PROSPECTIVE GRADUATE STUDENTS FAQ

1. MY UNDERGRADUATE/MASTER’S DEGREE IS NOT IN LINGUISTICS. AM I QUALIFIED TO APPLY TO YOUR PHD PROGRAM?

Our admission process is competitive and our graduate students typically have an undergraduate degree in linguistics or a closely related field. If your undergraduate degree is NOT in linguistics, you might consider getting an MA degree first or taking some linguistics classes as a graduate non-matriculated student (see the next question).

2. HOW DO I GO ABOUT BECOMING A GRADUATE NON-MATRICULATED STUDENT?

You can go to the following site for information: how to become a graduate non-matriculated student.

3. I’M ONLY INTERESTED IN AN MA DEGREE IN GENERAL LINGUISTICS. DO YOU OFFER AN MA DEGREE?

We do not offer a terminal MA degree in general linguistics. This means students get admitted directly to the PhD program in General Linguistics and get an MA degree after they pass the general exam (typically at the end of their third year in the program). You don't have to have an MA degree to apply to our PhD program, you can apply with an undergraduate degree (BA, BS or international equivalent).

4. DO YOU OFFER AN MA/PHD PROGRAM IN ROMANCE LINGUISTICS?

We do not offer an MA or a PhD in Romance Linguistics but students can choose to specialize in Romance languages while pursuing a degree in general linguistics.

5. WHAT IS THE MINIMUM GRE SCORE?

We do not have a minimum GRE score requirement but given the highly competitive nature of our admissions process, we recommend competitive scores. However, there are many other factors besides the GRE scores that the admissions committees take into consideration.

6. WHAT IS THE MINIMUM TOEFL SCORE?/DO ALL INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS HAVE TO TAKE A TOEFL EXAM?

Please refer to the following UW Graduate School memoranda on English proficiency requirements.

- Memo 8: Graduate School English Language Proficiency Requirements
- Memo 15: Conditions of Appointment for TAs who are not Native Speakers of English

Note that international PhD applicants must meet BOTH the UW Graduate School English proficiency requirements detailed in Memo 8 and the spoken English proficiency requirements described in Memo 15.

7. HOW COMPETITIVE IS YOUR GRADUATE ADMISSION PROCESS?
Our admission process is quite competitive but we do encourage all qualified applicants to apply.

8. WHAT ARE YOUR ADMISSION CRITERIA?
Here are some of the criteria that we take to be important when we make admission decisions. Note that they are just general guidelines to help you with your application process.

1. linguistics coursework successfully completed
2. strong recommendations from linguistics instructors
3. good grades and GRE scores
4. personal statement that describes the applicant’s motivation for graduate study, as well as possible areas of research. The more specific, the better.
5. sample of written work demonstrating your ability to conduct linguistic research

9. WHAT DO YOU EXPECT FROM A PERSONAL STATEMENT/STATEMENT OF PURPOSE?
The personal statement should describe your background and research interests as well as your motivation for pursuing a graduate degree in our department. Our department values the contribution of students from diverse and/or non-traditional backgrounds to the intellectual and social enrichment of the program. Please include in your personal statement any relevant information concerning your personal history, family background, work or volunteer experiences, and formative influences on your intellectual development. This information might involve cultural and educational opportunities (or the lack thereof), social, economic, or physical advantages and/or disadvantages that you have experienced, work or life experiences in minority or underrepresented communities, and the ways in which these experiences have affected your life, studies, and decisions concerning pursuing linguistics as a career goal. Speak to how these experiences demonstrate your ability to take initiative, conduct research, solve problems, particularly as relates to your interests and work in linguistics, or other research you have conducted. Include special interests and abilities, career plans, and future goals.

10. WHAT DO YOU EXPECT FROM A WRITING SAMPLE?
A writing sample should demonstrate your ability to conduct research in linguistics. It could be a term paper, an honors thesis, an MA thesis or a write-up of a conference presentation, or another sample that you will accurately represents your research aptitude.

11. WHAT KINDS OF FINANCIAL SUPPORT DO YOU OFFER?
We offer financial support to all incoming General Linguistics graduate students who have no other funding sources and who meet the department’s criteria for satisfactory progress. The support is for up to five years, subject to the availability of funding resources. The support, which includes a tuition waiver, typically takes the form of teaching assistantships, but can also include fellowships or research assistantships such as the University-sponsored Top Scholar Award (Research Assistantship) given to one incoming student during the first year. In order to maximize our ability to fund graduate students, we require students to apply for external funding sources (such as NSF graduate fellowships) once they become our graduate students, and assist them in the application process. Eligible students applying for admission to the PhD Program in General Linguistics are invited to compete for the Department’s Linguistics Award in Diversity Scholarship (the LADS), a competitive, merit-based fellowship designed to further the diversity priorities of the department of Linguistics. See Financial Aid & Assistantships for further details.

12. HOW DO I APPLY FOR A TASHIP/RASHIP?
Students applying to our PhD program in linguistics are automatically considered for a TAship or RAship in Linguistics (there is no special application). If you would like to be considered for a TAship in Romance languages, please follow these guidelines. If you would like to be considered for the Department’s Linguistics Award in Diversity Scholarship, please see See Financial Aid & Assistantships for further details.

13. DO I NEED TO HAVE AN ADVISOR (A FACULTY MEMBER WHO HAS AGREED BE TO BE MY ADVISOR) BEFORE I APPLY TO THE PROGRAM?
No, you do not need to have an advisor before you apply to our program. Students typically choose their graduate advisors during their first year in the program.

14. I PLAN TO SPECIALIZE IN COMPUTATIONAL LINGUISTICS. WHAT BACKGROUND DO I NEED BEFORE I APPLY TO YOUR PHD PROGRAM?

Our department offers a computational linguistics track within our PhD program with tailored course requirements (see http://linguistics.washington.edu/phd-linguistics#compling). To be prepared for these courses, compling track students need to be proficient in computer programming and to have some background in probability and statistics. Double majoring in linguistics and computer science (or doing a minor in CS) is excellent preparation for PhD work in computational linguistics. However, it is not required. This page, from our CLMS program, has advice and links to resources on preparing for graduate study in computational linguistics: http://www.compling.uw.edu/admissions/prep/.

Still have questions? Contact our Graduate Program Coordinators at linggpc@uw.edu.

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