

## **LINGUISTICS DEPARTMENT**

### **Doctoral Degree Program Assessment**

#### **Doctoral Degree Learning Outcomes**

1. Ability to conduct independent research and advance knowledge in area of specialization.
2. Ability to write technical papers that are of sufficiently high-quality to merit publication in scholarly journals.
3. Demonstrate mastery in at least 2 core areas of linguistics sufficient to teach lower division courses in linguistics.
4. Demonstrate mastery of current theory, literature, research methods, and data management in area of specialization sufficient to teach upper-division and graduate-level courses in linguistics.
5. Demonstrate clear understanding of the principles of ethical research in area of specialization and adhere to these principles when conducting research.

#### **Doctoral Degree Assessment**

We have, by design, a very intensive, multistage evaluation system for Ph.D. students. Review is continual, but the instruments of evaluations change over the course of the program. These instruments each assess one or more of the learning outcomes.

##### 1. Course work

The first instrument of evaluation is the formal courses which the student takes in the first two years. Graduate courses require a term paper or research project which is evaluated for a grade. The first or second faculty meeting each term is devoted to quick reports from faculty advisors on each of their students, with the opportunity for faculty who have taught a student in a course to bring up any issues or concerns about the student's work. This evaluation assesses progress towards learning outcomes 2, 3, and 4.

##### 2. Second-year review

A second instrument of evaluation is the formal review that every student undergoes by the full faculty at the end of their 2<sup>nd</sup> year. Each 2<sup>nd</sup> year student submits, at the beginning of Spring term, a term paper or thesis for the faculty's evaluation, along with a plan for the next segment of the program and a prospective career plan beyond the Ph.D. These materials are reviewed by the faculty, and a student who fails this review will not continue in the program. This evaluation assesses progress towards learning outcomes 1, 2, and 4.

A student who does continue in the program submits an annual report and updated CV to their advisor, who is expected to monitor the student's progress.

##### 3. Qualifying papers (QP)

A third instrument of evaluation is the process by which a student qualifies to advance to candidacy in the department. In lieu of a doctoral examination, a student must produce two

research papers (QPs) which our faculty deem suitable for submission to a peer-reviewed journal or volume. These papers must be in different subfields or methodological specializations. Each QP is evaluated by two faculty as though it were for journal submission. This evaluation assesses progress towards all learning outcomes.

#### 4. Advisory committees

Advisory committees are formed to ensure that several faculty members can speak to the quality of the student's work. In the first year of the Ph.D. program, a student forms their first faculty advisory committee. This committee is the consulting body for the first qualifying paper. The committee may change with the topic of the second qualifying paper, and then again with the dissertation. The student meets with his or her advising committee each year to summarize research progress since the last meeting and map out benchmarks the remainder of the program. Ongoing evaluations of student work by members of an advisory committee allows us to assess student progress towards all learning outcomes.

#### 5. Ph.D. thesis

The Ph.D. thesis or dissertation is the written presentation of a single large research project that demonstrates the student's ability to conduct independent, new, and meaningful research in their chosen area of specialization. In this way, the thesis evaluation assesses a student's achievement of learning outcomes 1, 2, 4, and 5.

The thesis project is first proposed to the doctoral committee prior to the student undertaking their thesis work so as to ensure that the scope of work is significant and of sufficient interest to merit a doctorate in linguistics. Once approved, the student is expected to consult closely with their advisor and doctoral committee members as they make progress in their research and writing. These consultations are for mentoring purposes rather than for evaluative ones. Given a shift from evaluation to pure mentoring in the final stages of the Ph.D. program, the thesis defense is also typically *pro forma*. If the written presentation of the approved research is not adequate, the committee will have signaled this in advance of the defense. The thesis defense only proceeds once doctoral committee members find that the dissertation needs only minor revisions to be accepted in fulfillment of the degree.

### **Assessment Process and Timeline**

Our department is undergoing several rapid changes, including the addition of two new faculty this year and a new hire planned for next year. We have formed a graduate curriculum committee to reimagine the program as a function of these changes. We have three primary goals for this reimagining. The first is to integrate an applied track into the curriculum. The second is to restructure the tracks that lead to other areas of specialization in order to take maximum advantage of new and existing faculty expertise. The third is to grow class sizes through the restructuring. We hope to complete our proposal for the revised curriculum during this academic year.