Graduate programs in linguistics: roadmap for current students

Maintained by the Graduate Supervisor in Linguistics

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1.   General information

1.1. Terminology

In this document, the term *Graduate Supervisor* refers to the person who oversees LING graduate programs in SLaLS. The term *academic supervsior* or *primary supervisor* refers to the faculty member guiding a particular student's academic work, such as their QP, MA, or PhD thesis.

1.2. Where to find information

This guide is specifically written for students in the linguistics (LING) graduate programs. General information about course offerings and regulations for graduate students is found in the Graduate Calendar. It is the first go-to place for question about how something works.

> https://calendar.carleton.ca/grad/

General graduate forms and policies:

> https://gradstudents.carleton.ca/resources-page/forms-policies/

Information on awards and funding:

> https://gradstudents.carleton.ca/awards-and-funding/

Linguistics-specific questions can be addressed to the Graduate Supervisor, and to the Program Administrator. Their contact information is found on the School website:

> https://carleton.ca/slals/

International students should be familiar with the International Students Support office:

> https://carleton.ca/isso/

1.3. Program duration and extensions

The duration of the MA program is two years (six terms, including summers). Many students are able to finish in five terms, without the final summer, defending in May of Year 2. Extensions beyond six terms are possible in extenuating circumstances, but there is a hard limit of 3 terms for MA program extensions.

The duration of the PhD program is now set at six years. This means that taking six years does not count as an 'extension', but most funding and TAship packages are shorter than that, typically four years for scholarships or five years for TAships. Therefore it may be in the student's best interest to finish earlier than the maximum possible time. Extensions are also possible in special circumstances.

If a need for an extension arises, students should contact their primary supervisor and the Graduate Supervisor as soon as possible.

1.4. Summer registration

Generally speaking, students are expected to register in all terms, including summers. "Registering" in this context means taking a course or enrolling in a non-credit milestone such as Qualifying Paper or Thesis. Under some circumstances students may wish to take a summer (or some other term) off. There are some complexities here; make sure you talk to the Graduate Supervisor before making any decisions. Some general points to note (see also regulation 8.1 and 8.2 of the Calendar):

- There are two ways you can take time off: either by simply not registering, or by requesting a formal leave of absence.

- Only the latter option (leave of absence) is available if you are registered in the thesis, or any milestone where a grade of IP has been assigned. According to regulation 8.2, "continuous registration" applies in these circumstances. Failing to register will result in loss of status, i.e. you would have to reapply to the program.

- Otherwise, if you are not registered in the thesis or do not have any outstanding IP grades, you may not register for up to three terms without loss of status.

- If you are an international student, there may be immigration consequences for taking time off. Talk to the ISSO before making any decisions. For immigration purposes, the summer term counts as a "regularly scheduled break" in our Masters program, but not in our PhD.

- If you are not registered or take a leave of absence, you lose access to University resources for that term. Importantly, you would not be covered by Carleton's liability insurance, which would

normally protect you in any school-related activities. You also lose access to the library and to supervision resources.

1.5. TAShips

As part of their admissions offer, some students receive TAships, called "Priority TAships" (PTA). These TAships run in Fall and Winter semesters. The Associate Director of SLaLS assigns TAs to courses based on preferences and needs. Our students TA courses both within and outside of linguistics.

Students without a PTA may also apply for "out-of-priority TAships" (OPTA). These are given based on need and funding available to students who do not otherwise have a TAship, or have exhausted their priority TAships. In very rare cases students with a PTA can receive an OPTA in the Summer term. Applications for OPTA are made on Carleton Central.

1.6. Article 17 teaching

PhD students, both domestic and international, may be offered contract instructor positions to teach undergraduate courses. This is goverend by Article 17 of the CUPE4600 Unit 2 Collective Agreement. Such appointments are made at the discretion of the Employer, based on teaching need. If you are interested in being considered for this opportunity, please contact the Graduate Supervisor.

1.7. Grading in graduate classes

In our graduate programs, a passing grade is a B-. Any lower grade will result in the course not couting toward the degree, similar to receiving an F in an undergraduate course. From the graduate calendar:

> A grade of B- or better must normally be obtained in each course credited towards the master's degree. A candidate may, with the support of the departmental Graduate Supervisor/associate chair (graduate affairs) and the approval of the Dean of the Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Affairs, be allowed a grade of C+ in 1.0 credit. Some programs do not permit the C+ option and apply a B- minimum rule.

Additionally, students in both the PhD and MA programs must maintain a 10.0 GPA.

All milestones, including Theses, Comp exams, Proposals, and QP are graded on a SAT/UNSAT basis. One exception is the Research Essay for Masters students in the essay stream, which is graded on a letter basis.

1.8. Repeatable courses

Core linguistics 5000-level graduate courses may be repeated for credit up to two times. This includes LING 5004, 5005, 5007, 5009, 5077, and 5505, i.e. all the 5000-level courses that are not combined graduate/undergraduate.

1.9. Academic supervisor

Even though we do not at this time require students to establish a formal relationship with a primary academic supervisor prior to admission, we encourage students do so as early as possible, ideally in the first semester of their program. That faculty member not only guides the thesis research, but also serves as an academic guide more generally, and a first point of contact for questions and concerns about the program.

Students should be familiar with all the faculty members in the program, with respect to their research interests and expertise. If unsure who to work with, students should approach several faculty members and the Graduate Supervisor and ask for advice.

1.10. Committees

There are two kinds of entities called "committees". An *advisory committee* is an optional and informal group of faculty members who assist the primary supervisor in guiding the student's research throughout its progress. Advisory committees can be formed by the student in consultation with their primary supervisor. It is the student's and/or the primary supervisor's responsibility to contact potential members and ask them to participate on such committees. The Graduate Supervisor can provide input when needed. The Graduate Supervisor should be informed of the committee membership when it is finalized, but does not formally approve it. Advisory committees, especially for PhD students, can easily change membership over time and from one stage of the student's progress to the next, though it would make sense to continue with the same group if things are working well.

The second, more formal kind of committee, is an *examination committee*. This is a group of internal and external faculty members who participate in thesis defences. There are regulations about the composition of these committees, especially for the PhD. See details under specific programs. Examinations committees do not need to be established until relatively close to the defence.

1.11. Letter of understanding

Students and their primary academic advisors should discuss and sign the *Letter of understanding*, attached at the end of this guide. It outlines their mutual responsibilities, particularly relating to timing of feedback. Students should abide by the general expectations relating to academic reponsibilities as laid out in the letter at all times.

1.12. Annual evaluation

Every year by March 15th students should fill out the *Annual review* form, attached at the end of this guide. It is an information-sharing tool for all faculty members to keep track of students' progress, assess the health of the programs, identify any issues of concern, and assist students where needed.

2. MA in Linguistics

The MA in Linguistics is available in two versions, the **thesis** and the **research essay** pathway. Most students are admitted into the thesis stream. Switching into the essay stream is possible, on consultation with the primary supervisor and the Graduate Supervisor. The main difference between the thesis and essay is in the scope and depth of research. Due to the course requirements, switching from the thesis to the essay pathway is most practically achievable if done prior to the fall of year 2.

2.1. Roadmap

Thesis stream:

Consult with Graduate Supervisor on course selection, if needed	Summer before Year 1
Meet with Graduate Supervisor and academic supervisor, if already selected	September – October of Year 1
Apply for external funding	Early fall of Year 1
Complete required coursework (2.5 credits)	Year 1, including Summer, with one course possibly delayed until Year 2
Select academic supervisor	Winter of Year 1 at the latest; students are encouraged to select academic supervisor earlier
Form thesis advisory committee	Summer between Year 1 and Year 2
Write thesis proposal	Winter-Summer of Year 1, due Aug. 31st
Defend thesis proposal	By Sept. 30th of Year 2
Research and write thesis	Year 2
Defend thesis	Summer of Year 2

Essay stream:

Consult with Graduate Supervisor on course selection, if needed	Summer before Year 1
Meet with Graduate Supervisor and academic supervisor, if already selected	September – October of Year 1
Apply for external funding	Early fall of Year 1
Complete required coursework (4.0 credits)	Years 1 and 2
Select academic supervisor	End of Year 1 at the latest; students are encouraged to select academic supervisor earlier
Complete essay	Year 2

2.2. Explanations: thesis stream

These explanations apply to the thesis stream. For the essay stream, see below.

Initial meeting

Students who are admitted to the program do not need to formally have a academic supervisor finalized. In many cases, students have a clear study plan and an academic supervisor lined up. Early in the program, in September or October of Year 1, students will meet with the Graduate Supervisor to discuss their study plans and possible academic supervisor selection.

Coursework

Students will be enrolled in courses mainly in Year 1 Fall & Winter, although they may continue to take courses in Year 2 if a desired course is not offered in Year 1, or they wish to take only 2.0 credits of courses in Year 1. It is not advised to postpone more than 1 course until the second year.

External funding

Students are generally expected to apply for external funding, even if they already have a funding package. External funding deadlines (OGS, SSHRC) are in the fall. Watch for communication from Graduate Studies and/or the Graduate Supervisor about deadlines.

Academic supervisor and advisory committee

After the academic supervisor is selected, students may form an advisory committee that will provide guidance on their research program. The committee would typically consist of the academic supervisor (a faculty member), possibly a co-supervisor (a faculty member or adjunct research professor), and other faculty members or outside experts. It is up to the student and supervisor to decide whether, when, and how to involve the other committee members in the work. Ideally, such a committee should be formed in the summer after year 1, so that it would be available for the thesis proposal defence early fall of year 2.

On the examination committee, see below.

Thesis proposal

When the student has a comprehensive research plan, they will write a thesis proposal, submit it to the Thesis Committee, and defend the proposal at a meeting that will be similar in format to the

thesis defence. The thesis proposal contains a concrete statement of the research plans and methodology of the thesis, and possibly a literature review, and certainly a bibliography. The exact length and format of the thesis proposal varies depending on the specifics of the project. Expectations will be articulated by the primary academic supervisor, in consultation with the Graduate Supervisor if needed.

The student should start working on the proposal as soon as the research plans are clear and an academic supervisor is selected, and continue working over the summer between years 1 and 2. The proposal is due to the adivsor and advisory committee on August 31st. The proposal will be defended at a meeting of the thesis advsiory committee, to take place by Sept. 30th of Year 2.

Thesis, defence, and examination committee

Once the proposal is approved, the student can proceed with their research activities as stated in the proposal, although it is understood that the plans may need to be modified as the research progresses. The student will work closely with the academic supervisor, and consult with other advisory committee memebers and other faculty as needed.

The thesis examination committee should consist, minimally, of the primary supervisor and (co)supervisors, at least one other faculty member, typically a member of the advisory committee, and one additional *external* member. The external member should be at arms-length from the thesis research, i.e. should not have participated in the advisory committee. The student should not be in contact with the external member about the thesis; it is the primary supervisor's responsibility to contact them. The Graduate Supervisor should be informed of the selection. Ideally, the external member should come from outside of the student's home unit (LING), but in some cases, with the approval of the Graduate Supervisor, may be in LING.

A defence copy of the thesis should be submitted to the examination committee three weeks in advance of the defence.

The thesis defence will take place by the Summer of Year 2. Students are encouraged to defend earlier rather than later, in case revisions are required by the committee.

2.3. Essay stream

The Research Essay option is designed for students whose career goals lead them to prefer coursework over the in-depth research experience provided by the Thesis pathway.

Similar to the thesis stream, students in the essay stream will consult with the Graduate Supervisor at the beginning of their program, in September or October of Year 1.

Students in the Research Essay option will take four full terms of courses (years 1 and 2): 1.0 credit in core theoretical linguistics, 1.0 credit in theoretical linguistics or language and cognition, and 2.0 credits in LING electives or CGSC, ALDS, or FREN courses related to language, cognition and research methods. The electives that are selected will depend on the strength of the students' linguistics background and individual interests.

Students are generally expected to apply for external funding, even if they already have a funding package. External funding deadlines (OGS, SSHRC) are in the fall. Watch for communication from FGPA and/or the Graduate Supervisor about deadlines.

The primary supervisor should be selected by the end of Year 1. Students are expected to start their research essay in Year 1 Summer or Year 2 Fall. It should normally take two terms to complete. While there is no formal committee providing guidance to the students, they are encouraged to consult with other faculty members in Linguistics and other academic units. A member of the Graduate Studies Committee will be a second reader for the essay, with the decision on the final grade made by both the supervisor and second reader.

3. PhD in Linguistics, Language Documentation, and Revitalization

3.1. Roadmap

Consult with Graduate Supervisor on course selection, if needed	August before Year 1
Meet with Graduate Supervisor and academic supervisor, if already selected	September – October Year 1
Apply for external funding	Early fall of Year 1 (and subsequent years)
Complete LING 6801, ALDS 6407, and 1.5 credits of other coursework	Year 1
Select academic supervisor	End of Year 1 at the latest; students are encouraged to select supervisor earlier
Form QP advisory committee	Year 1 Summer
Defend QP	Year 2 Fall
Complete and defend comp exam	Year 2 Winter
Write thesis prospectus	Year 2 Winter – Year 3 Fall
Defend thesis prospectus	Year 3 Fall
Defend thesis	Year 6 Summer, or earlier
Submit final thesis	Year 6 Summer, or earlier

3.2. Explanations

Initial meeting and academic supervisor selection

Students who are admitted to the program do not need to formally have a academic supervisor finalized. In many cases, students have a clear study plan and an academic supervisor lined up. Early in the program, in September or October of Year 1, students will meet with the Graduate Supervisor to discuss their study plans and possible academic supervisor selection. An academic supervisor should be selected by the end of Year 1; students are encouraged to do so earlier.

External funding

Students are generally expected to apply for external funding, even if they already have a funding package. External funding deadlines (OGS, SSHRC) are in the fall. Watch for communication from Graduate Studies and/or the Graduate Supervisor about deadlines. Funding is especially important for PhD students whose research plans involve documentation. Students who are not successful in a given year are expected to re-apply in subsequent years. Students are also expected to apply for funding from organizations such as the Canadian Studies Network, Endangered Languages Fund, and SOAS (University of London), which all provide grants for field research.

Coursework

The two core courses for this program are LING 6801 [1.0 credit] (Language Documentation) and ALDS 6407 [0.5 credit] (Revitalization Policy). These will be taken in the student's first year of study. Another 1.5 credits in electives will be selected from LING courses or ALDS, CGSC and ANTH courses related to language, linguistics, cognition, or research methodology. The electives that are selected will depend on the strength of the students' linguistics background and individual interests. All coursework should normally be completed by the end of Year 1 Winter, although in some cases a course can be postponed until the second year.

Advisory committee

After the primary supervisor is selected, students may form an advisory committee that will provide guidance on their research program, starting with the QP. The committee would typically consist of an academic supervisor (a faculty member), possibly a co-supervisor (a faculty member or adjunct research professor), and other faculty members or outside experts. It is up to the student and supervisor to decide whether, when, and how to involve the other committee members in the work.

Advisory committees for PhD students may need to change over time as the research topics change between the QP and the Thesis.

On the examination committee, see below.

Qualifying Paper (QP) and QP defence

Students will be required to write a Qualifying Paper (QP) that will assess their potential for conducting original research and/or demonstrate an application of linguistic theory to language documentation or revitalization. Once the student has decided on a topic for their QP, they may form an adivsory committee in consultation with their academic supervisor and Graduate Supervisor (see above). QP topics and styles may vary widely; generally, a QP is expected to be a work of original research, intermediate in scope between an undergraduate honours thesis and a Master's thesis.

Students will defend their QP orally, and the defence should take place by the end of Year 2 Fall. A QP defence committee will normally be identical to the advisory committee, or will be similarly constituted if an advisory committee had not been formed. There is no formal requirement of an external member at the QP defence stage, but students and primary advisory may involve outside experts if warranted. QP defences are not formally regulated by the University; they are an opportunity for students to experience defence-like procedures before their actual Thesis defence.

Comprehensive Examination (Comp Exam)

After completing their coursework students must pass a Comp Exam. The exam will consist of 1-3 written questions asked by the student's supervisor(s) in consultation with the advisory committee. The questions will relate to the student's intended topic of research for the PhD thesis, and will aim to both test the breadth and depth of the background knowledge and lay the foundation for elements of the thesis, in particular the background and literature review. A written response to the posed questions will be submitted within 10 weeks, and students will orally defend their responses at a meeting of the advisory committee. Students should complete the Comp Exam by the end of Year 2 Winter, which is after their QP defence and before their Prospectus defence.

Thesis Prospectus

The thesis prospectus is a document that specifies the background, direction and content of the student's research program that will result in the PhD dissertation. Before beginning work on the prospectus, students will form a thesis advisory committee, in consultation with the primary supervisor and Graduate Supervisor. This committee will oversee their dissertation research. In most cases the thesis advisory committee will be nearly identitcal to the committees used at prior stages (QP and Comp Exam). The committee will consist of the supervisor, an internal faculty member from

linguistics, and an additional faculty member who may be from outside linguistics or Carleton. The prospectus should be between 40 and 60 double-spaced pages. It should contain a literature review, state the research questions, methodology for carrying out the research, and some preliminary results and/or analyses, if available. Students will be required to orally defend the prospectus in a prospectus defence similar in format to the QP and thesis defences. The prospectus defence should take place by the end of Year 3 Fall.

PhD Thesis

After defending their prospectus in Year 3 Fall, students will have 2.5 years in which to complete their thesis, assuming they take the full 6 years in the program. The thesis will require a language documentation or revitalization component. Documentation could include the writing of a dictionary or grammar of an Indigenous or other minority language, and in the case where those already exist, the documentation research could focus on a particular aspect of the grammar such as phonology, morphology or syntax. A thesis centred on language revitalization would involve determining what can and needs to be done to prevent further loss in endangered languages. Both components require working closely with speakers of the language under study: in documentation, to record the properties of their language, and in revitalization, to develop strategies and resources necessary to maintain and protect their language.

PhD thesis *examination committees* are regulated by the University. Details are found here:

https://gradstudents.carleton.ca/wp-content/uploads/Thesis-Examination-Policy-revised-Jan-2022-1.pdf

In the weeks prior to the planned defence, students and their primary supervisors should consult with the Graduate supervisor regarding examination committee membership. In addition to the members of the advisory committee, the examination committee must include two *external* members, one from outside of the student's home unit, and another from outside of Carleton.

Letter of understanding between graduate students in linguistics and the School of Linguistics and Language Studies

Updated 2023-07-10

1. General expectations
1.1. Students

Logistic
- Students will check their audits regularly and ensure they fulfill the program requirements, contacting the Graduate Supervisor with any questions.
- Students will be familiar with the academic regulations laid out in the Graduate Calendar, as well as the information in the Graduate Guide for Linguistics.
- Students will check their Carleton email at least once a day on working days during the fall and winter semester and at least once a week at other times.
- Students (especially at the PhD level) are encouraged to maintain a current CV.
- Students will seek out and apply for external funding.

Academic
- Students will take ownership and initiative with respect to their research projects, seeking resources and advising when needed.
- Students will attend class regularly and meet regularly with their academic supervisor.
- Students will sign up for the Linguistics Reading Group mailing list (send an email to `join-culing@lists.carleton.ca`), and are strongly encouraged to participate in reading group meetings and the academic life of the department.
- Students will get approval before using data obtained from another source, such as their academic supervisor.

Dissemination
- Students will participate in the Annual linguistics graduate conference, held every April. Masters students should present their work at least once, PhD students approximately every other year.
- Students will strive to disseminate their work in conferences and publications, but will ask for feedback on abstracts or papers from their academic supervisor prior to submission.

1.2. Faculty

- The Graduate Supervisor will be available for meetings to discuss progress in the program and any issues that arise.
- Academic supervisors will meet regularly with their students and help ensure their timely progress through the program.
- Academic supervisors will set clear expectations about progress and timelines.
- Academic supervisors and other faculty will respond to emails from students within 1–2 working days during fall and winter semesters and within a week at other times.
- Academic supervisors and other faculty will provide feedback on students' work within a timely manner, including thesis and QP drafts, and any work disseminated beyond Carleton. The exact timeframes are to be agreed individually (see below).

2. Individual understanding between student and academic supervisor

Frequency of meetings: _____

Approximate research hours/week: _____

Other expectations: _____

_____

_____

How much time does the academic supervisor need to provide feedback on...

presentation slides _____

abstract _____

funding app _____

short paper/chapter _____

long paper/thesis _____

Name: [   ]   ☐ PhD   ☐ MA   Year started [   ]

Anticipated year of completion [   ]

Linguistics Graduate Student Annual Review
Return this form to the Graduate Supervisor by March 15th annually
Please also attach your current CV

Your academic supervisor(s): [   ]

Courses taken since summer of previous year

[   ]

Milestones completed since March of previous year (e.g. proposal, QP), and date completed

[   ]

Presentations or publications since March of the previous year, including any work that you submitted and that was not accepted

[   ]

Awards and scholarships you applied for since March of the previous year, and results of these applications

[   ]

RAships or other participation in research groups

[   ]

Which talks or reading group presentations have you attended this year? List any non-required academically-related activity here:

Anything else you would like the linguistics faculty to know about your progress or concerns?

What are your specific plans for next year: milestones, projects, applications for funding, etc.?