

Department of Linguistics, MA Program

College of Arts and Humanities

Student Outcomes Assessment Plan (Soap)

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I. Mission Statement

The Department of Linguistics offers a Graduate Certificate in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) and a Master of Arts degree with specializations in Linguistics or TESL. Toward these ends the Linguistics Department is dedicated to providing students in these programs with the highest level of educational experience possible.

Our graduate program aims to develop intellectual skills that are essential to professional careers or advanced degrees. They also help enhance critical thinking, satisfy broad intellectual interest, and enrich personal knowledge.

II. Goals and Student Learning Outcomes

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A. Goals and Objectives (and courses that meet objectives)

Core

Goal 1: Knowledge of How Language Works.

Objective 1 Demonstrate knowledge of language structure and use.

Objective 2 Show an understanding of current linguistic theories.

Objective 3 Demonstrate ability to apply this understanding to a theoretical problem.

Objective 4 Demonstrate ability to compare and evaluate different theoretical approaches.

(All graduate courses in general linguistics, including Ling 242, 243, 248, 249, and 231T cover the learning objectives listed above; Objectives 3 and 4 are also covered in Ling 241.)

Goal 2: Effective skills in the analysis of linguistic data.

Objective 1 Demonstrate skill in identifying related elements in a data set.

Objective 2 Demonstrate skill to formulate organizing principles that encompass a data set.

Objective 3 Demonstrate skill to recognize and evaluate alternative analyses of a data set.

(All graduate courses in general linguistics, including Ling 242, 243, 248, 249, and 231T cover the learning objectives listed above.)

MA in Linguistics (General Linguistics)

Goal 3: Ability to carry out independent empirical, experimental, or theoretical research.

Objective Produce a research paper which includes a literature review, appropriate methodology, data, interpretation of data, and a discussion of theoretical implications.

(All graduate courses in general linguistics, including Ling 242, 243, 248, 249, and 231T cover the learning objectives listed above; it is also covered in Ling 241 and 237.)

MA Degree in Linguistics with Option in TESL

Goal 3 also applies to the Option in TESL. (Ling 241, 237)

Goal 4: Ability to carry out curriculum preparation in TESL.

Objective Produce a curriculum for a language course which includes a focused literature review, needs assessment, goals and objectives, course design overview, sample lesson plans, and language assessments. (Ling 244)

Goal 5: Ability to write a pedagogical paper on an aspect of one or more language skills.

Objective Produce a paper which focuses on a pedagogical argument based upon the research. Include a literature review, language learning tasks, and an analysis of the tasks in light of TESL theory, research, and pedagogy. (Ling 237)

III. Curriculum Map (Matrix of Courses X Learning Outcomes)										
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Curriculum Map of goals and objectives covered in each of the Linguistics MA courses.										
	1.1	1.2	1.3	1.4	2.1	2.2	2.3	3	4	5
242	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		
243	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		
248	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		
249	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		
231T	X	X	X	X						
241			X	X				X		X
237								X		X
244									X	
CompExam	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X

MA Papers	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		
Ling 242 Seminar in Phonology										
Ling 243 Seminar in Syntax										
Ling 248 Seminar in Sociolinguistics										
Ling 249 Field Methods										
Ling 231T Advanced Phonetics										
Ling 231T Seminar in Language Acquisition										
Ling 241 Seminar in TESL Theory and Methods										
Ling 237 Seminar in Teaching Reading and Writing										
Ling 244 Seminar in Curriculum Design and Assessment										

IV. Assessment Methods

A. Direct Measures

GOALS 1 AND 2: COMPREHENSIVE EXAMINATION

Assessment of the learning objectives of Goals 1 and 2 will be done by the MA Comprehensive Examination. This examination consists of problem sets that require analysis usually in terms of an essay style answer. The examination is three and a half hours long, and it is offered around the 10th week of each semester, with questions in each section of the exam changing each semester. When students register to take the examination, they are required to state three areas of preference.

The current structure of the MA Comprehensive Examination is as follows:

General Linguistics students:

- 3 questions: 2 questions from the core areas,* and 1 question from the core or TESL areas**
- OR

- an MA paper (in any area) & 1 question from the core areas***

TESL option students

- 3 questions: 2 questions from the TESL areas,** 1 question from the core areas*
- OR

- an MA paper (in any area) & 1 TESL question***

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- * Four core areas:
 - Phonology (142, 242)
 - Syntax (143, 243)
 - Discourse analysis (144, 251)
 - Sociolinguistics (148, 248)

- ** Three TESL areas:
 - General theory, method, and research (LING 141, 171, 241)
 - Reading and writing (LING 237)
 - Assessment and curriculum design (LING 244)

***The question must be chosen from the area other than the area of the MA paper.

Evaluation System for Goals 1 and 2: The customary approach to evaluating student performance on the Comprehensive Examination has been to give either a High Pass, Pass, Conditional Pass, or Non-Pass for a student's answer to each question on the examination. Two faculty members do this. The results are cumulated and an overall evaluation with the same rubrics is given. A Conditional Pass means that while passing most of the examination, the student showed some deficiency in a particular area. The student is then required to make up this deficiency before they can graduate. A Non-Pass means the student's answers were judged to be generally so weak in most areas that they must re-take the whole examination and get at least a Pass before they can graduate.

This evaluation system has proven to work well for judging individual student performance, and we will use the results of this to assess whether the objectives under Goals 1 and 2 are met.

GOAL 3: MA PAPERS AND THESES

Every graduate course in linguistics requires that students carry out a project involving either empirical data collecting, experimental data collecting, or a theoretical investigation of an area covered by the course. The MA paper that may be elected in lieu of a portion of the comprehensive exam, if approved by the department for the students who successfully complete it, will be used for evaluation of Goal 3. Another instrument to evaluate Goal 3 will be a recent thesis, since the thesis option in the graduate program was approved for the program in 2011. For the purpose of program assessment, students will be required to submit one of these projects, MA papers, and or theses to the Department Assessment Committee for evaluation.

Papers/theses will be evaluated according to the objectives set forth in Goal 3.

GOALS 4 AND 5: COURSE PROJECTS

Graduate courses in TESL require that students carry out a project which exhibits ability to carry out curriculum preparation in TESL and to write a pedagogical paper on an aspect of one or more language skills. These skills are principally covered in Ling 244 and Ling 237. For the purpose of program assessment, students will be required to submit one of these projects to the Department Assessment Committee for evaluation. Papers will be evaluated according to the objectives set forth in Goals 4 and 5.

B. Indirect Measures

SURVEYS

The Linguistics Department plans to conduct two types of survey.

- a. Exit Survey. This survey will be given to students in their last semester of graduate work and will ask questions related to the extent to which students see themselves as achieving the learning goals and objectives of the program they were in.
- b. Alumni Survey. This survey will be given to former graduates of our MA programs to determine how well they feel that the program they were in gave them the background they needed for either the advanced schooling or the work they are currently engaged in.

V. Student Learning Outcomes X Assessment Methods Matrix

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	GOAL 1	GOAL 2	GOAL 3	GOAL 4	GOAL 5
COMPREHENSIVE EXAM	X	X			
MA PAPER THESIS			X		
COURSE PROJECTS (LING 244)				X	
COURSE PROJECTS (LING 237)					X

VI. Timeline for Implementation of Assessment Methods and Summary Evaluations

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Year 2008 to 2009

Fall 2008: Determine assessment measures that will be used in the plan.

Spring 2009: MA Program in Linguistics: Evaluation of Goal 1 (Objectives 1 & 2) using Comprehensive Exam

Fall 2009: MA Program in Linguistics: Evaluation of Goal 1 (Objectives 3 & 4) using Comprehensive Exam

Year 2010 to 2011

Spring 2010: MA Program in Linguistics: Evaluation of Goal 2 (Objectives 1-3) using Comprehensive Exam

Fall 2010: MA Program in Linguistics: Evaluation of Goal 3 using MA Paper in TESL

Spring 2011: MA Program option in TESL: Evaluation of Goal 3 using Thesis in Linguistics

Year 2011 to 2012

Fall 2011: MA Program option in TESL: Evaluation of Goal 4 using course papers

Fall 2011: Conduct alumni survey

Spring 2012: MA Program option in TESL: Evaluation of Goal 5 using course papers

Spring 2012: Survey graduate students graduating in the spring of 2012 to assess their views of the M.A. program in both options.

VII. Closing the Loop - Summary Evaluation, Curriculum Adjustment, and Reporting

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As a result of our past self-study, comments from students, and recommendations by the external review committee, Dean Samiian, and the University Graduate Committee, we will continue to develop new 200-level courses for the graduate program and continue to move toward adding a thesis option within the department. The goal of program development is to increase rigor and attractiveness of the program for graduate students.

Specific steps to be taken:

1. Develop a new option in General Linguistics. Propose the new option as a program change (2009-2010)

2. Increase the number of specialized offerings for each option (General Ling and TESOL). Develop and submit new course proposals (from 231T topics course to permanent course) for:

Sem. in Language Acquisition (approved as LING 265, Fall 2008)

Sem. in Advanced Phonetics (new course proposal submitted, Fall 2008)

Sem. in Teaching Listening and Speaking (new course proposal submitted, Fall 2008)

3. Continue to develop new 200-level courses in the graduate program (e.g., Research Methods in TESOL, submitted as a LING 231T topics course, Fall 2008).
4. Propose program changes to replace 100 level courses in the program with new 200-level courses. Implement the graduate program core as required courses for all students in the master's degree program. (2009-2010)
5. Propose program changes to place Seminar in Language Acquisition and Seminar in Advanced Phonetics in the program Core, and to place Seminar in Teaching Listening and Speaking in the required courses for the TESOL option. (2009-2010)
6. Add a thesis option to the Linguistics MA. (2009-2010)
7. Continue to look for ways which enable the graduate faculty to devote more time to research and student mentoring (including opportunities for assigned time for research and funding for conference travel).

The expected outcome of these changes is to increase rigor and attractiveness of the program for graduate students. With the exception of (7)—which includes opportunities for assigned time for research and funding for conference travel—there are no known costs/resource implications for these activities.