PhD Handbook

Department of Linguistics
University of Rochester

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1   Introduction

At Rochester, cross-disciplinary, collaborative research is strongly encouraged. The linguistics faculty are grounded in the traditional fields of formal linguistics, employing theoretical, computational, and empirical methodologies to examine data and topics in syntax, semantics, pragmatics, phonetics, phonology, and morphology. Much of our research is carried out in collaboration with faculty and students in related fields. Refer to Graduate Studies Bulletin for a thorough overview of fields of study, courses, and faculty at the University of Rochester ("the university").

Linguistics has strong connections with Brain and Cognitive Sciences, Computer Science, and Philosophy, but we also have connections in other departments, such as Biomedical Engineering and departments at the Eastman School of Music. We are also a core member of Rochester's Center for Language Sciences, which provides research, training, and collaboration opportunities for students and faculty involved in language research.

Linguistics graduate students are housed in the Department of Linguistics ("the department") as their primary affiliation. Our graduate students have some shared space in Lattimore Hall and they typically have access to their advisor's lab space. The department houses a computational linguistics lab, a constraint-based grammar lab, an eye-tracking lab, a language documentation lab, a phonetics lab, a quantitative semantics lab, a sociolinguistics lab, and a syntax lab.

2   Requirements and expectations

2.1   Learning outcomes

We expect PhD students in the Department of Linguistics to have gained the following outcomes:

- High proficiency in core knowledge in linguistics

- High proficiency in their area of specialization

- High proficiency in research and scholarship

- High proficiency in communication of research results (oral and written)

2.2   Departmental expectations

Students are expected to be active participants in the department. This includes attending department events, such as but not limited to colloquia and joint labs. Students who cannot attend on a particular occasion should give advance notice to the Director of Graduate Studies (DGS).

2.3   Course requirements

Students must take at least eight 4-credit courses as well as LING 501.[1] The required eight courses must include LING 589, three other foundational courses, three advanced courses, and one elective. The elective may be a course either inside or outside the department and should be selected in consultation with the advisor. A list of introductory and non-introductory courses can be found below. Students should bear in mind that they should strive to become research active sooner than later, and that there is also the possibility of registering for research credits. *Please note that course codes and titles may change.*

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[1]Most students will take more than eight courses over the course of their graduate program. These requirements are the minimum required for the degree.

Foundational courses

    LING 410: Introduction to language sound systems

    LING 420: Introduction to grammatical systems

    LING 424: Introduction to computational linguistics

    LING 425: Introduction to semantic analysis

    LING 426: Morphology (*not offered yearly*)

    LING 589: Field methods

Advanced courses offered yearly

    LING 427: Topics in phonetics and phonology

    LING 450: Data science for linguistics

    LING 460: Syntactic theory

    LING 465: Formal semantics

    LING 470: Preserving diversity in language and culture

    LING 501: Methods in linguistic research

Advanced courses typically offered every other year

    LING 404: History of linguistic thought

    LING 405: Historical linguistics

    LING 428: Lexical semantics

    LING 440: Topics in language variation and change

    LING 461: Constraint-based syntax

    LING 466: Pragmatics

    LING 481: Statistical methods in computational linguistics

    LING 482: Deep learning methods in computational linguistics

Notes:

1. Other advanced courses are offered occasionally. Refer to the departmental website for updates on which other classes are offered in a particular year.

2. The courses offered in a particular semester are announced in the immediately prior semester.

3. If a student is pursuing a joint degree in another department, they should check what the requirements are in the other department and plan accordingly. This should be done in consultation with their program advisor.

2.4   Qualifying papers and advancing to candidacy

2.4.1   Requirements

Each student is required to complete two Qualifying Papers (QPs) – the first in the second year, the second in the third year. A QP is a paper of (near) publishable quality of a length that is appropriate for the area of specialization. Students may base the QP either partly or wholly on a paper that was written for a course. In line with the interdisciplinary emphasis of the program, the two QPs are expected to reflect breadth by, e.g., engaging with different specializations and/or research methodologies.

2.4.2   Committee and QP plan

Each QP has a committee consisting of a primary QP advisor and a secondary QP advisor. The advisors must be faculty members in the Department of Linguistics. The first QP must have an additional faculty member from *outside* the department as a third member; see §2.4.5 below. In consultation with their primary advisor, students may add an additional QP committee member who has relevant outside experience (i.e., a fourth member for QP1 or a third member for QP2).

     At the end of their first year, students select their QP1 committee in consultation with their advisor. Note that the QP committee may or may not include their advisor. At the end of their second year, students select their QP2 committee in consultation with their advisor.

     Students are expected to provide input on their preferred QP advisors. At the end of their first and second year, students submit their *QP Plan* – a short document consisting of i) a one-paragraph description of their indented QP project/area and ii) a list of 2 or 3 preferred research advisors for the QP. The QP Plan should be submitted by the student to their program advisor by **April 15**. Using this input, the department will assign QP committees by the end of the academic year. The students preferences will be taken into account, but these will be balanced against faculty expertise and faculty committee loads.

2.4.3   QP proposal

Students are expected to submit a *QP Proposal* for each of their QPs by **September 15** of the respective academic year (year 2 for QP1, year 3 for QP2). The proposal is between 1-2 pages long plus a bibliography, and should be submitted to the student's program advisor and QP committee.

Note: *The QP proposal is* not *the same thing as the QP plan.*

2.4.4   Timeline and defense

Students work with their research advisors on developing a concrete timeline for each qualifying paper. The final draft must be submitted at least 1 week before the QP defense, which takes place in a closed meeting with the committee.

     After the defense, the committee will assign one of these outcomes:

- Pass without revisions

- Minor revisions
  Expected timeline for completion: Within one month of the defense

- Major revisions
  Expected timeline for completion: By the end of the semester following the defense

- Fail

Minor revisions need only be approved by the primary QP advisor. Major revisions require approval by all QP committee members. A fail means that a) the student is placed on academic probation and b) they must restart the process for the QP in question from scratch, typically requiring a change in topic or direction.

2.4.5   Advancing to candidacy

The first qualifying paper is a university requirement for formal entry into PhD candidacy; in other words, QP1 is the department's Qualifying Exam. Students must also complete all required coursework before advancing to candidacy.

2.5   PhD dissertation

2.5.1   Thesis committee

In the Fall semester of their fourth year, the student assembles a thesis committee, which consists of at least three members. The following requirements hold:

- At least two of the committee members must be full-time tenure-track/tenured faculty with primary affiliations in the Department of Linguistics.

- The chair of the committee must be a tenure-track/tenured University of Rochester faculty member.

The committee is formed by the student and their program advisor. The committee is approved by the department by majority vote by **September 30**. The DGS will communicate the decision to the student and their advisor by the end of the following week.
Note: Once the committee is formed, the chair of the thesis committee takes over as the student's advisor.

2.5.2   Dissertation proposal

Students must prepare a dissertation proposal (min. 15 pages single spaced) including an appropriate bibliography. The proposal will be presented by the student in a private meeting with the committee at the end of the fall semester of the student's fourth year. If the committee determines that the proposal needs more work, another deadline will be set up for later that year.

2.5.3   Dissertation defense

A PhD dissertation must be presented in a public defense, following the submission of a (near)-final draft of the dissertation to the committee. The defense is scheduled by the committee and the student as an open departmental event, normally taking place in the last few weeks of the student's 5th year. The student may invite guests to the public defense, but numbers should be checked with the department ahead of time to ensure adequate space. After the defense, the committee confers and assigns one of these outcomes:

- Pass without revisions

- Minor revisions
  Expected timeline for completion: Within one month of the defense

- Major revisions
  Expected timeline for completion: By the end of the semester following the defense

- Fail

Minor revisions need only be approved by the thesis committee chair. Major revisions require approval by the entire thesis committee. A fail means that the student does not receive the PhD degree. They may receive an appropriate master's degree from those available in the Department of Linguistics, so long as they have completed all requirements for the master's degree.

Publication   After all required corrected have been made, the student uploads the final copy of the dissertation to ProQuest, following the university procedures.

Resources   Consult the UR Dissertation Manual for useful information about the procedures and format of the dissertation. There is also a lot of useful information on the Graduate Education resource page for PhD Students.

2.6   Summary of program requirements

Requirement	Completion
1. Eight courses + LING 501	Years 1-3
2. QP 1	Year 2
3. QP 2	Year 3
4. PhD thesis proposal	Beginning of Year 4
5. Dissertation & defense	Years 4-5
6. Two TA-ships	Years 2-5 (see §5)

3   Timeline and progress evaluation

3.1   Program Length

Students are normally expected to complete their PhD in five years; see Table 1 for a sample schedule.

YEAR 1	Fall	Spring
	LIN 501 Methods	LIN Elective
	LIN Core 1	LIN Core 3
	LIN Core 2	Breadth Elective
YEAR 2	Fall	Spring
	LIN Advanced 1	LIN Advanced 2
	LIN Elective	Breadth Elective
	Qualifying Paper 1	Breadth Elective
	TA	QP 1 (cont.)
YEAR 3	Fall	Spring
	Qualifying Paper 2	LIN Advanced 3
	Elective	TA
		QP 2 (cont.)

Table 1: Sample schedule

3.2   Evaluations and feedback

Students complete self-evaluations in the Spring semester of each year, which gives them an opportunity to reflect upon their progress and their strengths and weaknesses, and also to consider their future directions and needs.

After receiving self-evaluations, the faculty meet to discuss students' performance in coursework, their progression in completing the Program of Study, and current and future research activity. Students then receive a progress report from the DGS.

3.3   Academic probation

Minimum grades for courses or research work carrying graduate credit are C or S. However, a student can get credit for only one C during the course of their graduate studies.

3.3.1 Getting placed on academic probation

A student will be considered to have an unsatisfactory record and will be automatically placed on academic probation if any of the following situations occur:

- The student receives the grade of B- in two courses; or

- The student receives the grade of C or lower in one or more courses; or

Note: Students who receive their first and only C (or lower) grade in their final semester are not subject to academic probation. However, if the grade is not a pass, the student must ensure that they still have enough credits to graduate.

3.3.2 Consequences of academic probation

A student on academic probation cannot be awarded a graduate degree. Students in extenuating circumstances may appeal to the Director of Graduate Studies (Department of Linguistics) and the Dean of Graduate Studies (College/AS&E).

If a student receives a grade below B in two courses while on academic probation, the student is subject to removal from the program. In such a case, the student must petition the Dean of Graduate Studies to remain in the program. This petition must be approved by the Department Chair, and it must include a discussion of the reason for the poor performance and a plan for improved academic performance.

3.3.3 Removal from academic probation

A student will be removed from academic probation if the student completes 12 semester hours of graduate credits with no grade lower than B-.

4 Advising

4.1 Director of Graduate Studies

The DGS oversees the components of the graduate program and serves as a resource to students on administrative issues concerning their curricular and program requirements. For other issues, students can contact the Department Manager.

4.2 Program of study

Each student is expected to develop a Program of Study (PoS) in consultation with their advisor. The PoS is a document that lays out which courses the student will take in which years of the program. In general, the PoS should be updated by the end of each academic year, if necessary. It is not required to present a 5 year plan on the first PoS although it may be helpful for the advisor and student's internal deliberations to develop such a plan.

4.3 Advisors

Each student is assigned a faculty **program advisor** when they enter the program. Students work with their advisor on course selection to develop a PoS, to be approved by the DGS.

Students are encouraged/expected to meet with other faculty members during the first year in order to learn more about the department's research and determine future research advisors. At the end of the first year, students choose **research advisors** (primary and secondary) who will supervise their first QP. At the end of their second year, students choose research advisors for their second QP. The student should continue meeting with their program advisor as needed throughout the initial part of the program.

In their fourth year, at the latest, students are expected to form a thesis committee; see §2.5.1. Once the thesis committee has been formed, the thesis committee chair takes over as the student's advisor.

4.4 Advising concerns

Any issues relating to advising should be discussed with the Departmental Manager, DGS, or Department Chair, depending on the nature of the issue.

5 Teaching

The expectation is that each student will serve as a Teaching Assistant (TA) for at least two courses during their time in the program. Occasionally students may serve as the sole instructor for a course. If the course is a 200/400 level course, then in most cases students should have taken the course before they TA for that course.

5.1 Teaching load

Students will not be required to TA/teach more than two semesters. Any requests for additional teaching assignments will be addressed by the Director of Graduate Studies.

5.2 TA selection

TA assignments are made by the faculty at the end of the academic year for the following academic year and will be communicated to students shortly after the decision has been made.

5.3 TA eligibility

In order to be eligible to teach or TA students should be in good academic standing (i.e. not on academic or departmental probation).

5.4 TA training

The Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning (CETL) and The Learning Center are resources available to all students. Students are encouraged to take advantage of training that is offered through these programs, and the DGS will make every effort to communicate these opportunities to students. Additional resources are offered on the CETL website.

5.5 TA responsibilities

TAs are responsible for communicating with the course instructor on their responsibilities in that particular course. These may include: 1) regularly attending the course; 2) holding regular office hours; 3) grading papers or exams; 4) ad hoc meetings with the instructor and/or students.

5.6 TA evaluation

TAs will be evaluated by the instructor for that course, informally, and, if requested by the student TA, in a formal letter. If a student is serving as the sole instructor for a course, they may request to have a faculty member visit the course and write an evaluation, which will be included in their file. Any concerns about responsibilities and evaluation should be communicated with the instructor first, and then the Director of Graduate Studies if necessary.

6 University requirements and expectations

All students must adhere to college and university requirements for the degree, as outlined here.

6.1 Registration

A full-time graduate student is defined as a student who registers for at least 9 credits for the semester. Students are not required to maintain full-time status in order to complete the program; however, a lapse in full-time status may impact (i) eligibility for health insurance, (ii) the continuance of student loans, and (iii) visa status for international students.

Graduate students must register for 400 level courses when available (not 200 level; these are designated for undergraduates). As a graduate student, prerequisites are flexible, but courses taken at other universities may not exactly correlate with UR courses. Graduate students are able to register for any 400 level course, but it should be determined by the advisor if they have the appropriate background/knowledge to successfully complete the course. If it is recommended by the advisor that they take a 100 or 200 level course, they need to audit or sit-in on this course and get appropriate approvals to do so; see §6.4.

Note: *Registration must be completed within two weeks from the first day of classes, or a late registration fee will be charged.*

6.2 Continuation of status

Matriculated graduate students must maintain continuous registration (Fall and Spring) until they are awarded degrees, withdraw from the degree program, or are dropped from the degree program by the university. Students maintain continuous registration by registering for credit courses or one of the following courses: 899 or 999 (continuation of enrollment status).

This status is utilized as follows:

- It is considered full-time enrollment for all reporting purposes and satisfies government requirements for F-1 and J-1 international students to maintain full-time enrollment.

- It is for students who are not enrolled in full-time coursework but are, nonetheless, working full time on their degree requirements.

- It includes a relevant fee (often a dissertation fee), as well as other fees associated with full-time enrollment.

- Students are registered with specific reference to a faculty advisor, who is ultimately responsible for monitoring their full-time effort.

- The student has either completed all requirements for the degree other than the thesis or is enrolled in final coursework in addition to the work necessary for the degree requirements

- Students are eligible for federal loans.

- Students are eligible for university health insurance.

Note: 895 and 995 *do not* maintain full-time status, *do not* satisfy visa requirements for international students, and *do not* maintain eligibility for health insurance or federal loans. For further information, please see Regulations and University Policies Concerning Graduate Studies

6.3 Dropping courses

Dropping credit hours after the seventh week of a semester or retroactively after the conclusion of the semester is not permitted if the change affects the student's time status (i.e., if full-time status changes to part-time status) for that particular semester. That is, if a student drops a class another class must be taken as a replacement, or the student may lose full-time status.

6.4   Taking additional classes not for credit

6.4.1   Auditing a class

Auditing a course within Arts, Sciences & Engineering is permitted for full-time and part-time graduate students when suggested by the faculty advisor and approved by the course instructor.
Note: There is a fee to audit a course that is not covered by tuition scholarships.

The audited course will appear on the student's transcript provided the student attends throughout the course. Auditing a course is worth zero credits and a grade is not issued. Students who do wish to receive credit for such a course may do so by i) changing the registration in the office of the graduate registrar prior to the end of the sixth full week of classes in a given semester, and ii) paying the required tuition for the course. Note that once a course has been audited, it cannot be repeated for credit without prior approval of the Dean of Graduate Studies.

6.4.2   Audit waivers

AS&E GEPA policy is that, "Students may, in special circumstances, petition the AS&E Dean of Graduate Education for a waiver of the audit fee. The petition to cover the audit fee must be submitted before the end of the add/drop period via the Audit Fee Waiver Request Form, which must be signed by the student's faculty advisor and the course instructor. Note that the petition will not be approved without a clear rationale for why the student cannot (i) take the class for credit as part of their existing tuition waiver and (ii) why that class is beneficial for their program of study."

The university discourages entirely unofficial attendance ("sitting in"). Therefore, if a student wishes to sit in on a class they should first ask for permission of the course instructor and then submit an audit waiver request as per the policy above.

6.4.3   Grades

Grades for graduate students are reported on one of two systems:

1. A (excellent), A–, B+, B (good), B–, C (poor), and E (failure)

2. S (satisfactory), E (failure)

The grade S may not be used for any student in a class in which the other students are graded on the A–E scale. Students who receive a C, E or two B-'s in courses or in research credits are automatically placed on probation; see §3.3.

The following grades are also assigned to courses: I (assignments not completed) and W (withdrawal from a course). Courses or research for which a student has registered and which are graded I (incomplete) must be completed within the time period stated by the professor, typically before the end of the following semester. Students should refer to Grades in the Regulations and University Policies Concerning Graduate Studies. It is the responsibility of the student to complete the work; the professor may replace the grade of incomplete with IE (failure) or with a passing grade at any time.
Note: *Retroactive dropping of credit hours after the conclusion of a semester is not permitted if the change affects the student's full-time/part-time status for that particular semester.*

7   Community values

7.1   Code of conduct

The Department of Linguistics encourages the free exchange of information and ideas, with the aim of promoting dialogue and providing a platform for the dissemination of knowledge reflective of the values of the language science community at Rochester. Disagreement and argumentation are welcome and important to discourse but must be done within the contingent rules of respectful behavior, which include, but are not limited to, tolerance of differences, reason and open-mindedness.

7.2   Unethical conduct

Students are expected to meet the ethical standards set out here, in the document *Regulations and University Policies Concerning Graduate Studies*. This document briefly overviews university rules and regulations in the section titled "Standards of Student Conduct" and includes rules for academic honesty, as well as due process in reviews considering disciplinary action. Unethical conduct of any kind, including academic dishonesty or misconduct involving scientific or professional behavior, will be grounds for disciplinary action. See this document on student conduct for further details.

7.3   Use of Department and University equipment

The research labs and computers and equipment in the labs are the property of the Department of Linguistics and the University of Rochester.

- Any computers or equipment in the labs—including audio and video recorders, microphones, headphones, cables and adapters—are *shared resources* and are offered to those working in the labs on research projects or are offered by a faculty member to those working under their research supervision.

- For any portable equipment—including digital recorders—students who take this equipment out of the labs are taking full responsibility for the borrowed equipment in their possession. This includes paying for repair or replacement if the equipment is damaged while in the student's possession.

- Students are required to adhere to all equipment usage instructions given to them by the responsible faculty member(s). Those who do not adhere to instructions will lose the privilege of using the equipment.

7.4   Departmental probation

The faculty may recommend that a student be placed on departmental probation instead of, or in addition to, college academic probation.

    The department wishes its students to succeed in terms of academic performance, research ability, and placement in their chosen profession: Any student having academic difficulty or problems of any nature (financial, personal or professional) that impede their progress toward the degree is strongly encouraged to discuss them with their mentor/program advisor, with area faculty, or with the DGS, and to seek out resource people in the department or in the university who are able to provide help for those problems. The DGS and Department Manager can help students identify relevant resources outside the department.

7.4.1 Getting placed on departmental probation

Departmental probation may be recommended if a student is not making satisfactory research progress or is not meeting other expectations:

- Sufficient participation in classes designated by instructors as requiring such participation.

- Courteous behavior, including verbal behavior, toward faculty, staff, peers, research participants, and consultants.

Probation may also be recommended in cases of problematic behavior, particularly the following:

- Behavior that interferes with effective functioning as a student, research scientist, or professional in training, including:

  – Unreceptiveness to supervisory feedback

  – Difficulties in working collaboratively with supervisors or colleagues

  – Chronic tardiness in meeting academic and professional responsibilities

7.4.2 Removal from departmental probation

Students placed on probation will receive a written report from the Director of Graduate Studies (DGS) or Department Chair. This report will include a statement of the reasons for the action and any applicable deadlines. For students being placed on probation, the report will include a statement of the conditions that must be met to be removed from that status.

If progress continues to be unsatisfactory, it may be recommended that the student be dismissed from graduate study.

7.4.3 Review of decision

By written request to the Department Chair, students may request a review of a decision for departmental probation or for dismissal, or students may submit a written statement for inclusion in their file. Although it is the usual practice to place students on probation at least one semester prior to dismissal.

7.4.4 Reinstatement

If students have met the conditions of their probation, the faculty will vote to reinstate them. A majority vote of the faculty is required for reinstatement. Students whose performance is judged satisfactory according to the above standards will receive a written report of the evaluation from the DGS or the Department Chair.

7.4.5 Faculty oversight

In addition to this formal evaluation procedure, problems or difficulties concerning graduate students are generally considered by the appropriate group of faculty as they arise. This includes, at least and unless warranted otherwise, the student's advisor, the Director of Graduate Studies and the Department Chair.