



## Linguistics Graduate Program Doctoral Candidacy Requirements

The University of Calgary Doctoral Candidacy Regulations ("the Regulations") govern the conduct of admission to candidacy at the University of Calgary. This document establishes program specific requirements associated with the conduct of admission to graduate candidacy under the *Regulations*.

### A. Statement of Purpose

The process of admission to candidacy in Linguistics serves multiple purposes. At one level, it is an intellectual "fitness test", to make sure that the student has the adequate preparation, background knowledge and skills to prepare a defensible doctoral dissertation in linguistics. To that end, students must show that they can conduct innovative, independent, and important original research in the field; that they are familiar with the relevant literature for their research and can relate their work to it; that they have suitable background knowledge of the appropriate research methods for the work they are conducting; that they can think independently and on their feet; that they can write and speak well enough to communicate their ideas successfully to both experts and to people who are not specialists in their field of study; and that they can engage meaningfully in critical discussions of their work.

We also have expectations of both breadth and depth of knowledge on the part of students --"breadth" in the sense that we want them to know multiple areas of research in the field well enough to qualify as a true linguist, and "depth" in the sense that they need to know their chosen sub-discipline well enough to be able to conduct meaningful research in it. For a student to be admitted to candidacy, we test the depth of their knowledge in their chosen sub-discipline of linguistics in a Field of Study (FoS) examination which focuses on the quality of the student's own research. This examination has both written and oral components. For the written component of the examination, the student prepares a primary research paper, which is based on original, independent work in the student's chosen sub-discipline of linguistics, and which will ideally form the basis of a chapter in the student's subsequent dissertation. We also test the student's breadth of knowledge of the field of linguistics by assessing a secondary research paper, taken from the student's coursework in a different linguistic sub-discipline from their primary field of study, which they have revised and expanded into a manuscript that is suitable for publication as a conference proceedings paper. The student then defends the breadth, depth, and theoretical relevance of the work done for both papers in the oral component of the examination. We also validate that students who have passed the FoS Examination have a suitable plan for carrying out their doctoral thesis research by approving a written thesis research proposal (see below).

B. All doctoral students in the Linguistics Graduate Program must successfully complete the following components for admission to candidacy:

1. All program course requirements, as specified in the linguistics entry in the University of Calgary [graduate calendar](#).
2. A Field of Study (FoS) examination, with both oral and written components.
3. An approved written thesis research proposal.

Approved by The Department of Linguistics: April 28, 2016

Approved by FGS Policy Committee: May 30, 2017

Proposed Effective Date: May 30, 2017

### **Field of Study Pre-Examination Meetings**

Normally, within 15 months of the student's first registration, the Supervisor will organize a meeting of the student's Supervisory Committee. The Supervisory Committee includes the student's Supervisor, possibly a co-Supervisor, and two additional members, one of whom may be external to the Program.

At the pre-examination meeting, the student will make an informal oral presentation of their initial concepts and plans for their doctoral research. The Supervisory Committee will then: (1) provide feedback on the research questions, methodology, theoretical framework, and data collection strategies for the student's planned research, (2) identify a topic for the primary research paper for the FoS Examination in the student's chosen sub-discipline of linguistics, (3) identify a topic for the secondary research paper in a distinct sub-discipline of linguistics, and (4) develop a timeline for the completion of candidacy requirements.

The meeting should also include some discussion of how each paper will contribute to the "breadth" criterion for candidacy. In some cases, this will be self-evident--for example, where one paper deals with a topic in syntax and the other deals with a topic in phonetics. In other cases, the student may wish to analyze a single linguistic phenomenon from different disciplinary perspectives and/or using quite different research methods. In this case, the criteria for demonstrating that the two papers are indeed distinct and will meet the breadth requirement must be clarified and correspond to the policy of the linguistics doctoral program, as stated in the linguistics graduate program handbook.

At the conclusion of this meeting, the Supervisor will draft a short memo, identifying the topics the student has chosen to study for the primary research paper and the secondary research paper, the basic research questions for both papers, and the timeline the Supervisory Committee and student have developed for completing the candidacy requirements. This memo will be added to the student's file and sent to (1) the Graduate Program Director, (2) all members of the Supervisory Committee, and (3) the student.

Any change to the student's primary and secondary sub-disciplines between the Pre-examination Meeting and the FoS Examination must be approved by the Supervisory Committee. In this case, a second memo, identifying the new sub-discipline(s) and topic(s), and providing the reasons for amending the initial subject areas, will be drafted by the Supervisor and sent to the Supervisory Committee members, the student, the Graduate Program Director, and to the Graduate Program Administrator, for inclusion in the student's file.

Prior to scheduling the FoS Examination (see below), the student must submit initial drafts of both their primary and secondary research papers to the Supervisory Committee. It is recommended that the student submit these initial drafts of the research papers to the Supervisory Committee within 20 months of the student's first registration in the program. The Supervisory Committee will then meet to discuss whether these drafts of the papers meet a minimal standard for presentation and discussion at the FoS Examination. If the Supervisory Committee decides that the papers meet this standard, each Supervisory Committee member will confirm this decision in an e-mail, sent to both the student's Supervisor and to the Graduate Program Director. If the papers do not meet the standard for the Examination, then, following this meeting, each Supervisory Committee member may also provide the student with feedback on how to improve the quality of their papers. The student may then revise and

re-submit the papers to the Supervisory Committee as many times as is necessary to meet the standard for the Examination. If the suggested improvements for the papers are minor, then only the student's Supervisor needs to see the revised papers, prior to scheduling the FoS Examination. If the suggested improvements for the papers are major, then the Committee members with relevant expertise must see the papers again, prior to scheduling the FoS Examination. The student's Supervisor may schedule the FoS Examination only after the Graduate Program Director has received confirmation from all Supervisory Committee members that the quality of the student's research papers is sufficient to proceed with the FoS Examination.

This requirement for Supervisory Committee approval of the student's research papers is however constrained by the need for the student to complete the Field of Study examination within 26 months of their first registration in the PhD program (see below). If the student has completed drafts of the two research papers required for the Field of Study examination and submitted them to the Supervisory Committee at least once for review, the scheduling of the FoS examination may proceed even without approval by the entire Supervisory Committee once the student has completed all of their course requirements and been enrolled in the PhD program for 25 months.

#### **Format of Field of Study (FoS) Examination**

The Field of Study examination tests the student's depth and breadth of knowledge in their primary and secondary sub-disciplines of linguistics by focusing on the quality of their own research. The FoS examination includes both a written component and an oral component, which are coordinated but evaluated independently.

#### **Scheduling of Field of Study (FoS) Examination**

Linguistics PhD students must take the FoS Examination within 26 months of their first registration in the PhD program, but are strongly encouraged to complete this requirement as soon as possible after completing all of their course requirements. A minimum of five weeks prior to the FoS Examination, the student's supervisor will schedule the student's examination in conjunction with the Graduate Program Director and Graduate Program Administrator. A minimum of three weeks prior to the FoS Examination, the student must submit both their primary and secondary research papers to the Examination Committee.

#### **Composition of FoS Examination Committee**

The FoS Examination is conducted by a committee that consists of the student's Supervisory Committee plus two additional members with relevant expertise. Where possible, the additional members of the committee will be drawn from faculty members in the linguistics graduate program; however, the additional members of the committee may be external to the program. A neutral chair will chair the oral component of the examination and is non-voting; the neutral chair will be assigned by the Graduate Program Director.

#### **Format of the written component of the FoS Examination**

For the written component of the FoS Examination, the student will present two original research papers to the Examination Committee. The contents of the primary research paper (in the student's primary research area) may eventually form the basis of a core chapter of the student's dissertation. The

secondary paper (in the student's secondary research area) is taken from one of the student's graduate seminars in a linguistic sub-discipline that is different from their primary field of study. For example, if the student's primary research paper is in phonetics, the secondary paper will focus on a research topic from one of the other sub-disciplines, such as morphology, phonology, syntax, semantics, language acquisition, historical linguistics or psycholinguistics. In most cases, it will be clear that the contents of the primary research paper and the secondary paper are different enough to satisfy the breadth requirement. In some cases, however, the research focus of the two papers may overlap. In these cases, the Supervisory Committee will make a decision regarding the appropriateness of the choice of topic for the secondary paper in the pre-examination meeting.

#### (1) The Primary Research Paper

The primary research paper will normally be between 25 and 50 pages (typed and double-spaced in 12 point font, with 1 inch/2.54 cm margins, not including references or appendices) in length and follow the formatting conventions required of linguistics research (e.g., as applied to articles published in the journal *Language*). The primary research paper must address a specific research question appropriate to the chosen sub-discipline. It must include a discussion of relevant literature on the topic, including current theories within which the research question can be framed. Crucially, the primary research paper must make an original contribution to the scientific understanding of the specific research question that the student has chosen to address. The original contribution may consist of new data which supports (or fails to support) an existing analysis of a theoretical problem, a novel theoretical solution to the problem, or an original synthesis of competing theoretical analyses. It may also consist of new data on an existing problem gathered from a novel population, the exploration of a novel methodology for investigating the problem with an explicit comparison to previous methodologies, or a computational implementation of an analysis. We expect the student to clearly state within the primary research paper where its original contribution resides. For example, if the student is providing a novel theoretical solution to a problem, it is expected that the paper will state explicitly that the analysis goes beyond mere description and attempts to meet explanatory adequacy (as this is normally understood in the field of linguistics).

#### (2) The Secondary Research Paper

The secondary research paper will normally be 20 to 30 pages in length (typed and double-spaced in 12 point font, with 1 inch/2.54 cm margins, including references and appendices), and follow the formatting conventions required of linguistics research (e.g., as applied to articles published in the journal *Language*). The student will create the secondary paper by substantially revising a paper submitted to a graduate seminar. It is expected that the student will improve the original graduate seminar paper by taking into account feedback received from the graduate seminar instructor, along with advice from the student's Supervisor and the other members of the Supervisory Committee. This secondary research paper may include a substantial revision of the paper submitted to the graduate seminar, may include a next step in the research originally conducted for the graduate seminar paper, or may present an alternative analysis from the work the student conducted for the seminar paper. This secondary research paper should form a manuscript that is appropriate for a conference proceedings

paper. The student will select the venue to model their paper on in consultation with their Supervisory Committee.

### **Format of the oral component of the FoS Examination**

In the FoS Examination, students first present brief, oral summaries of the contents of the two research papers they have submitted for the FoS Examination, and are then examined by the members of the Examination Committee on the contents of the papers and the related oral summaries of the research.

The oral component of the Field of Study examination is split into two halves and may last up to two hours. The first half of the FoS examination focuses on the student's primary research paper. The student begins this half of the examination by presenting a 10 to 15 minute-long overview of this research paper to the Examination Committee. The Examination Committee then asks the student questions about the ideas, methods and results detailed in the paper and presentation. Each Committee member will be given a chance to ask the candidate questions, and normally at least two rounds of questions by the examiners will be completed before moving on to the second half of the examination. The first half of the oral examination may last up to an hour in total.

The structure of the second half of the examination is similar to the first, except that this half of the examination focuses on the student's secondary research paper. The student also begins this half of the examination by presenting a 10 to 15 minute-long overview of this research paper to the Examination Committee. The Examination Committee then asks the student questions about the secondary research paper and presentation. As before, each Committee member will be given a chance to ask the student questions, and normally at least two rounds of questions by the examiners will be completed before the examination is concluded. The second half of the oral examination may last up to an hour in total.

Throughout the oral component of the FoS Examination, the questions that the examiners pose to the student should be clear and succinct. The student should be given a reasonable amount of time to respond to each question. If the student has understood the question and cannot answer it, the examiner should pass to another question and not attempt to extract an answer by prolonged interrogation, or by leading the student. The neutral chair should guard against any tendency of the examiners to interact with each other instead of concentrating on the examination of the student.

### **Evaluation of the FoS Examination**

Prior to the FoS Examination, each examiner will prepare a short report on the quality of the two papers that the student has submitted for the examination. Each examiner will submit an electronic copy of this report to the neutral chair for the FoS Examination within three weeks of having received the research papers from the student. This report will serve as a record of each examiner's independent assessment of the overall quality of the two research papers submitted for the FoS Examination, prior to any discussion of the student's work by the Examination Committee. This report should address how well the papers have met the criteria by which the student's performance on the written component of the examination is evaluated: namely, whether the papers are clearly written, well-organized, include proper use of technical terms, display appropriate knowledge of the relevant background literature for

each research topic, present a clear motivation and rationale for the study or analysis that the student has conducted in each paper, and, finally, present logical, well-argued conclusions based on suitable research methods and analytical techniques for the topics that the student has chosen to address in their research.

Along with a written report on the student's primary and secondary research papers, each examiner will independently send to the neutral chair a vote of "pass" or "fail" for these two papers, evaluated as a whole, prior to the FoS Examination. To ensure that the written and oral components of the examination are evaluated independently, this constitutes the only vote that the committee makes on the written component of the examination, and thus these votes are "locked in" at this point, prior to the oral component of the FoS Examination. Both papers that the student has submitted must satisfy the criteria described above in order for the student to successfully pass the written component of the FoS Examination.

The student's performance on the oral component of the FoS Examination will be evaluated on the basis of the quality of their presentation and discussion of both their primary and secondary research papers. Students must be able to clearly communicate the ideas and motivations behind their work to the Examination Committee, as well as engage meaningfully in a critical discussion of the findings of their work and their relevance to related theoretical issues in linguistics. The student must be able to demonstrate mastery of the material that forms the basis of their two FoS research papers, and an advanced level of understanding of both their primary and secondary sub-disciplines of linguistics. As with the written component of the FoS Examination, the student's presentation and discussion of both of their research papers must meet these criteria in order for the student to successfully pass the oral component of the FoS Examination.

At the conclusion of the oral component of the FoS Examination, the student will be asked to withdraw from the room while the committee deliberates on the student's performance in this component of the examination. Before any discussion of the student's performance, each examiner must give their preliminary recommendations of "pass" or "fail" for the oral component of the exam, independently, by secret ballot collected by the neutral chair. This provides the committee with a frame of opinion on which to base a full discussion of the student's performance.

The examiners will then conduct a discussion of the quality of the performance of the student in the oral component of the examination. After the discussion, a final vote will be taken and each examiner must make a recommendation of "pass" or "fail" for the oral component of the FoS Examination. Every attempt should be made by the Committee to reach a unanimous decision for the result of the examination.

After the result of this vote is disclosed to the Committee, the neutral chair will also tally and disclose the results of the vote on the written component of the Examination, collected prior to the Examination itself. Two or more "fail" votes constitute a fail on either component of the examination.

The neutral chair will inform the student of the Committee's decision on each of the written and oral components of the FoS Examination. In addition, as part of the Committee's discussion of the student's performance on the examination, the Supervisor will collect feedback on the student's work and oral presentation from other members of the Examination Committee, and then communicate that feedback to the student after the exam, regardless of whether the result is a pass or a fail.

If the student fails either component of the FoS Examination, the examiners will, within five working days from the date of the oral component of the examination, send reports to the Graduate Program Director of Linguistics, explaining the reasons for their vote. The neutral chair will also send a report on the oral and/or written components of the Examination to the Graduate Program Director; in addition, copies of these reports and the initial examiner's reports on the papers submitted for the FoS Examination will be sent to the Dean of Graduate Studies. A failed or non-unanimous result for either component of the examination is considered a recommendation by the members of the examination committee to the Graduate Program Director. The Graduate Program Director may uphold the fail in the case of a clear result or refer the decision to FGS in the case of an unclear fail. If the Graduate Program Director upholds the fail, the graduate program will, within ten working days from the date of the examination, send a Notice of Failed Candidacy Component to the student, and also keep the Notice of Examination, the post-exam memos, and the Notice of Failed Candidacy Component in the student's file.

### **Appeal of failed FoS Examination**

Students who fail either component of the FoS Examination may appeal the decision to the Faculty of Graduate Studies (see [Academic Regulations](#) – O.2. Appeals Against Faculty of Graduate Studies Rulings).

### **Re-Take of the FoS Examination**

Students may re-take the FoS Examination only once. A student who fails only one component of the FoS Examination is only required to re-take that component of the Examination. The student's re-take of the Examination will take place no sooner than two months and no later than six months from the date of the first Examination. Normally the composition of the Examination Committee will remain the same. In reporting the results of the re-take of the FoS Examination, the committee will again be limited to recommending either a pass (i.e., no more than one negative vote), or a fail.

If the student fails a re-take of either component of the FoS Examination, the examiners will, within five working days from the date of the Examination, send reports on the Examination to the Graduate Program Director of Linguistics, explaining the reasons for their vote. The neutral chair will also send a report on the Examination to the Graduate Program Director and the Dean of Graduate Studies. As per FGS regulations, a second failure of the FoS Examination requires the student to withdraw from the program.

### **The Written Thesis Research Proposal**

The purpose of the written thesis research proposal is to determine whether the student has an achievable and meaningful plan for their dissertation research, and to give the student's Supervisory

Committee an opportunity to provide feedback and guidance on the proposed research plan before the student begins to execute it.

### **Format of the Written Thesis Research Proposal**

Within two months of successfully passing the FoS Examination, the student will submit a draft thesis proposal to their Supervisory Committee. The student's proposal must be written according to the following guidelines:

1. The proposal is limited to a maximum of 10 pages, excluding references. It is to be typed and double-spaced in 12 point font, with 1-inch/2.54 cm. margins.
2. The main hypotheses and objectives that form the basis of the thesis proposal should be clearly stated.
3. Approximately half of the proposal should be devoted to describing the theoretical importance of the proposed research, along with a review of the relevant background and related literature for the proposal.
4. Approximately half of the proposal should describe the proposed research in detail, including a description of the resources required for the research and a timeline for completion.

All of these elements must be included in the proposal. Incomplete proposals will not be evaluated by the Supervisory Committee.

### **Approval of the Written Thesis Research Proposal**

Within three weeks of receiving a draft of the written thesis research proposal from the student, the Supervisory Committee will meet with the student to evaluate the proposal and determine whether or not it satisfactorily presents a viable research proposal for the doctoral dissertation according to the guidelines and expectations presented above. The written thesis research proposal will only be considered satisfactory if it is unanimously approved by the Supervisory Committee. If the proposal is unsatisfactory, the Committee will provide the student with feedback at this meeting on how to improve the proposal. At that time, the Committee will determine a deadline for submitting revisions, bearing in mind the 28 month deadline for completing all candidacy requirements. The student will then revise the thesis proposal according to the feedback provided by the Supervisory Committee. The student may revise the proposal once to satisfactorily incorporate the feedback that has been provided by the Supervisory Committee into the proposal, again keeping within the limit of the 28 month deadline for completing all candidacy requirements.

### **Appeal of failed Written Thesis Research Proposal**

In accordance with the FGS regulations for candidacy, a student may appeal a failed written thesis research proposal to the Faculty of Graduate Studies (see [Academic Regulations](#) – O.2. Appeals Against Faculty of Graduate Studies Rulings).

**Admission to Candidacy**

Once the Supervisory Committee has approved the student's final written thesis research proposal, the student will advance to the category of "Candidate for the PhD" in the Linguistics Graduate Program. The student's advisor will then send a memo to the Graduate Program Director for linguistics, documenting that the thesis proposal has been approved by the Supervisory Committee, along with an electronic copy of the approved proposal.