are initially reviewed by a Linguistics admissions committee, comprising the Director of Graduate Studies and two other Linguistics faculty members. The committee brings its recommendations for admission to the entire Linguistics faculty for discussion.

PhD applicants in particular should consider contacting specific faculty members in their research areas of interest, ideally before they submit their applications. Informal contact with faculty, via e-mail or other communication methods, can be an especially good way of gauging whether you will be able to pursue your research interests at MSU. Take time to review [the Linguistics faculty members’ websites](#) to find out more about the work they do.

## 3.1 Requirements

### 3.1.1 General requirements for admission to the University

For general requirements, please see the section “[Admission](#)” in the [University’s Academic Programs Catalog on Graduate Education](#). To be admitted for a graduate degree, you must hold a bachelor's degree or its international equivalent and provide an accurate application dossier.

### 3.1.2 General requirements for international students

The MSU Linguistics graduate programs regularly admit international students from a wide variety of national and language backgrounds. Please review the section “[International Student Admission](#)” in the [University’s Academic Programs Catalog on Graduate Education](#) for more information on e.g. English proficiency standards, immigration procedures. We also recommend that you contact the Academic Co-ordinator, Ben Lampe ([lampeben@msu.edu](mailto:lampeben@msu.edu)), early in your application process, with any questions you might have about procedure.

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



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.

### **3.1.3 General requirements for admission to the MA and PhD in Linguistics**

**Graduate Record Exam (GRE).** Applicants must take this standardized test (although see section 3.1.4 on the BA-MA degree for exceptions). There is no fixed minimum score you must achieve on the GRE, 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.

### **3.1.4 Admission to the dual enrollment BA-MA program**

The dual-enrollment BA-MA is an integrated program in which some credits taken to fulfill your undergraduate requirements can be counted toward fulfilling the requirements for an M.A. as well.

#### **3.1.4.1 Benefits**

There are many benefits for academically advanced undergraduates who are enrolled in the dual program. You will be encouraged to take graduate-level courses when you are an upperclassman, exposing you to an exciting and intellectually accelerated environment. You’ll be included in the Linguistics graduate program’s events, including social events and professional development, where you can get to know other dual-degree students as well as the program’s MA and PhD students.

With respect to time, for many students the dual enrollment program can allow you to complete the MA degree in less than the usual two years. Economically, the BA-MA program allows you to count up to 9 credits of your Linguistics courses toward the the M.A. These credits will be assessed at the undergraduate tuition rate, even if they are 800-level graduate courses. They will count toward your BA degree *and* toward your MA degree.

Therefore, the dual degree may result in significant cost savings in both direct (e.g. tuition fees) and indirect (e.g. housing) expenses during your studies. In addition, the GRE test requirement is waived, saving you both time and a fee.

#### **3.1.4.2 Eligibility**

To be eligible to apply, you must be an undergraduate Linguistics major at MSU, with a GPA in courses labeled LIN of 3.5 or above. Applications cannot be submitted until at least the fall semester of your sophomore year. See 3.1.4.4 for more on applications.

#### **3.1.4.3 Deciding whether and when to apply**

*It is important that you talk to the Director of Graduate Studies (DGS) in Linguistics as early as possible, to see if this is an appropriate program for you.* Check the Linguistics program website or talk to your academic advisor if you’re not sure how to contact the DGS. The sooner you begin the conversation, the sooner the DGS can work with your undergraduate academic advisor on a co-ordinated plan. The dialog can begin as early as freshman year. If you’d like to get the maximum financial benefit of the BA-MA,

you will want to dual-count 800-level courses, i.e. take graduate courses at the undergraduate tuition rate. Since some of these courses have 400-level prerequisites or must be taken in a prescribed sequence, you'll need to discuss your course plan with the DGS.

Your courses can start to dual-count no earlier than the start of your junior year. Thus, if you want to dual-count courses in your junior year, you should ideally apply to the BA-MA program in your sophomore year, or in the fall of junior year. We strongly recommend that you apply to the program no later than the end of junior year, so that you can dual-count courses in your senior year.

#### **3.1.4.4 Application procedure**

To apply to the dual enrollment B.A.-M.A. degree program, please follow the information below:

- Submit a graduate school application.
- Submit a request for dual enrollment.
- Personal Statement: Please indicate that you are applying for the B.A.-M.A. dual enrollment program.
- Letters of Recommendation: At least 2 of the 3 must be submitted by core Linguistics faculty.
- GPA: A minimum 3.5 in LIN courses is required.
- Transcripts: You do not need to submit your university transcripts, as the department will request them from MSU's Office of the Registrar directly on your behalf.
- Application Deadline: No later than the end of your junior year.

NOTE: Applications are accepted on a rolling basis. Please ensure that the DGS knows that you've submitted your application, since the DGS will not receive an automatic notification from the admissions system.

See also the sections "Dual Enrollment by Undergraduates" and "Requirements for a Linked Bachelor's-Master's Degree" in the University's Academic Programs Catalog on Graduate Education.

#### **3.1.5 Requirements for admission to the MA program**

**Basic familiarity with linguistics.** Applicants should have completed an introductory course in linguistics. Students may be admitted without this requirement, but they must then enroll in LIN 401 Introduction to Linguistics in the first term in residence. Credits received for LIN 401 cannot count toward the M.A.

**Grade point average.** 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.

#### **3.1.6 Requirements for admission to the PhD program**

**Academic readiness for engagement with linguistics.** Applicants must hold a bachelor's or master's degree (or a foreign equivalent) in linguistics or a related field.

**Grade point average.** 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.

## 3.2 Procedures

### 3.2.1 General information

Application to the MSU Linguistics program is via an online application form (<https://grad.msu.edu/apply>). The four-digit admissions code for the M.A. in Linguistics is 0713, and the Ph.D. code is 0714.

Once you submit an application through the system (including the application fee), you will be assigned a student identification number, known at MSU as an “APID”. This is a valuable number to keep track of, should you eventually be admitted. You will also need your APID for reference if you need to contact the Office of Admissions or the Graduate Secretary.

Your application will be composed of multiple parts, listed in sections 3.2.2 – 3.2.7 below. Your application must be complete in order for you to be considered for admission into the program. We recommend that you regularly check the online portal to see how your application is coming together. This is especially important for letters of recommendation (section 3.2.3).

### 3.2.2 Application form and statements

**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.

### 3.2.3 Letters of recommendation

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.

It is a good idea to give your recommenders a clear idea of the application deadline (section 3.3) and to follow up with them to ensure that they will send the letter before that date. If you are concerned that a recommender will not be able to send in their letter on time, consider asking a fourth person to write a letter for you. You need a *minimum* of three letters; there is no maximum. Your application will not be penalized if you end up with more than three letters. (Note, however, having more than three letters does not increase your likelihood of admission).

**Note** that the MSU admissions system does not currently send you a notification when a recommender submits their letter. Please make sure that you check the admissions portal periodically to see whether your letters (and other application components) have been submitted.

### **3.2.4 Transcripts**

Arrange for each college or university you have attended to send an official transcript to the department and an unofficial copy. If your previous institution(s) will only send a transcript to the MSU Admissions Office, this is also acceptable. A transcript is a record of all the courses you have taken at that institution, including the grade you obtained for each course.

Please note that "official transcript" means that the institution has sealed the transcript in a physical envelope and directly mailed it to the department and/or the institution has directly emailed the transcript to Michigan State University. An unsealed transcript submitted or uploaded by the student directly invalidates the "official" status of that transcript.

### **3.2.5 Graduate Record Exam (GRE).**

Ensure that your test scores are sent to the MSU Office of Admissions. MSU's "institution code" is 1465 and our "department code" is 2903.

### **3.2.6 English language proficiency**

Your TOEFL or IETLS score report must be sent from the testing agency directly to the Office of Admissions at Michigan State University: Hannah Administration Building, 426 Auditorium Road, Room 250, East Lansing, MI, 48824-2604.

### **3.2.7 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.)

## **3.3 Deadlines**

**Fall semester admission.** The Linguistics program's deadline for admission for fall semester is December 15. However, domestic students will be eligible for additional funding opportunities if you submit your application before November 30.

**Spring semester admission.** 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. Starting in spring may make it difficult for you take required courses at the appropriate times, delaying your progress in the program. The program's funding for PhD students (and, rarely, for MA students) is allocated – on merit – in the early spring for the following academic year (see section 3.4). Spring admission would mean that you could not be considered for funding in your first semester, nor for the following academic year. If you think you might nonetheless need to pursue this possibility, email the Director of Graduate Studies to discuss it. The deadline for spring admission is September 15.

### **3.4 Financial support**

The Linguistics program has access to a limited number of competitive teaching, research and administrative assistantships. All applicants are automatically considered for these fellowships and assistantships. Because support is limited, all applicants are encouraged to seek outside funding for their graduate studies.

## **4 Degree Requirements for the M.A.**

### **4.1.1 Overview of requirements**

All requirements of the University and of the College of Arts & Letters must be met. (See Graduate Student Rights and Responsibilities (<https://grad.msu.edu/gsrr>) for residency requirements and residency fees). Current program requirements for the MA (<https://reg.msu.edu/academicprograms/ProgramDetail.aspx?Program=0713>) may change. Those outlined in the handbook for your entering academic year are the requirements that you will follow.

### **4.1.2 Selection of an advisor and guidance committee**

All MA students must have an advisor. Initially the Director of Graduate Studies serves as the student's advisor. It is strongly recommended that by the fifth week of the third semester of enrollment, a core Linguistics faculty member has agreed to serve as the student's advisor, and that the advisor and the student have together selected a guidance committee. Core faculty members are those who hold a 51%-100% appointment in Linguistics. For more details, see section 6.

### **4.1.3 Grade requirements**

Students in the MA program must maintain a grade point average of at least 3.20 and not receive a grade below 3.0 in more than two courses. They must receive a minimum grade of 3.0 in all courses labeled LIN. See section 10 on *Academic Performance*.

#### 4.1.4 Credits

A total of 30 credits is required for the degree under either Plan A (by thesis) or Plan B (by exam). At least 16 of the credits earned for the M.A. degree must be in courses numbered at the 800-level. LIN 401 Introduction to Linguistics may not be taken for graduate credit. Courses below the 400 level may not be taken for graduate credit. No more than 3 credits of LIN 898 Masters Research may be counted toward the degree. Elective credits need not be restricted to courses labeled LIN. Courses at the 400-level or above in other programs may be counted toward the MA degree with the approval of the student's guidance committee.

#### 4.1.5 Required courses

The following courses are required of all MA students in Linguistics, regardless of Plan type (A or B):

**Group 1: All of the following:**

- LIN 834 Syntactic Theory I
- LIN 837 Semantics and Pragmatics I
- LIN 824 Phonological Theory I
- LIN 827 Phonetics I
- 

**Group 2: Two of the following, of which at least one must be either LIN 825 or LIN 835**

- LIN 825 Phonological Theory II
- LIN 835 Syntactic Theory II
- LIN 828 Phonetics II
- LIN 838 Semantics and Pragmatics II

An 800-level 3-credit Linguistics seminar or independent study in syntax, phonology, phonetics, or semantics or pragmatics may be substituted for one of the courses in Group 2

**Group 3:** One additional 3-credit Linguistics course excluding LIN 890 that is not a course in phonetics, phonology, syntax, semantics or pragmatics.

Additional courses may be required by the student's guidance committee.

Each of the required courses is worth 3 credits, for a total of 21 credits. If substitutions are made, please bear in mind the University MA degree requirement that 16 credits must be in courses numbered 800.

#### 4.1.6 Deadlines

The University's time limit for completion of the MA degree is six calendar years from the date of enrollment in the first course that you took that counted toward your MA. See section "[Time Limit](#)" in the [University's Academic Programs Catalog on Graduate Education](#). However, you should aim to complete your studies within two years if possible.

#### **4.1.7 Responsible Conduct of Research & Scholarship (RCR)**

MA students must meet the University's requirements for demonstrating that they have been trained in responsible research practices. This is achieved through a combination of online workshops and 'face-to-face' training (section 11). Overall details can be found at <https://grad.msu.edu/researchintegrity>. The DGS will communicate via e-mail or in a meeting with all current students about the Linguistics program's expectations for fulfillment of the Responsible Conduct of Research and Scholarship (RCR) requirement.

#### **4.2 Additional requirements for Plan A (MA by thesis)**

- In addition to taking the 21 credits of required courses listed in 4.1.5 above, students proceeding to the Plan A thesis must: enroll in 4 credits of LIN 899 Masters Thesis Research. No more than 4 credits of LIN 899 will be counted toward the MA degree in Linguistics. Typically, these credits are accrued in the student's final semester.
- accrue at least 5 more credits (to reach the minimum of 30 credits) in courses at the 400-level or above that are approved by the student's guidance committee. They need not be restricted to courses coded LIN.
- Students must be enrolled for at least 1 credit during the semester the student is defending his/her thesis, including the summer semester.
- Successful oral defense of a thesis, and submission of the thesis. (section 9.1)

#### **4.3 Additional requirements for Plan B (MA by exam)**

Students proceeding to the Plan B exam must, in addition to completing all required courses detailed in section 4.1.5:

- Complete a further 9 elective credits in linguistics courses approved by their advisor.. "Linguistics courses" need not be restricted to courses labeled with the LIN designation. Courses at the 400-level or above in other programs may be counted toward the MA degree with the approval of the student's guidance committee.
- Pass a written examination in a chosen area of linguistics. (Section 8)

#### **4.4 Dual enrollment BA-MA**

The requirements for achieving an MA in the dual enrollment BA-MA program are the same as for the Linguistics MA more generally, as outlined in sections 4.1.2 to 4.1.7. A maximum of 9 credits at the undergraduate tuition rate can be counted toward the MA. See section 3.1.4 Admission to the dual degree BA-MA program for more details.

## **5 Degree requirements for the PhD**

### **5.1 Overview of requirements**

All requirements of the University and of the College of Arts & Letters must be met. (See Graduate Student Rights and Responsibilities (<https://grad.msu.edu/gsrr>) for residency requirements and residency fees). Current program requirements for the PhD (<https://reg.msu.edu/academicprograms/ProgramDetail.aspx?Program=0714>) may change. Those outlined in the handbook for your entering academic year are the requirements that you will follow.

### **5.1.1 Selection of a main advisor and guidance committee**

All PhD students must have a main advisor. Initially the Director of Graduate Studies serves as the student's main advisor. By the end of the second semester of enrollment, a core Linguistics faculty member must have agreed to serve as the student's main advisor, and the main advisor and the student have together selected a guidance committee. The initial committee must include the faculty member designated as the Comp 1 Advisor (see section 5.1.6 for more on comprehensive exams). To remain eligible for funding in the third year, the guidance committee must convene its initial meeting before the end of the second year. For details of how to select a main advisor, see section 6. For information about funding eligibility and program milestones, see section 10 on academic performance.

### **5.1.2 GradPlan**

PhD students must create a GradPlan (<http://gradplan.msu.edu>) that will serve as their framework of their progress in their PhD program, as well as a conduit for faculty committee members, the Director of Graduate Studies, and the graduate secretary to help guide student development towards a successful dissertation defense. Students are encouraged to begin their GradPlan starting in the second semester of their PhD program. The Graduate Secretary can provide you with the guidance you will need.

### **5.1.3 Grade requirements**

Students in the PhD program must maintain a cumulative 3.5 grade-point average in courses labeled LIN. They must receive a grade of 3.0 or higher in all LIN courses. They must not accumulate more than 6 credits with a grade of 3.0 in courses labeled LIN. 10.3.3<sup>(b)</sup> For details of the consequences of receiving grades of 3.0 or below.

### **5.1.4 Credits**

There is no overall maximum or minimum number of credits required for the PhD program. However, students must have enrolled in a minimum of 24 credits of LIN 999 Doctoral Dissertation Research (maximum 36 credits) before graduation. For more information on when to enroll in LIN 999, talk to the Graduate Secretary and the Director of Graduate Studies.

### **5.1.5 Required courses**

**Group 1:** All of the following:

- LIN 834 Syntactic Theory I
- LIN 837 Semantics and Pragmatics I
- LIN 824 Phonological Theory I



- LIN 827 Phonetics I
- 

**Group 2:** Two of the following, of which at least one must be either LIN 825 or LIN 835

- LIN 825 Phonological Theory II
- LIN 835 Syntactic Theory II
- LIN 828 Phonetics II
- LIN 838 Semantics and Pragmatics II

An 800-level 3-credit Linguistics seminar or independent study in syntax, phonology, phonetics, or semantics or pragmatics may be substituted for one of the courses in Group 2

**Group 3:** One additional 3-credit Linguistics course excluding LIN 890 that is not a course in phonetics, phonology, syntax, semantics or pragmatics.

Additional courses may be required by the student's guidance committee.

Each of the required courses is worth 3 credits, for a total of 21 credits. If substitutions are made, please bear in mind the University MA degree requirement that 16 credits must be in courses numbered 800.

### 5.1.6 Comprehensive exams

PhD students will write and successfully orally defend comprehensive exams (henceforth 'comp papers'). See section 7 for more details. The requirements are:

- Two research papers in two different areas of linguistics.
- At least one of the papers must show specialist knowledge in phonetics, phonology, morphology, syntax, semantics or pragmatics.
- The student will identify a Linguistics faculty member as the Comp Advisor for each of the qualifying paper.
- For each paper, the student must prepare a brief written proposal (typically 10-15 pages) and submit the proposal to the committee.
- The committee must meet with the student to discuss and approve each proposal at a 1.5 hour proposal defense.
- The student must then write the paper and submit the paper to the guidance committee.
- Each paper must be subjected to an oral examination by the student's guidance committee of 1.5 hours, which may include a brief summary presentation by the student.
- 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.
- Both of the comp papers must be completed before the submission of the dissertation proposal. See section 5.1.10 (deadlines).

If the student would like to challenge the outcome of the evaluation of a comp paper, he/she should follow the procedures given below under 'Conflict Resolution' in section 12.2.

### **5.1.7 Responsible Conduct of Research & Scholarship (RCR)**

PhD students must meet the University's requirements for demonstrating that they have been trained in responsible research practices. This is achieved through a combination of online workshops and 'face-to-face' training, both of which are recorded in GradPlan (section 5.1.2). Overall details can be found at <https://grad.msu.edu/researchintegrity>. The DGS will communicate via e-mail or in a meeting with all current students about the Linguistics program's expectations for fulfillment of the Responsible Conduct of Research and Scholarship (RCR) requirement.

### **5.1.8 Dissertation proposal**

A dissertation proposal must be prepared following satisfactory completion of the comprehensive exams ('comp papers'). See section 7 for more on comp papers. For guidelines and procedures associated with dissertation proposals, see section 9.

### **5.1.9 Dissertation and dissertation defense**

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. See section 9 for more details.

Each student must register for a minimum of 24 credits of doctoral dissertation research (LIN 999), but no more than 36 (see 5.1.4 Credits). Students must be enrolled for at least 1 credit during the semester the student is defending his/her dissertation, including the summer semester.

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.

### **5.1.10 Deadlines**

It is a University regulation that all of the comprehensive examination (in the case of Linguistics, both "comp papers", i.e. qualifying papers) must be completed by the end of the fifth year of enrollment in the Ph.D. program. All remaining requirements for the degree must be completed within eight years of the first course that counted toward your PhD degree. See section "[Time Limit](#)" in the [University's Academic Programs Catalog on Graduate Education](#).

In order to maintain satisfactory status in the Linguistics graduate program, however, students should adhere to the more stringent timeline explained in section 10 on Academic Performance.

## **6 Selecting an advisor and guidance committee**

### **6.1.1 Before you have chosen an advisor**

The Director of Graduate Studies (DGS) serves as the main 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.

### **6.1.2 The main graduate advisor**

Your main graduate advisor plays a crucial role in guiding you through the program, developing your intellectual interests, as well as supporting your applications for grants, jobs and other initiatives. They may also collaborate with you on research projects and introduce you to opportunities and contacts within and beyond the field of linguistics. Many students find that their relationship with their advisor lasts for years after graduation. It is important to choose your advisor carefully. Your primary criterion should be their academic expertise in a research area of most interest to you.

That said, it is also quite normal for students to change their main advisor during the course of their MA or PhD degree, or to add a co-advisor. The Linguistics faculty encourage students to work with the most appropriate main advisor for their research interests, fully aware that research interests develop and change over time.

It is generally a good idea to begin by selecting a main advisor. You can then discuss with them who the other members of the committee should be. Arrange to meet and talk with a potential advisor so that you can invite them to serve as your committee chair.

If you are an MA student and you intend to finish your MA in less than 2 years, you will need to identify an advisor by the end of the first year (second semester).

### **6.1.3 The guidance committee**

Your main advisor serves as the chair of your guidance committee. Members of the committee work with you and your main advisor as you progress through your degree. 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. [See section 7 for more on PhD comp papers and the Comp Advisor]
- To conduct and evaluate oral defenses.

In most cases the student will work most directly with the chair of the committee, i.e. their main advisor. The amount of participation of other members depends upon the nature and content of the student's program, and whether or not a given member is serving as a Comp Advisor. Students may seek advice on degree requirements from any member of the Linguistics faculty.

Changes in the membership of the guidance committee can be made on consultation with your main advisor and the faculty members involved, and may be initiated by the student at any time in GradPlan.

#### **6.1.4 The MA guidance committee**

An MA committee has a minimum of three members, including the chair. The majority of the members, including the chair, must be members of the core faculty of the linguistics program.

#### **6.1.5 The PhD guidance committee**

A PhD committee has a minimum of four members, including the chair. 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, and after the first guidance committee meeting, the student initiates a GradPlan for approval by all members.

#### **6.1.6 Additional and ‘non-regular’ committee members**

**Additional members.** For an MA or PhD project that is cross-disciplinary in nature, or for which specific expertise must be sought outside of the Linguistics program, it may be advisable to exceed the minimum number of guidance committee members. This is in principle permissible so long as the required minimum of core Linguistics faculty is met (2 for the MA, 3 for the PhD). The additional member(s) can be a Linguistics faculty member, faculty from another program/department, or from another university.

**‘Non-regular’ MSU faculty, academic specialists, and non-MSU individuals.** If the committee otherwise meets the requirements of the Linguistics program, an additional member may be a non-tenure stream MSU faculty member, an MS academic specialist, or a non-MSU individual. For procedures, see the section [“Planning a Doctoral Program and Appointment of a Guidance Committee”](#) in the [University’s Academic Programs Catalog on Graduate Education](#).

#### **6.1.7 Timeline and procedures**

By mid-semester of your second semester, you should identify a main advisor and a Comp Advisor for your first comp. Typically you will already have a main advisor in mind (e.g. when you applied to the program) but if not, then the Comp 1 Advisor can also serve -- even temporarily-- as your main advisor. Vice versa, your main advisor can also serve as your Comp 1 advisor.

In consultation with the main advisor and the Comp Advisor, approach 2-3 other faculty members as relevant -- via e-mail or in person -- who will be able to provide you with expertise in the Comp 1 area and/or the expected dissertation area. Once they agree to serve on your committee, let your main advisor know.

Your main advisor should arrange an initial guidance committee meeting of 1-1.5 hours with all committee members present. At this meeting, you will discuss and determine (i) the likely subfield areas of the two comp papers; (ii) the courses you will take in Year 2 and beyond, and how they will support those comp papers; (iii) the timeline for your comp papers, dissertation proposal, application for a Dissertation Completion Fellowship and dissertation defense; (iv) how you will spend your time in the

summer between Years 1 and 2; (v) whether the committee can expect you to defend a Comp 1 proposal before that summer, or whether instead you'll be doing pilot reading/data collection/experiments for a proposal defense in the fall of Year 2. In the latter case, the Comp 1 Advisor may wish to schedule a follow-up meeting of any faculty on the committee who are directly involved in your preparations for Comp 1. This will be an opportunity for you to talk about your summer plan in more detail.

After the guidance meeting, you should initiate a GradPlan (see section 5.1.2), listing the committee members, courses taken and to be taken etc. Make use of the Notes function to specify who is serving as the Comp 1 Advisor, and (if relevant) which course you are using to substitute for LIN 431 Morphology.

Your GradPlan will be routed to all committee members for them to review against their notes from your guidance meeting. If everything is in order, they will each approve your GradPlan electronically. It is then routed to the Director of Graduate Studies.

Reminder: You can reconstitute your graduate committee after the defense of Comp 1, or indeed at any time. For example: Your Comp 1 is in semantics but you don't intend to pursue further research in semantics. You expect Comp 2 to be on a sociophonetic topic, and the dissertation will probably also be in sociophonetics. You can replace semantics-oriented faculty with sociolinguistics and/or phonetics faculty.

## 7 The PhD comprehensive examinations ('comp papers')

**Requirements.** Two comprehensive exams ('comp papers') must be successfully defended in a timely manner. Each comp paper must be in a different area of linguistics, of which one must be in phonology, phonetics, morphology, syntax, semantics or pragmatics. See section 5.1.6 for the overall requirements for comp papers, and section 10.3.5 for deadlines for satisfactory progress.

**Goals.** Comp papers are intended to test your grasp two different areas of linguistics. They provide an opportunity to build on your broad understanding of the subfield (hence 'comprehensive') by carrying out a more narrowly focused project. Good comp papers will thus exhibit both *breadth* of understanding of core concepts, theories, problems and literature in the subfield, and *depth* of engagement with a specific research question in that subfield.

**Developing research ideas.** Students often develop an idea for a comp paper from a paper or project that they have already completed for a related LIN course, or from a topic with which they already have familiarity, e.g. from an MA degree. Talk with your main advisor, with the course instructor (if relevant) and with faculty who have expertise in the subfield, about whether your idea would be suitable for expansion into a comp paper.

**Planning.** At your initial meeting with your guidance committee, you will discuss the likely two subfields in which you will write comp papers, the relevant courses that you have taken or will need to take in order to successfully carry out the research, and your specific timeline for preparation and defense of the comps.

**Finding a supervisor for each comp (the 'Comp Advisor' role).** Your main advisor maintains overall responsibility for ensuring that you are on track to complete your two comps. However, if one or more of your comps are to be written in subfields for which your main advisor does not have relevant expertise, or

if your main advisor is unavailable (e.g. they are on leave), you will need to identify a faculty member to supervise the comp: a Comp Advisor. Often, but not always, this will be instructor of a relevant course that you have taken in the program. It is important that you meet and talk with potential comp advisors to discuss your research idea and timeline. Keep your main advisor informed about the steps you are taking. Once a faculty member has agreed to supervise your comp, they will work with you to develop a comp proposal. They must also be added to your guidance committee if they are not currently serving on it.

**Comp proposal.** This is a manuscript that clearly outlines and justifies your research question and hypothesis/hypotheses, provides a summary of relevant literature, explains what you will do (for projects involving fieldwork or experiments, it will be necessary to describe your proposed methods in detail), gives a timeline for completion, and justifies the project on the grounds of originality or other contribution to the field. 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. Once your Comp Advisor has approved the proposal, you will circulate it to your guidance committee via e-mail.

**Comp proposal defense.** Not less than two weeks from the date of circulation of the comp proposal, you will defend your proposal before your guidance committee. Your main advisor will normally make the arrangements for this meeting, which lasts up to 1.5 hours. You will give a short oral summary of your proposal, and then answer questions from the committee. If the committee approves your proposal, you can proceed to the comp paper itself. If the committee requests revisions to your proposal, the committee will also agree on how to proceed next. Options include: a second defense; circulation of a revised proposal for committee approval via e-mail; or approval of the revised proposal at the sole discretion of the Comp Advisor.

**Comp paper.** The comp paper is a 20-30 page, similar in style to a journal article in the subfield. It would at minimum be suitable for presentation at an appropriate peer-reviewed conference, in the judgement of the respective Comp Advisor. Your Comp Advisor will tell you how they would like to work with you during the research and writing period e.g. weekly meetings, specific deadlines for drafts, etc. Once your Comp Advisor has approved the comp paper, you will circulate it to your guidance committee via e-mail.

**Comp paper defense.** Not less than two weeks from the date of circulation of the comp paper, you will defend it before your guidance committee. Your main advisor will normally make the arrangements for this meeting, which lasts up to 1.5 hours. You will give a short oral summary of your proposal, and then answer questions from the committee. If the committee finds your paper satisfactory, your main advisor will notify the Graduate Secretary that you have passed the comp, so that this can be recorded in GradPlan. Procedures for revision are as detailed above for comp proposals. If the committee fails the paper, you have one more opportunity to propose, submit and defend a new paper, within one semester (excluding summer). See also section 12.2 on Conflict Resolution.

**Presenting and/or publishing your comp paper.** Seek advice from your Comp Advisor and your guidance committee on where to present interim and final results, and which journals or other publication venues would be suitable for your comp paper. *Publication of your comp paper is not a requirement.* However, getting feedback on your work at conferences and via written reviews is valuable professional experience. It's also worth considering getting as much informal feedback as you can during the proposal and writing process, from mentors or peers whom you trust, from lab or research groups you belong to, or from writing groups or doctoral support groups that you have joined.

**Completion of comps.** You may work on both comps concurrently, although it is advisable to stagger them if possible. In principle you can also work concurrently on a dissertation proposal, although you may not defend this proposal until you have successfully defended both comp papers.

## 8 The MA Plan B exam

Each Plan B student must pass a three-hour, closed-book written examination in a particular area of linguistics. A student preparing for an M.A. exam may enroll in LIN 898 Masters Research, 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.

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 bibliography is divided into 3-4 topic sections. The first must be a general section e.g. general sociolinguistics, general semantics, and may include key upper-level textbooks for this area. The other sections represent sub-areas of the student's knowledge, e.g. Japanese sociolinguistics, phonetics-phonology interface. The student will usually be required to answer at least one question on each bibliography topic/section.

The guidance committee approves the student's selected area and bibliography and prepares the examination based on the bibliography. Exam questions are designed to elicit thoughtful and critical synthesis of the bibliographic sources, in the form of short essays. It is a good idea to ask your main advisor and/or the Director of Graduate Studies for some examples of past exam questions.

The guidance committee evaluates the written examination on the scale High Pass/Pass/Low Pass/Fail. If the committee fails the paper, you have one more opportunity to propose, submit and defend a new paper, within one semester (excluding summer). See also section 12.2 on Conflict Resolution.

## 9 Preparing an MA thesis or PhD dissertation

### 9.1 M.A. by Thesis (Plan A)

**Developing research ideas.** Students often develop an idea for a comp paper from a paper or project that they have already completed for a related LIN course, or from a topic with which they already have familiarity, e.g. from an MA degree. Talk with your advisor, with the course instructor (if relevant) and with faculty who have expertise in the subfield, about whether your idea would be suitable for expansion into a comp paper.

**Thesis proposal.** In consultation with the guidance committee the student prepares a thesis proposal of about 8-12 pages. Normally the proposal should be submitted not later than the term in which the student is to complete course requirements. 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. It should be formatted in American Psychological Association (APA) style or another common format used in linguistics, such as the Linguistic Society of America Unified Style Sheet (<https://www.linguisticsociety.org/resource/unified->

style-sheet). It is a good idea to ask your advisor or other students in the program for examples of recent MA thesis proposals.

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.

You will agree with your MA advisor on the deadlines for drafts of the proposal. When your advisor has approved the proposal, you will circulate it to your guidance committee via e-mail. Once the committee has had at least two weeks during the regular academic year to read the proposal, the advisor will ascertain whether the committee finds your proposal sufficiently promising, or if they reject 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.

**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.

**Thesis credits.** The student must enroll in a total of exactly 4 credits of LIN 899 (thesis research). It is usually advisable to do this in the semester in which you plan to graduate, but you will discuss this decision with your advisor.

**Oral defense.** Once your advisor has approved the final draft of your thesis, you will circulate it to your committee via e-mail. No less than two weeks from the date of circulation of the comp paper, you will defend it before your guidance committee. This is an oral examination of at most two hours. Your advisor will normally make the arrangements for the defense. You will give a short oral summary of your proposal, and then answer questions from the committee. The questions 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.

If the committee finds your defense satisfactory, your advisor will notify the Graduate Secretary that you have passed the defense, so that you can initiate the procedures for graduation. If the committee fails the thesis, you have one more opportunity to propose, submit and defend a new thesis within one semester (excluding summer). See also section 12.2 on Conflict Resolution.

## **9.2 University Policy About Dissemination of Graduate Students' Research**

In keeping with MSU's public mission, the University requires that theses, dissertations and abstracts will become public after the conferral of the degree; embargoes can only be pursued for a limited period (see



9.2.1 below). Results that are subject to restrictions for dissemination by funding agencies (see 9.2.2 below) cannot be part of any document submitted as a thesis or dissertation to the Graduate School.

### **9.2.1 Hold/embargo on publication of documents submitted to ProQuest**

Students submitting a thesis/dissertation to ProQuest now can request a hold/embargo of publication by ProQuest by contacting the Graduate School at [msuetds.approval@grd.msu.edu](mailto:msuetds.approval@grd.msu.edu). In response to the request, the Graduate School will send directly to the student a form that needs to be completed and turned to the Graduate School prior to submission of the document to ProQuest. The form needs to be signed by the student's major professor and by the Associate Dean of the student's college. The request for the hold/embargo may be for six months, one year or two years. Requests for a period longer than six months must include a written justification for the length of the hold/embargo.

### **9.2.2 Graduate students' participating in University Research Organization (URO; <https://uro.egr.msu.edu/>):**

Graduate students involved in a URO project will receive both written documentation and a verbal explanation of any limitations or implications to their current or future academic progress prior to participating on the project. Students engaging in work for a URO project undergo a 2-step approval process before hiring: a consultation with a representative of the URO's office to explain the restrictions on the project, and an interview with the Graduate School Dean or Dean's designee to discuss the relationship, if any, between their work as graduate students and their participation in the project. Students must be informed that results that are subject to restrictions for dissemination cannot be part of any document submitted as a thesis or dissertation. As part of their degree program, all graduate students must have research options to ensure the generation of appropriate results to fulfill the degree requirements, and to have data for professional development activities that are integral to their graduate education (e.g., presentations at conferences and research seminars).

## **10 Academic Performance**

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. The Director of Graduate Studies also conducts reviews of student records (including grades) every semester. In their decisions, the faculty take into account special circumstances of individuals, such as illness or family responsibilities. Students should make sure their main advisors know about any special circumstances and/or achievements in the field.

### **10.1 Procedures**

All graduate students enrolled in the Linguistics program are reviewed annually before March 1. The review is based on the standards described in section 10. You will complete a form supplied to you by the DGS, in which you will provide a summary of your progress in the program in the preceding year. You will discuss the form with your main advisor (or the DGS if you do not yet have one), who will also complete a section of the form. These forms, once both parties have signed them, should be sent by you to the graduate secretary, usually in electronic form. The graduate secretary maintains them as part of your academic record.

See also section 2.4.8 of the *Graduate Student Rights and Responsibilities document*, which states: *Written evaluations shall be communicated to the graduate student at least once a year, and a copy of such evaluations shall be placed in the graduate student's file.*

The graduate secretary assists the Director of Graduate Studies in retrieving relevant graduate student records for all graduate students, including the signed forms, reflecting performance on each of the standards listed in section 10.3.

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.

For each student, the annual review paperwork that they completed with their main advisor 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 resolution in section 12.2 below.

Students whose performance does not meet the program's definition of 'satisfactory' (see section 10.2.1) will receive a letter from the Director of Graduate Studies by April 1.

Students who wish to contest their annual review, to respond in writing to a warning letter from the DGS, or to complain that they did not receive a timely warning letter from the DGS, may do so by writing to the chair of their committee and/or the DGS. Should the student wish to take further action, steps are outlined in section 12, *Student Conflict and Conflict Resolution*.

## **10.2 Funding and its relationship to satisfactory status**

In order to receive funding awarded by the Linguistics program, including but not limited to graduate assistantships, travel grants and summer research fellowships, it is essential that you remain in satisfactory status. Students in the MA and PhD programs are expected to maintain satisfactory status. Satisfactory status is defined in section 10.2.1 below. For more on funding sources, see section 10.5 and 10.6.

### **10.2.1 Status types**

At any time, a graduate student in the Linguistics program has one of the five status levels listed below. 'Funding' is defined in section 10.2 above. Unless there are extenuating circumstances, students should aim to be in *at least* satisfactory status at all times.

**highly satisfactory** If available funding is limited, then all other things being equal, 'highly satisfactory' students will be ranked above 'satisfactory' students.

**satisfactory** Eligible for funding. If available funding is limited, then all other things being equal, 'satisfactory' students will be ranked above 'probationary' students.

**probationary** At risk of losing funding. Letter from the DGS. 'Satisfactory' status must be regained within one semester, excluding summer. If the student is not 'satisfactory' by that deadline, they are deemed 'unsatisfactory'.

**unsatisfactory** Loss of funding. Letter from the DGS. The student becomes ineligible for funding for one academic year from the time of this designation. In the case of PhD students, this reduces

the overall potential GAship funding from five years to four years. The ‘lost’ year of funding cannot be added later. ‘Satisfactory’ status must be regained within one semester, excluding summer. If the student is not ‘satisfactory’ by that deadline, they are deemed ‘at risk’.

**at risk** Risk of dismissal. Letter from the DGS. If the student is in unsatisfactory status for two years, they can be dismissed from the program. See the policy on dismissal in section 10.7.

In most cases, the additional semester for addressing deficiencies will be the fall semester of the calendar year in which the annual evaluation is made. So if the annual evaluation is in spring 2019, the student’s probation lasts until the end of fall semester 2019.

### **10.2.2 Leave of absence and annual evaluation**

In the specific case of a student taking a leave of absence from the program, the clock will be stopped for the length of the absence. Thus, for example, if a student is designated ‘probationary’ and then takes a semester of absence, they will still be ‘probationary’ upon their return. That is, the semester of absence does not count toward the timeline below, and the student will not have been re-assigned to ‘unsatisfactory’ status during the absence.

## **10.3 Standards for evaluation**

If a student fails to meet the ‘satisfactory’ standard for any of the standards for evaluation, they will receive a letter from the DGS that details their options for regaining satisfactory status. An exception to this is the standard for course grades, for which more stringent consequences apply: See section 10.3.3.

Students may respond to the letter following the guidelines in section 10.1.

Six standards of student progress are considered:

1. Course load [section 10.3.1]
2. Grade point average (GPA). [section 10.3.2]
3. Grades. [section 10.3.3]
4. Number of deferred grades. [section 10.3.4]
5. Rate of program completion. [section 10.3.5]
6. Professional accomplishment. [section 10.3.6]

These standards 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 main advisors know about any special circumstances and/or achievements in the field.

### **10.3.1 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 loads are listed below.

#### **Full-time M.A. student:**

Without a graduate assistantship: 9 credits

With a half- or quarter-time assistantship (i.e., a full or partial assistantship): 6 credits

With a three quarter-time assistantship (i.e., more than a full assistantship): 3 credits

**Full-time Ph.D. student:**

Most students: 6 credits

Students who have completed both comp papers or are doing department-approved off-campus dissertation fieldwork: 1 credit

Students with a three quarter-time assistantship: 3 credits

**10.3.2 Grade point average (GPA)**

**PhD students.** Students in the PhD program must maintain a cumulative grade point average of at least 3.5 in courses counted toward the degree. Courses counted for the degree are those at the 400 level or higher that are (i) labeled LIN; or (ii) non-LIN courses deemed applicable to the student's degree by the student's main advisor and guidance committee. Note that grades for LIN 490 and LIN 890 do not count toward the student's GPA.

highly satisfactory	GPA of 3.8 or above
satisfactory	GPA of 3.5 to < 3.8
probationary	GPA of less than 3.5

A student in probationary status has one semester, excluding summer, in which to raise his or her GPA to 3.5 or above. Raising the GPA can be achieved by (i) taking further courses, or (ii) re-taking a course with the instructor's permission. The student should consult with their main advisor and guidance committee about the best course of action.

If the student has completed all coursework required by their guidance committee, no probationary status is applied, and there is no expectation that the student will raise their GPA.

**MA students.** Expectations for MA student GPA are the same as for PhD students, with the following adjustments to the scale:

highly satisfactory	GPA of 3.8 or above
satisfactory	GPA of 3.2 to < 3.8
probationary	GPA of less than 3.2

**10.3.3 Grades**

Standards for grades apply only to courses labeled LIN.

Students are expected to receive a grade of 3.5 or above in all LIN courses. Students must not accumulate (i) more than 6 credits (i.e. 2 courses) with a grade of 3.0 in any courses that are labeled LIN or (ii) any grade below 3.0 in any LIN course, or they will be subject to dismissal from the program.

highly satisfactory	Grade 3.5 or above in all required courses.
satisfactory	Grade 3.5 or above, with at most one grade of 3.0.
probationary	<i>not applicable</i>
at risk	Grade 3.5 or above with at most two grades of two 3.0.
dismissal	Three grades of 3.0 <i>or</i> any grade below 3.0.

Unless there are extenuating circumstances, a failure to achieve at least a 3.0 in a LIN course is considered a strong sign that the student is unable to meet the basic academic standards of the PhD in Linguistics. The student will be dismissed from the program, without passing through ‘probationary’, ‘unsatisfactory’ and ‘at risk’ statuses. (See section 10.7 for policies on dismissal.) The Director of Graduate Studies is responsible for reviewing students’ grade records every semester. Thus, for example, a student who receives a grade below 3.0 in a fall semester course will not return in the spring. A student who receives a grade below 3.0 in a spring semester course will not return in the fall.

### 10.3.4 Deferred grades

According to University policy, a deferred grade “is reserved for graduate students who are passing a course but for reasons acceptable to their instructors cannot complete the course during the regularly scheduled course period”. Deferred grades appear with the code “DF” on the student’s transcript. If for any reason an instructor issues a DF-Deferred to a student who did not request the grade marker, the student may request the grade marker be removed from their transcript. See the University of the Ombudsman’s information about Special Grades: <https://ombud.msu.edu/grade-codes.html>.

Grades should not be deferred without strong justification, such as extended illness of student or instructor. Grade deferral puts the student at risk of slowing their pace of program completion.

	<i>At the time of annual evaluation:</i>
satisfactory	No deferred grades in the previous 12 months.
probationary	One deferred grade in the previous 12 months.
unsatisfactory	Two deferred grades in the previous 12 months.

The above does not apply to graduate thesis or dissertation work.

Under University policy, the student must complete the required work -- and a grade must be reported -- within 6 months, with the option of a single six-month extension. (Note that the DF will remain on the student’s transcript along with the new grade e.g. DF/4.0.) However, to regain satisfactory status, the student should ensure that the work is completed within one semester, excluding summer.

If the required work is not completed within the time limit, The student’s status will accordingly change downwards to the next level of status shown in section 10.2.1. Additionally, the DF will become U-Unfinished and will be changed on the transcript 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.

### 10.3.5 Rate of program completion

Students are expected to complete their doctoral degrees in Linguistics within five years. Completion rates for MA students are more flexible, as MA students are typically not funded by MSU graduate assistantships. Five years’ is defined as including the summer following the fifth year. To maintain ‘satisfactory’ status, a student must meet the program completion milestones below:

<b>PhD students</b>	
Form a guidance committee	≤ 2 semesters
Complete required courses	≤ 6 semesters
Defend 1 <sup>st</sup> comp paper	≤ 5 semesters
Defend 2 <sup>nd</sup> comp paper	≤ 7 semesters
Defend dissertation proposal	≤ 8 semesters

Defend dissertation  $\leq 10$  semesters\*

\*This includes the summer immediately following the 10<sup>th</sup> semester.

NOTE on guidance committee milestone: The student must have formed a committee. An initial guidance meeting must have been convened. The student must initiate a GradPlan to record the outcome of the meeting, and all committee members must approve it via GradPlan.

**MA students: Plan A (thesis)**

Form a guidance committee  $\leq 2$  semesters  
Defend Plan A thesis proposal  $\leq 4$  semesters  
Defend Plan A thesis  $\leq 6$  semesters

**MA students: Plan B (exam)**

Form a guidance committee  $\leq 2$  semesters  
Approval of Plan B reading list  $\leq 4$  semesters  
Pass Plan B exam  $\leq 6$  semesters

If, at the time of annual evaluation, a student has not made satisfactory progress, the student is automatically placed in probationary status, triggering a letter from the DGS.

Recall that satisfactory rate of progress through the milestones is directly tied to funding eligibility. It applies to all students, not just those dependent on MSU graduate assistantships. For more on funding, see sections 10.4 to 10.6.

### 10.3.6 Professional accomplishment

Participation in program activities is expected, unless personal circumstances in the preceding year have impeded a student's ability to participate. Program activities include attendance at lectures and colloquia, conference practice talks of other students, and pre-professional workshops.

Professional accomplishments are those beyond expected normal participation in program activities (colloquia, lectures, conference practice talks, workshops) in the past year. They include research activities such as article submission, publications, presentations at conferences, grant submissions to national funding agencies, teaching awards, etc. They also include, where relevant, a student's evaluation as a graduate assistant (GA), as reflected by mid-semester and/or end of semester GA evaluation forms (and SIRS forms, in the case of teaching assistants (TAs)).

highly satisfactory	Professional accomplishments beyond satisfactory normal participation
satisfactory	Participation in program activities such as colloquia, lab talks.

## 10.4 Funding eligibility

As part of the annual evaluation process, the Linguistics faculty assesses students' eligibility for funding. 'Funding' includes, but is not limited to, graduate assistantships (GAs), funding for travel to conferences, summer research fellowships, and other opportunities for which the Linguistics program has some decision-making power.

Students are not eligible for funding unless they are in satisfactory status.

## 10.5 Graduate assistantships (GAships)

For more information about graduate assistantships (duties, expectations, compensation, etc.), see section 13, 'Work-related Policies'.

**PhD students.** All PhD students can expect up to five years of GAship funding, including the summer following the spring semester of the fifth year. PhD students in their sixth year or beyond are not eligible for GAship funding. A GAship after five years is offered only rarely, e.g. if the Linguistics and Languages department has a need for a specific skillset. PhD students can expect to receive a GAship every year, unless (i) they are in 'unsatisfactory' or 'at risk' status; or (ii) department resources are unexpectedly highly constrained. In the latter case, GAships will be awarded to students in 'highly satisfactory' status ahead of those in 'satisfactory' status, unless there is a need for a specific skillset.

**MA students.** If one or more GAships remain after all eligible PhD students have been funded, the remaining GAship(s) may be awarded to eligible MA students. *This does not happen every year.* MA students in their third year or beyond are not eligible for GAship funding.

## 10.6 Other funding

Students making satisfactory progress toward their degree are eligible for numerous sources of additional financial support, including, but not limited to:

- funding for research and travel to conferences
- summer research fellowships
- Summer College Research Abroad Monies (SCRAM)
- Dissertation Completion Fellowships

**Research and travel to conferences.** Applications are accepted throughout the year. For more information about research and conference travel support, talk to the Director of Graduate Studies and watch for notices via e-mail throughout the year. Support from the College of Arts and Letters ([http://www.cal.msu.edu/application/files/6215/0947/9440/Guidelines\\_for\\_Graduate\\_Student\\_Travel\\_Funds.pdf](http://www.cal.msu.edu/application/files/6215/0947/9440/Guidelines_for_Graduate_Student_Travel_Funds.pdf)) and the MSU Graduate School (<https://grad.msu.edu/travel>) and the Council of Graduate Students (<https://cogs.msu.edu/resources/funding/conference-award/>) is also available.

**Summer research fellowships.** All students in satisfactory status can expect to receive at least one fellowship during their five year career. Applications are accepted in early spring. A subcommittee of Linguistics faculty reviews applications and sends a rank-ordered list to the College of Arts and Letters. Priority is given to PhD students. More information:

<http://www.cal.msu.edu/currentstudents/graduate/resources>.

**Summer College Research Abroad Monies (SCRAM).** For students whose research requires the use of resources abroad, the College of Arts and Letters provides a competitive fellowship. Applications are accepted in early spring. More information: <http://www.cal.msu.edu/currentstudents/graduate/resources>.

**Dissertation Completion Fellowships.** Applications are due in the early spring. For PhD students who are in the late stages of their career. The expectation is that students will work full-time for one semester on writing their dissertations, and finish during the tenure of their fellowship. Linguistics PhD students are strongly encouraged to apply for these awards in their fourth year, in order to take the spring or fall semester of their fifth year to focus on dissertation writing. More information: <https://grad.msu.edu/fellowships/dissertation>

## 10.7 Dismissal from the program

**Status.** A student who has failed to regain satisfactory status after two years is at risk of dismissal from the program. See section 10.2.1 on statuses.

**LIN course grades.** A student who fails to achieve a 3.0 in a LIN course will be dismissed without first passing through probationary and at risk statuses. A student who accrues three grades (more than 6 credits) of 3.0 in LIN courses will be dismissed.

**Failure to pass MA 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, excluding summer. 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 -- or a revised version of the original paper -- which must be proposed, submitted and defended within one semester, excluding summer. 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.

**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.

**Academic integrity.** Violations of academic integrity may also result in dismissal. This is covered in section 11, *Research Integrity and Safety*.

**Conduct.** See section 12, *Student Conduct and Conflict Resolution*.

Dismissals are not automatic. Decisions are made at the discretion of the DGS, in consultation with the Linguistics core faculty.

Students may request an extension to regain satisfactory status. 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 regaining satisfactory status.
- A letter from the main advisor supporting the extension.

A student who wishes to contest a dismissal decision should may do so by writing to the chair of their committee and/or the DGS. Should the student wish to take further action, steps are outlined in section 12, *Student Conflict and Conflict Resolution*.



# 11 Research Integrity and Safety

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> and <https://rio.msu.edu/about>).

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 main 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 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 (<https://hrpp.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' (<https://tech.msu.edu/teaching/tools/ithenticate/>) package.

# 12 Student Conduct and Conflict Resolution

## 12.1 Student conduct

Students are expected to abide by University policies and ordinances. Violations of University policy are adjudicated through University procedures, and violations of University ordinances are adjudicated through criminal court proceedings in the same manner as city ordinances or state law. For a comprehensive list of those policies and ordinances, see the Spartan Life Student Handbook: <http://splife.studentlife.msu.edu/regulations/selected>

Students are expected to conduct themselves professionally. In general, we believe that appropriate professional conduct includes:

- respect for others' personhood and diversity of personhood, including but not limited to race, color, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, style of dress, manner of speaking, political viewpoint, etc.;
- a shared commitment to basic values such as fairness, equity, honesty, and respect;
- honest and accurate representation of one's identity, credentials, and professional background (e.g., no inflation of status or experiences on one's vita, and accurate representation of contributions to committee work or to collaborative projects and publications);
- awareness that appropriate professional conduct does not entail the transfer or appropriation of the work of others without shared decision-making, credit, and benefits—a standard for how to work appropriately within a community and to collaborate professionally;
- acknowledgement of the collaborative and social nature of the scholarly enterprise, which extends beyond use of formal scholarly citations to an acknowledgement of how fellow scholars have helped one to form ideas, review drafts, suggest revisions, etc.;
- respect for one's intellectual ancestors, especially for those who created the discipline within which one works;
- actively and respectfully listening to and engaging with people, their ideas, and how they experience (and represent) cultural and intellectual institutions;
- respect for human subjects involved in research;
- explicit training of graduate students in sound disciplinary practices (including appropriate methodological instruction) in core courses and in the interactions that we have with one another as colleagues.

### **12.1.1 Sexual Harassment Policy**

This all-university policy applies to university employees as well as students. Sexual harassment is reprehensible and will not be tolerated at Michigan State University. Such behavior subverts the mission of the University and threatens the careers, educational experience, and well-being of students, faculty, and staff.

The University prohibits sexually harassing behavior including that made unlawful by Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Title IX of the Educational Amendments of 1972, and the Elliott-Larsen Civil Rights Act. University policy and the law also prohibit retaliation against persons who report sexual harassment.

#### **Confidentiality**

To the extent permitted by law, the confidentiality of each party involved in a sexual harassment investigation, complaint, or charge will be observed, provided it does not interfere with the University's ability to investigate the allegations or take corrective action.

#### **Prohibited Acts**

No member of the University community shall engage in sexual harassment. Persons who engage in sexual harassment are subject to disciplinary action, including dismissal for employees and/or suspension for students.

Sexual harassment is defined as unwelcome advances, requests for sexual favors, or other behavior of a sexual nature when (a) submission to such conduct is made explicitly or implicitly a term or condition of an individual's employment or status in a course, program, or activity; (b) submission to or rejection of such conduct is used as a basis for a decision affecting an individual's employment or status in a course,

program, or activity; (c) such conduct has the purpose or effect of unreasonably interfering with an individual's work or performance in a course, program, or activity, or of creating an intimidating, hostile, or offensive environment in which one engages in employment, a course, a program or an activity.

### **Examples of Sexual Harassment**

Sexual harassment encompasses any unwanted sexual attention. Examples of behavior encompassed by the above definition include, but are not limited to a) physical assault; b) threats or insinuations which cause the victim to believe that sexual submission or rejection will affect his/her reputation, education, employment, advancement, or any conditions which concern the victim's standing at the University; c) direct propositions of a sexual nature; d) subtle pressure for sexual activity, an element of which may be conduct such as unwelcome sexual leering; e) conduct (not legitimately related to the subject matter of the work, course, program, or activity in which one is involved) intending to or having the effect of discomforting and/or humiliating a reasonable person at whom the conduct is directed. This may include, but is not limited to, comments of a sexual nature or sexually explicit statements, questions, jokes, or anecdotes, and unnecessary touching, patting, hugging or brushing against a person's body.

Depending on the circumstances, any of the above types of conduct may be considered sexual harassment and subject to disciplinary action, even if that conduct occurs only once.

### **Seeking Assistance or Filing a Complaint**

1. Students, faculty and staff who believe they are the victims of sexual harassment may seek information and assistance from:

- the chairperson, director, or dean of the relevant unit
- supervisory support personnel
- the Women's Resource Center
- the Ombudsman
- Student Life or Residence Life staff
- the MSU Counseling Center
- the Sexual Assault Crisis and Safety Education program
- Faculty or staff academic advisors
- the Faculty Grievance Official
- the Anti-discrimination Judicial Board Coordinator
- The Office of Student Employment

2. If a student, faculty member, or staff member wishes to file a complaint, s/he may take the following action(s):

- If the alleged harasser is a faculty or staff member, the affected individual(s) may make a written complaint to that employee's unit administrator.
- If the alleged harasser is the unit administrator, the affected individual(s) may make a written complaint to the unit administrator's superior or another unit administrator within the Department.
- If the alleged harasser is a student, the affected individual may file a complaint with the Office of Judicial Affairs.
- A student, faculty, or staff member also may elect to file a written complaint with the Anti-discrimination Judicial Board for non-disciplinary relief, or with another appropriate dispute resolution body.

The filing of such a complaint does not prevent the University administration from taking independent disciplinary action.

### **Awareness**

Members of the University community are responsible for knowing and understanding the University's policy prohibiting sexual harassment. Students who do not understand the policy should contact the

Office of the Vice President for Student Affairs. Faculty and staff who do not understand the policy should contact Human Resources or the Assistant Provost for Academic Human Resources, whichever is appropriate.

For additional information, see <http://inclusion.msu.edu/files/SexualHarassmentPolicyold.pdf>

Students may be dismissed from the program if they fail to display professionally accepted behavior, by acting overtly violent, threatening, or abusive; committing felonies or destroying property; displaying proven gross incompetence and negligence in their teaching assignments; and other serious breaches as confirmed by the University grievance officers, University lawyer, or University police.

## **12.2 Conflict resolution**

Conflicts, disagreements, and issues sometimes arise during the course of a graduate program. The University has established a judicial structure and process for hearing and adjudicating alleged violations of recognized graduate student rights and responsibilities. Students may file a formal grievance at the College level following the College of Arts and Letters by-laws on grievance and hearing procedures. The procedure can be found in Sections 5.3-5.4 of ‘Graduate Student Rights and Responsibilities’ (<https://grad.msu.edu/gsr>). The first venue to resolve such conflicts informally or formally rests within the academic unit, which in this case is the Department of Linguistics and Languages.

### **12.2.1 Conflicts with students**

If you have a conflict with another student, your first point of contact is the Department of Student Life: <http://studentlife.msu.edu/sccr>

### **12.2.2 Conflicts with faculty**

The following are steps you can take to deal with concerns you might have about a faculty member in cases including, but not limited to, contesting a course grade, a failed comp paper, thesis or dissertation defense, or an annual evaluation.

If there is a conflict of interest (for example, the Associate Chair is also your main advisor), you are encouraged to take your concern to the next level in the sequence below. At any time of this process, you may consult the University Ombudsperson <https://ombud.msu.edu/>, and section 12.2.4 below.

- a. In case of a conflict with a faculty member, including the DGS, a student should consult with the department’s Associate Chair for graduate studies, who may meet with one or both of the individuals involved.
- b. Following that the department chair should be consulted if necessary.
- c. If a student is dissatisfied with the outcome of discussions with the (associate) chair, the student can request a department grievance hearing: <https://ombud.msu.edu/Academic%20Grievance-procedures/index.html>. A Department Grievance Board will be convened.
- d. Conflicts which cannot be resolved at the department level should be reported to the Associate Dean of Research and Graduate Education.

### 12.2.3 Changing your advisor or guidance committee members

Changes in the membership of the guidance committee can be readily carried out in GradPlan, upon consultation with faculty members involved. They 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. See section 6, on guidance committee formation.

However, in cases of irreconcilable conflict, the chair shall reserve the right to replace a student's graduate main advisor or committee chair with another qualified person acceptable to both the graduate faculty and to the student, as ascertained through private discussions. Such replacement shall occur within one week of the meeting at which an irreconcilable conflict has been identified.

### 12.2.4 Other resources on conflict resolution

- The **Graduate School** offers workshops and useful information on conflict resolution.
- **Office of the University Ombudsperson.** If you find yourself in this situation and have exhausted the internal resources for resolving the issue, you may contact the Office of the University Ombudsperson. The Office of the University Ombudsperson provides assistance to students, faculty, and staff in resolving University-related concerns. Such concerns include: student-faculty conflicts; communication problems; concerns about the university climate; and questions about what options are available for handling a problem according to Michigan State University policy. The University Ombudsperson also provides information about available resources and student/faculty rights and responsibilities. The office operates as a confidential, independent, and neutral resource. It does not provide notice to the University - that is, it does not speak or hear for the University. Contact the Ombudsperson at any point during an issue when a confidential conversation or source of information may be needed. The Ombudsperson will listen to your concerns, give you information about university policies, help you evaluate the situation, and assist you in making plans to resolve the conflict.

Contact information:  
Office of the University Ombudsperson  
129 N. Kedzie Hall  
(517) 353-8830  
ombud@msu.edu <https://www.ombud.msu.edu>

## 13 Work related policies

For questions related to employment, your first point of contact is the Academic Co-ordinator, Ben Lampe ([lampeben@msu.edu](mailto:lampeben@msu.edu)).

1. *GAship levels.* GAs are appointed at 3 levels of compensation:

- Level I: GAs with less than one year of experience as a graduate assistant or full support fellow.
- Level II: GAs 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: GAs with at least 6 semesters of experience as a graduate assistant or full support fellow with a Master's degree or equivalent. Any GA 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 limited amount of such funds available. Procedures for applying for travel funds will be communicated by the DGS via e-mail, a meeting, or some other method. The graduate secretary can assist you with acquiring and filling out paperwork.

### **13.1 English Language Testing: MSU Policy Affecting International Teaching Assistants (ITAs)**

MSU candidates for TA appointments who were required to demonstrate English proficiency as a condition for regular admission to Michigan State University must also demonstrate that they meet a minimum standard of proficiency in spoken English before they can be assigned teaching work that involves oral communication with undergraduate students. Those ITAs who received a waiver of the TOEFL or of other accepted tests of English proficiency for admission, must also meet the requirement of

proficiency in spoken English before they are assigned to teaching work that involves oral communication with undergraduate students. To meet this requirement, those ITAs may use any of three options listed below:

- Presenting a TOEFL iBT speaking section score of 27 or higher.
- Receiving a score of 50 or higher on the [MSU Speaking Test](#)
- Taking [AAE 451](#) or [AAE 452](#) (ITA language support courses) and receiving a score of 50 or higher on the [ITA Oral Interaction Test \(ITAOI\)](#).

Individual exceptions from these requirements (on a case-by-case basis in rare circumstances) will be considered by the Graduate School in consultation with the ELC upon the request of the department and with the endorsement of the Associate Dean of the College.

## 14 University resources

In addition to those mentioned elsewhere in the handbook, the university offers a number of resources that may prove useful.

- 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.