

LINGUISTICS, M.A.

The M.A. in Linguistics at USC is a degree in general linguistics. Our M.A. program is designed to provide students with the broadest possible background in linguistics and encourages them to take advantage of the wide range of opportunities presented by the Program's faculty and to discover connections between the various subdisciplines of the field. It is possible for all credit hours earned in a graduate certificate program in TESOL at USC to apply to this degree. Please speak to an advisor to see how these hours apply in your situation.

Learning Outcomes

1. Students will demonstrate knowledge of general linguistics, including phonological and syntactic structure, and proficiency in problem-solving skills.
2. Students will demonstrate effective oral communication of basic linguistic knowledge and knowledge in the core areas of phonology and syntax.
3. Students will demonstrate knowledge of a subdiscipline in the field of linguistics and its application to general linguistics.

Admissions

Required Documents

- **Official Transcripts.** Please submit transcripts for all prior undergraduate and graduate study.
- **3 Letters of Recommendation.**
- **Personal Statement.** Please ensure that your statement addresses the following questions, though you do not need to address them in the exact order below (maximum 1,000 words total).
 - a. *What kind of linguistic research do you see yourself conducting in graduate school? Be as specific as possible, offering examples as relevant.*
 - b. *How have you learned about linguistics, whether through classes, readings, seminars, or other experiences? What insights have you gained that further stimulated your interest and reinforced your conviction that you are well-suited for this field?*
 - c. *What relevant experience, training, or coursework do you have, given the type of research you wish to pursue (e.g., quantitative, qualitative, or formal research)?*
 - d. *Are there any gaps or discrepancies in your academic record that you would like to explain?*
 - e. *Why do you want to join our program, given the specific training and faculty expertise that we offer?*
 - f. *What makes you a strong candidate for graduate school and likely to have a successful career in linguistics?*
- **TOEFL/IELTS Score** (for international applicants for whom English is not a first language)

Degree Requirements (30 Hours minimum)

Non-Thesis Option

Coursework (36 Hours minimum)

Candidates must take a minimum of 12 courses (36 credit hours) of graduate work, to include the following:

Core Courses (9 Hours)

Course	Title	Credits
LING 710	Introduction to Phonology	3
LING 720	Introduction to Syntax	3
One more graduate-level core linguistics course in one of the following: phonetics, phonology, morphology, syntax, semantics or pragmatics ¹		3
Total Credit Hours		9

¹ Including LING 600: Survey of Linguistics.

Note: Other courses may be used to satisfy this requirement pending the approval of the student's advisor and the graduate director. Students may choose depth (another syntax or phonology course) or breadth (another core area).

Special Field (9 Hours)

- M.A. students should take at least 3 courses (9 credit hours) in a LING area approved by the student's advisor.

Secondary Field (9 Hours)

- M.A. students should take at least 3 LING courses (9 credit hours) in an area outside of their special field.

Elective Courses (9 Hours)

- M.A. students should take 3 additional LING courses approved by the student's advisor (9 hours). Permission is required for the inclusion of any non-LING course in the program of study.

Note: LING 806: The Graduate School's official policy on independent study is to allow up to 6 hours towards the M.A.

Special Note on Grades

Graduate students whose GPA falls below 3.00 will be placed on academic probation by The Graduate School and allowed one calendar year in which to raise the cumulative GPA to at least 3.00. Students who do not reach a cumulative 3.00 grade point average during the probationary period will be suspended from graduate study and will not be permitted to enroll for further graduate course work as a degree or a non-degree student.

Foreign Language Requirement

The study of languages is a necessary tool for linguists and candidates must demonstrate knowledge of at least one foreign language. This can be accomplished in one of the following ways:

- successful completion of an intensive reading course in a language - approved by The Graduate School - while a graduate student at USC,
- successful completion of a course at the intermediate level of language proficiency no more than six years prior to award of the degree,
- a passing grade on a language reading proficiency examination administered by the USC Department of Language, Literatures, and Cultures,
- completing 6 hours of coursework in a non-Indo-European language with a grade of at least a B.

Students seeking the master's degree will have three opportunities to pass the language course or satisfy the reading proficiency examination. Nonnative speakers of English may select English as a foreign language, upon submission of the Certification in English as a Foreign Language for Masters and Doctoral Programs.

Comprehensive Examination

Students must pass a comprehensive exam that includes an oral component in which students must demonstrate effective oral communication of their knowledge of general linguistics and the core areas of phonology and syntax as they apply to the student's primary field. Students will be examined by a committee of two Linguistics Program faculty members, typically including the faculty advisor and a faculty member representing the student's special field.

Students who pursue the non-thesis M.A. option will submit to their comprehensive exam committee one written work product from one of their specialization courses that will serve as the foundation for the oral examination.

The exam committee will produce an overall rating of Pass/Fail by assessing basic knowledge of general linguistics; basic knowledge of phonology; basic knowledge of syntax; ability to apply knowledge to a given problem.

The oral examination should be scheduled **no later than the middle of the fourth/last semester**. Upon successful completion of an oral comprehensive examination, the examination committee chair will inform the Graduate Director.

Thesis Option

Coursework (30 Hours minimum)

Candidates must take a minimum of 10 courses (30 credit hours) of graduate work, to include the following:

Core Courses (9 Hours)

Course	Title	Credits
LING 710	Introduction to Phonology	3
LING 720	Introduction to Syntax	3
	One more graduate-level core linguistics course in one of the following: phonetics, phonology, morphology, syntax, semantics or pragmatics ¹	3
Total Credit Hours		9

¹ Including LING 600: Survey of Linguistics.

Note: Other courses may be used to satisfy this requirement pending the approval of the student's advisor and the graduate director. Students may choose depth (another syntax or phonology course) or breadth (another core area).

Special Field (6 Hours)

- M.A. students should take at least 2 courses (6 credit hours) in a LING area approved by the student's advisor.

Elective Courses (12 Hours)

- M.A. students should take four LING courses outside of the special field plus approved by the student's advisor (12 hours). Permission is required for the inclusion of any non-LING course in the program of study.

Note: LING 806: The Graduate School's official policy on independent study is to allow up to 6 hours towards the M.A.

Thesis Hours (3 Hours)

Course	Title	Credits
LING 799	Thesis Preparation	3
Total Credit Hours		3

Only 3 hours of LING 799 may appear on the student's Program of Study. Any additional credits needed to complete the thesis should be taken under LING 806.

Note: Students who proceed from the M.A. to the Ph.D. will need to take one more core course to satisfy the Ph.D. core requirements if LING 600 was counted as an M.A. core requirement.

Special Note on Grades

Graduate students whose GPA falls below 3.00 will be placed on academic probation by The Graduate School and allowed one calendar year in which to raise the cumulative GPA to at least 3.00. Students who do not reach a cumulative 3.00 grade point average during the probationary period will be suspended from graduate study and will not be permitted to enroll for further graduate course work as a degree or a non-degree student.

Foreign Language Requirement

The study of languages is a necessary tool for linguists and candidates must demonstrate knowledge of at least one foreign language. This can be accomplished in one of the following ways:

- successful completion of an intensive reading course in a language - approved by The Graduate School - while a graduate student at USC,
- successful completion of a course at the intermediate level of language proficiency no more than six years prior to award of the degree,
- a passing grade on a language reading proficiency examination administered by the USC Department of Language, Literatures, and Cultures,
- completing 6 hours of coursework in a non-Indo-European language with a grade of at least a B.

Students seeking the master's degree will have three opportunities to pass the language course or satisfy the reading proficiency examination. Nonnative speakers of English may select English as a foreign language, upon submission of the Certification in English as a Foreign Language for Masters and Doctoral Programs.

Comprehensive Examination

Students must pass a comprehensive exam that includes an oral component in which students must demonstrate effective oral communication of their knowledge of general linguistics and the core areas of phonology and syntax as they apply to the student's primary field. Students will be examined by a committee of two Linguistics Program faculty members, typically the faculty advisor and a faculty member representing the student's special field.

Students who pursue the thesis M.A. option must successfully **defend the thesis proposal**, demonstrating knowledge of previous research in the field and methods for data collection and analysis. The written thesis proposal serves as the foundation for the oral examination. This should normally be completed (by full-time students) **in the 3rd semester**.

The exam committee will produce an overall rating of Pass/Fail by assessing basic knowledge of general linguistics; basic knowledge of phonology; basic knowledge of syntax; basic knowledge of the sub-field; ability to apply knowledge to a given problem. Upon successful

completion of an oral comprehensive examination, the examination committee chair will inform the Associate Director.

Thesis Requirement

In their fourth semester M.A. students should do the following:

- File an M.A. Thesis Form with the Program Office (usually before the start of the 3rd semester for full-time students). This must be done before the student may register for LING 799.
- Develop a thesis proposal (under the supervision of their thesis director) and defend this as part of their Comprehensive Exam. This should be done (by full-time students) in the 3rd semester.
- Write thesis (in the 4th semester) and have it approved by director and reader.