

**Graduate  
Studies****Forms****Graduate  
Student  
Handbook**

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**Undergraduate  
Studies****Course  
Schedules**

# Graduate Student Handbook

## Contents

- 1. Introduction
- 2. Faculty Advising, Mentors, and Committees
  - 2.1. Graduate Advisor
  - 2.2. Faculty Mentor
- 3. Annual Assessment of Student Progress
- 4. Petitions, Appeals, and Grievances
  - 4.1 Title IX Support
- 5. Program Requirements
  - 5.1. Course Work and Minimum GPA
  - 5.2. Teaching Assistantships
  - 5.3. Research Papers
  - 5.4. Colloquium Attendance and Presentation
  - 5.5. Language Requirements
  - 5.6. Dissertation Prospectus
  - 5.7. Advancement to Candidacy
  - 5.8. Writing, Filing, and Defending the Dissertation

## 1. Introduction

The purpose of this handbook is to provide a comprehensive resource for Linguistics Ph. D. students regarding departmental policies, deadlines, and

requirements.

In addition to the departmental material outlined here,

there are a number of university-wide requirements that all graduate students are bound by. Be sure and familiarize yourself with the graduate students sections of the General Announcements , as well as the wealth of information available on the Office of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies web site, especially in matters related to university time boundaries, official forms that you need to fill out, policies concerning dismissals, grievances, and appeals, and issues related to formatting, defending, and filing your dissertation.

The Linguistics department makes every effort to keep students apprised of university requirements, especially if new or revised policies are issued. However, ultimately students are responsible for being aware of and complying with all official requirements and university deadlines.

[\(Back to Top\)](#)

## **2. Faculty Advising, Mentors, and Committees**

One of the strengths of our department is the close working relationship enjoyed between graduate students and faculty members. We wish to foster this relationship by ensuring that you have appropriate advising and mentorship throughout your program. It is crucial that as many faculty members as possible are familiar with your work; not only does this allow for in-depth letters of recommendation when you are ready for the job market, but it also ensures that your work benefits from the feedback of people with different perspectives and expertise in all areas of linguistics. During the first year,

you will work closely with the department graduate advisor to choose a plan of study congruent with department requirements and your own interests. In addition to meeting with the Graduate Advisor, each incoming first-year student is also assigned a graduate student mentor. Your mentor will be a more senior student in the program who can offer advice and information about the city, the university, and the department, and will be available throughout the first year as you negotiate the many trials of getting started in graduate life. Your mentor will contact you prior to the beginning of your first semester. By the end of the first year, you will select a faculty mentor (informally referred to as your 'advisor') to provide more personalized advising in addition to the advice of the graduate advisor. For each of your two publishable papers, you will form a committee of two faculty members to advise you on your work. After your second publishable paper, you will then choose a final committee to advise you on your dissertation prospectus, to administer your qualifying exam for advancement to candidacy, and to supervise the writing and filing of the dissertation itself. This final committee is known as your 'dissertation committee'; its chair is known as your 'advisor' or 'committee chair'. Your dissertation committee must include three (or more) tenured or tenure-track members of the Rice faculty; one member of your dissertation committee must be external to Linguistics (i.e. from another department at Rice).

(Back to Top)

## **2.1 Graduate Advisor**

The graduate advisor serves as a resource for you at

every stage in the program. Before you register for classes in your first semester, you will consult with the graduate advisor to discuss which linguistics classes you have taken, what your interests are, which classes best meet your needs, and what types of options are available for you. You should continue to consult with the graduate advisor throughout the semester, to discuss your progress, obtain advice, and address any other relevant issues. The graduate advisor maintains files for each of the graduate students, containing information such as students' forms, curriculum vitae, student publishable papers, other pertinent paperwork, and the record of course reports. Currently, the graduate advisor is Dr. Robert Englebretson.

In each of your subsequent semesters, you will continue to meet with the graduate advisor to discuss your course schedule. Even after choosing a faculty mentor, you should continue to consult with the graduate advisor regarding departmental requirements, your progress, and for other issues and advice. Additionally, the graduate advisor will need to approve your fulfillment of the language requirement, publishable-paper requirements, and oral presentation requirements.

(Back to Top)

## **2.2 Faculty Mentor**

By the end of your first year of graduate study in Linguistics, you will choose a faculty mentor (advisor) who will guide the next phase of your progress in the Ph.D. program. The faculty mentor is a tenured or tenure-track

member of the Linguistics faculty at Rice who works closely with you on your specific areas of interest, and also helps you focus your work towards the dissertation. Your faculty mentor gives you advice on courses, publishable papers, submission of abstracts to conferences and papers for publication, and other professional activities. Usually the faculty mentor you choose is the faculty member with whom you want to work most closely on research topics. Your faculty mentor may ultimately also be your dissertation advisor, but this is not always the case. Sometimes, as your specific research areas develop, you may find that it is in your best interests to change faculty mentors. If this happens, you should discuss your situation with the graduate advisor, your current mentor, and the faculty member whom you wish to become your new mentor. Also remember that while you will have a faculty mentor from the end of your first year onwards, you still need to meet each semester with the graduate advisor to discuss your course registration and progress toward the degree. This cooperation between faculty mentor and graduate advisor ensures that you will remain aware of departmental requirements and your progress in fulfilling them.

(Back to Top)

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### **3. Annual Assessment of Student Progress**

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Once a year, at the end of Spring Semester, the Linguistics faculty meets as a whole to assess the academic progress of every graduate student. Based on the discussion at this meeting, the graduate advisor and department chair jointly draft an official progress letter for

each student, which is e-mailed to the student by mid May. The letter assesses the student's achievement of milestones to the Ph.D., alerts the student of any deficiencies in progress, notifies the student of any faculty concerns along with suggestions for improvement, and reminds the student of deadlines and time boundaries relevant to the upcoming academic year. Students should feel free to discuss concerns with their advisor, the graduate advisor, or the department chair.

(Back to Top)

#### **4. Petitions, Appeals, and Grievances**

Graduate Council has recently issued revised Guidelines for Dismissals, Petitions, Appeals, Grievances, and Problem Resolution. The revised guidelines can be found in the General Announcements and are linked at <http://ga.rice.edu/Home.aspx?id=2147483680> (dismissals), and <http://ga.rice.edu/Home.aspx?id=138> (appeals and petitions). Graduate student appeals and problems at the departmental level will be handled by a committee of the whole department faculty, minus the student's advisor and any members of the student's thesis committee.

#### **4.1 Title IX Support**

Rice encourages any student who has experienced an incident of sexual, relationship, or other interpersonal violence, harassment or gender discrimination to seek support. There are many options available both on and off

campus for all graduate students, regardless of whether the perpetrator was a fellow student, a staff or faculty member, or someone not affiliated with the university. Students should be aware when seeking support on campus that most employees are required by Title IX to disclose all incidents of non-consensual interpersonal behaviors to Title IX professionals on campus who can act to support the a student and meet their needs. The therapists at Rice Counseling Center and the doctors at Student Health Services are confidential, meaning that Rice will not be informed about the incident if a student discloses to one of these Rice staff members. Rice prioritizes student privacy and safety, and only shares disclosed information on a need-to-know basis.

If you are in need of assistance or simply would like to talk to someone, please call Rice Wellbeing and Counseling Center, which includes Title IX Support: 3311/(713) 348-3311

(Back to Top)

## **5. Program Requirements**

The remainder of this document presents in detail each of the departmental requirements for the Ph.D. in Linguistics. In addition to the departmental requirements discussed here, there are a few requirements defined by Rice University for all graduate students. For more information see the General Announcements (<http://www.ga.rice.edu>) and the Office of Graduate & Postdoctoral Studies web site (<http://www.graduate.rice.edu>).

The departmental requirements discussed in this

document went into effect beginning in academic year 2013-2014. When preparing for graduation, you should be aware that you are in most cases bound by the requirements listed in the General Announcements for the year in which you entered the program; however, if the requirements change in the course of your program, you do have the option of choosing the new set of requirements. It should be noted that the option of switching requirements can only be taken one time in the course of your program: you may not revert back to an earlier set of requirements once you've switched, nor may you choose from a later set of requirements should the department change them again.

The faculty recognizes that each graduate student is entering the department with a unique educational and language background, a specific set of professional interests, and various plans and goals for work after graduate school. For this reason, we encourage you to discuss these issues with the graduate advisor, department chair, and/or your committee so that we may accommodate your particular situation as much as possible.

In addition to the official requirements listed here, the faculty also expects you to form strong supplementary reading habits, regularly perusing current journal articles and the many other materials dealing with linguistic theory and practice that our library collection has to offer. As early as possible after your arrival on campus, you should familiarize yourself thoroughly with the linguistics holdings in Fondren Library, including the online journals and



databases. Faculty members and fellow grad students are an excellent resource for information on finding and obtaining library and online materials.

[\(Back to Top\)](#)

## **5.1 Course Work and Minimum GPA**

As a graduate student in Linguistics, you are required to register for at least 12 units of courses each semester before advancement to candidacy and to maintain a minimum GPA of 3.0. The following list outlines the courses you are required to take during your first three years in the program. This range of courses ensures that you will receive a rigorous and broad background in linguistics, which will prepare you for your own research projects and will make you highly-qualified for the job market. We generally expect course requirements to take three years. This ensures that you will fulfill Rice's residency requirement of four semesters of full-time study at the university, as well as Rice's minimum course-hour requirements. See the university graduate requirements section of the General Announcements for more information on Rice's residency and course-hour requirements. In addition to the required courses listed below, the mandatory 12 units per semester may also include independent study courses (LING 581), TA credit (LING 590), dissertation writing (LING 800), relevant courses in other departments, and the one unit you receive for colloquium attendance (LING 550). With no previous linguistics background, course work in the first three years includes:

- 1 problem-solving course in linguistic analysis (LING 500) to be taken in the first year of study
- 2 courses in the area of phonetics/phonology (LING 501 and 511)
- 2 courses in the area of syntactic/semantic analysis (LING 504 and LING 515 or LING 413)
- The two-course sequence in Field Methods (LING 407 and LING 408) to be taken normally in the second year of study
- 2 seminars in the department, usually taken in the second and/or third year of study
- 5 additional elective courses, including 2 courses in other subfields of linguistics

Depending on your previous linguistics course work and training, you may be able to waive some of these required courses. Course waivers are to be requested on an individual basis, and must be approved both by the department graduate advisor and the instructor of the course you wish to waive.

At various points during your graduate career you will need to take faculty-supervised independent research courses. Sign up for Ling 581 (Graduate Research) when you are conducting independent study research with faculty members, or for semesters when you need a course slot to focus on your publishable papers. After you have achieved candidacy, sign up for Ling 800 (Dissertation research) for researching and writing your dissertation. In order to sign up for either course, you must submit a Course Registration Form for Faculty-Supervised

Independent Research. Consult with the faculty member supervising you in this course while filling out this form. You need to work out the appropriate number of credits (1-12), clearly summarize your plan of study for the semester, and state the goal(s) that you will have achieved once the semester is over. The registration form must be signed by the faculty member with whom you will be working, as well as by the Graduate Advisor, and then must be returned to the department coordinator for inclusion in your graduate student file. Both Ling 581 and Ling 800 are graded on an S/U basis; earning a U in any independent study course will cause the department to place you on academic probation for a lack of satisfactory progress toward your degree.

In all of your course work, a grade level of B (3.0) is the formal minimum for a passing performance in the graduate program. A GPA lower than 3.0 will trigger probationary status. Two consecutive semesters of probationary status will lead to dismissal from the program. In addition to your course grades, however, the general assessment of your overall progress in the program also depends on timely fulfillment of the research paper requirements and meeting the required university time boundaries. This is of practical importance because the faculty meets at the end of each academic year to discuss graduate students' progress, as discussed above. Renewal of your fellowship and continuation in the program is dependent from year to year upon continuing satisfactory progress in your studies.

Back to Top

## **5.2 Teaching Assistantships**

As part of your training in linguistics, the department makes assignments in addition to your normal course work. For students receiving a fellowship, this assignment is generally in the form of a Teaching Assistantship. You are expected to TA four times during the time you are receiving departmental financial support, generally once a year for the first four years.

As a TA, you work closely with the instructor of an undergraduate course. Your duties include attending lecture, holding at least one office hour per week, grading assignments and exams, and holding occasional review sessions for students. This is also an excellent opportunity for you to gain classroom experience, and for this reason you should also plan to give one guest lecture during the course of the semester. Ask the course instructor for feedback and tips on your presentation. In general, you should expect to spend around 10 hours per week on your TA duties, although some weeks may be closer to 1 hour of work, while other weeks (particularly during midterm and final grading) may be busier than 10 hours. Because of your TA requirements, you must plan to be in residence during the entire semester for which you are a TA. Do not plan to leave town until two days after the last day of the exam period. You must work out details of any planned absences with the faculty member for whom you are TA'ing. Your work as a TA is a crucial component of your graduate training, is a key factor in faculty letters of recommendation, will help make you more marketable for job searches, and, most importantly, is an enormous influence (either positive or negative) on the

undergraduate students with whom you are working. For these reasons, you should approach your TA duties with the utmost of dedication and integrity.

In lieu of a TAship, you may occasionally be asked to perform other duties for the semester instead.

Assignments may include serving as a research assistant in faculty projects, field assistants for faculty members who are working on fieldwork in a specific area, or organizing and coordinating a conference. All such assignments are under the direct supervision of a faculty member, and are likewise important components of your graduate training and reasonable additions to your curriculum vita.

On occasion, the department allows advanced grad students the responsibility of being sole instructor for an introductory linguistics course, working under the supervision of a faculty member. This gives you an advantage on the job market and an opportunity for classroom experience and feedback on your teaching. In order to teach a course as sole instructor, you must have previously served as a TA for that course, received an endorsement from the faculty member for whom you have been a TA, and have gotten permission from the graduate advisor and department chair. You will work closely with a faculty member in all aspects of teaching, including preparing the syllabus, lecturing, designing assignments and exams, and grading. If you wish to be considered for this opportunity, please discuss this with both the graduate advisor and the TA coordinator during Spring Semester of the year prior to when you would like to teach. Bear in

mind that the department has the final say in all matters of course assignment.

Teaching experience is a necessary and important component of your doctoral program, since a Ph. D. functions in part as a teaching qualification for higher education. The department wants to make your TA experiences as positive as possible. We will do our best to match your skills and interests with your teaching duties, and to ensure that these duties do not interfere with your timely progress to the Ph. D. degree. Dr. Michel Achard is currently the departmental TA coordinator. The TA coordinator, who works with faculty and grad students on assigning TAs, is available to help resolve any problems that come up, and serves as a resource for grad students on issues related to all aspects of teaching. During the Spring Semester of every year, the TA coordinator will contact you regarding your preferences for a TA assignment for the upcoming year. This is the time to bring up any special circumstances that may impact your availability for the following year (fieldwork, etc.), and courses which you would especially like to TA for. This is also an appropriate time to discuss interest in teaching a course as the sole instructor. In general, all incoming grad students will be assigned to TA for LING 200 (the large undergraduate intro course). Each year during the semester in which you are TA'ing, you should sign up for LING 590 (Teaching Linguistics) for 3 hours of credit.

[\(Back to Top\)](#)

### **5.3 Research Papers**

Before advancing to candidacy, you must prepare two in-

depth research papers (generally referred to as 'publishable papers') under the supervision of a two-member paper committee. Each publishable paper must represent a different area in the field of linguistics (as determined by the Linguistics faculty). Choose each paper committee in consultation with your faculty mentor, and fill out a form for each of the two committees (available on the Forms section of the department web site). The committees will read and referee the papers, and give you comments to help improve your research project, writing, argumentation, and to help you make the paper publishable. Once both committee members have signed your publishable-paper forms, you will have fulfilled this requirement.

Since this may be your first experience writing and revising a professional academic paper, here are a few general pointers about the logistics. You should ask to meet regularly with the members of your paper committee, and actively seek feedback at every stage of the process. Faculty and students must respect each other's deadlines and time commitments throughout the process; in other words, students must give committee members sufficient time to read and comment on drafts, and committee members must do so in a timely manner. Do not expect committee members to read your work at the last minute. Once you have submitted a draft of your paper, you must allow two weeks for your committee members to read and comment. (If you have not received comments after the two weeks are up, don't be shy to remind the committee member. If this becomes a habitual problem, bring it to the attention of the department chair and/or graduate advisor.)

Be aware that this two-week turn-around time applies at every stage of the paper. In other words, if you are asked to make revisions, you will need time to make the revisions, submit the next version, and wait two more weeks for feedback on the new draft. For this reason, a good rule of thumb is to plan on submitting your final draft at least six weeks prior to any official deadlines. This will allow two weeks for the committee members to read and comment on the draft, two weeks for you to make revisions and corrections, and two weeks for the committee to read the final version.

You are required to present one of your papers at a departmental colloquium.

You are also expected, whenever possible, to submit your papers for presentation at relevant conferences and for publication in journals, edited volumes, or conference proceedings. The department requires that your papers follow the LSA style sheet, except in cases where the paper is intended for submission to a specified journal with a different style sheet.

Students are encouraged to begin working on publishable papers as soon as possible. The first publishable paper must be approved no later than the end of the fifth semester. Students who fail to meet this deadline will be dismissed from the program. The second publishable paper must be approved by the beginning of the eighth semester. This schedule will allow you to spend your fourth year focusing on writing your prospectus and advancing to candidacy.



(Back to Top)

## **5.4 Colloquium Attendance and Presentation**

The department sponsors a weekly colloquium series consisting of talks by Rice Linguistics faculty and grads, relevant faculty in other departments, and invited visiting speakers. Anyone is welcome to attend the colloquia. Speakers and topics are listed on the department's web page. Department faculty and graduate students are subscribed to an e-mail distribution list, which disseminates announcements of each talk, along with a short abstract. The colloquium is an important aspect of our linguistics community, enabling department members to know what others are doing, to find out about other areas of linguistics, and to find out about related fields outside their specialties. Thus, each member of the department is expected to attend. As a grad student, you should register for LING 550 (Colloquium), which gives you one hour credit per semester for colloquium attendance.

You are required to present one of your publishable papers as a departmental colloquium. Contact the department colloquium organizer to arrange to do this. In addition to your required publishable-paper colloquium, you are always welcome to give a talk on other projects you wish to share with the department, especially those related to your summer research proposals. You may also find it helpful to use a colloquium slot for giving a practice talk for an upcoming conference presentation, in order to get input and feedback before presenting your work at the conference itself.

[\(Back to Top\)](#)

## **5.5 Language Requirements**

For the departmental language requirement, students must show competency in at least one language other than English. The language requirement must be approved by the departmental graduate advisor as well as your committee chair. You should meet with the graduate advisor to discuss your plan for fulfilling this requirement, which must be done before advancement to candidacy. Students will demonstrate mastery of this language by completion of one of the following options: (1) You may satisfy this requirement by means of a translation exam supervised by a Linguistics faculty member. If you choose the translation exam option, you are expected to translate a linguistics-related text of approximately 500 words into English. Translations must be completed within 1-1/2 hours with the aid of a dictionary. (2) You may satisfy the requirement by two years of college-level language classes with a grade of B or better each term. (3) You may satisfy this requirement by carrying on a conversation with a native speaker of that language, under the supervision of a Linguistics faculty member. (It is up to you to locate and make arrangements with a suitable speaker.)

If your native language is not English, you cannot use English to satisfy this requirement. However, you may use your native language, if it has been your language of formal education through high school, or, in exceptional cases, with the consent of your mentor and the graduate advisor.

(Back to Top)

## **5.6 Dissertation Prospectus**

By about the beginning of the fourth year students should form their third and final committee - the dissertation committee. This committee must consist of at least three tenured or tenure-track Rice faculty members. Two of your dissertation committee members must be Linguistics faculty, and the third must be someone from another department at Rice. Your committee may have additional members as well, but this is not required.

Your first task with the dissertation committee is to write a third research paper, called the dissertation prospectus. The prospectus should consist of a substantial dissertation proposal and a comprehensive bibliography. It may be based on a grant proposal to an external funding agency, particularly in the case of proposed fieldwork. The prospectus may be in a different area of linguistics than either of the two publishable papers, or it may in fact overlap with one or both of the earlier papers. The work described in the prospectus should lead naturally into your dissertation. The prospectus should contain a statement of the topic area of your proposed dissertation project, a problem statement, a statement of the theoretical orientation and methodology, and a comprehensive bibliography. Work out the specific details of your prospectus with the members of your dissertation committee. You will defend the prospectus to them during your qualifying examination when you advance to candidacy. Please be aware that the two-week turn-around time discussed above for publishable papers

applies to the prospectus as well. You should plan to turn in a complete draft of your prospectus at least six weeks before your official time boundary for advancement to candidacy. This ensures two weeks for the committee to read and give feedback, two weeks for you to make revisions, and two weeks for the committee to then read the final version.

[\(Back to Top\)](#)

## **5.7 Advancement to Candidacy**

When you have completed your course work, when both publishable papers have been approved, and after you have passed your language examinations and submitted your prospectus, you will take an oral qualifying exam, to be administered by the dissertation committee. The exam will consist of two parts, a general exam, demonstrating your knowledge of the field, and a dissertation prospectus hearing. Upon completion of this qualifying examination, you will then apply for Candidacy for the Ph.D. University policy requires that you advance to candidacy before the beginning of your ninth semester of study at Rice. Any extensions to this time limit must be requested by petitioning the Office of Postdoctoral and Graduate Studies, and are granted only under extraordinary circumstances. It is your responsibility to ensure that you advance by this deadline. You are always welcome to advance earlier, as long as you have met the above requirements. Once you have advanced, you are considered 'ABD' (All But Dissertation). ABD status is generally the time you may begin applying for academic jobs and post-docs. Application for some research grants

also requires this status.

Once you have advanced to candidacy, you are required to meet annually with your three Rice committee members to review your research progress and discuss a plan for the upcoming year. (This meeting may take place via Skype or telephone as necessary.) Schedule this meeting late in the spring semester, as it will be the basis for your academic progress letter (see Section 3, above).

(Back to Top)

## **5.8 Writing, Filing, and Defending the Dissertation**

Following advancement to candidacy, you should work full time toward the completion of the dissertation. Students generally find writing a dissertation to be a challenging and rewarding process. However, it is also an inherently stressful activity. For this reason, you should meet regularly with the members of your committee at every stage of your project, and keep in touch with them about data collection and writing. It would also be wise to join a dissertation-writing group of some sort. Check with the GSA regarding dissertation-writing groups that meet on campus. There is also a good deal of literature available about the dissertation-writing process. One book which students have found particularly helpful is:

Bolker, Joan. 1998. Writing your dissertation in fifteen minutes a day: a guide to starting, revising, and finishing your doctoral thesis. New York: Holt.

And finally, remember that all of the faculty members have

also written a dissertation (and likely supervised a number of them too), and are happy to discuss any issues that come up for you.

Upon completion of a complete and acceptable draft of your dissertation, you will then, in consultation with all members of your dissertation committee, schedule a public defense of your work. You must submit the official form to schedule your defense at least two weeks prior to the defense date. All members of the Rice community are invited to the defense, and anyone else is welcome to attend. You should prepare a short presentation of your work, summarizing the main research question(s), how you went about doing your project, and your key findings. If your dissertation is a grammar, your defense talk should present a basic overview of the language. Your dissertation committee will then ask you questions about your dissertation, as may other members of the audience, time permitting.

The complete draft of your dissertation, which you intend to be the basis of your defense, must be delivered to your committee members no later than two weeks prior to your scheduled defense date, and you must additionally leave a copy in the department office as per university requirements. There are a host of other important deadlines to keep track of, as well as very specific formatting minutia which you must strictly follow in order to file the dissertation. Consult the relevant section of the Rice General Announcements, and thoroughly study the Thesis Guidelines section of the Office of Postdoctoral and Graduate Studies web page at

<http://graduate.rice.edu/thesis> As always, you are ultimately responsible for being aware of and complying with all formal requirements and university deadlines. After you have submitted a complete draft of your dissertation, defended it publicly, and made any revisions suggested by your committee, you are ready to file the dissertation.

When the final version of the dissertation is accepted by the doctoral committee and filed with the university, and all other requirements are certified as fulfilled, you have earned a Ph.D. in Linguistics!

[\(Back to Top\)](#)