

## Seeking a PhD

Like other PhD programs around the country, we have a limited number of openings and must be highly selective in our admissions decisions. Current MA students are not guaranteed admission into the PhD program, but must either petition for transfer or apply for admission.

Petition for Transfer: Students who are in the MA program and who have not yet applied for graduation do not need to *apply* for admission through the University to be admitted (from the MA program) into the Ph.D. program. The University sees this as a transfer from one program to the other (officially referred to as a ‘change in level’), and does not require an application fee. You therefore must *Petition for Transfer* into the PhD program. As such, the requirements for petition are slightly different from those of application for admission. This document explains the process of petitioning for transfer.

Apply for admission: Only those who are entering the PhD program with a terminal degree must apply for admission. Applying for admission requires that you submit a *Petition for Admission to a Doctorate in Same Discipline* as well as pay an application fee to the University. We therefore recommend that if you are currently in our MA program and seek a position in our PhD program, that you petition for transfer.

### What to submit for a Petition of Transfer

In order to Petition for Transfer, and in accordance with the policies of the Office of Graduate Education, you must submit the following to the Department office by the appropriate deadlines (September 1st for Spring admission and December 1st for Fall admission):

- A detailed statement of purpose describing your research interests and how you think you are qualified for PhD work (see criteria below).
- A writing sample (e.g. term paper)

\*Letters of recommendation are not needed because the whole Linguistics graduate faculty will be polled regarding your admissibility.

### When to Petition

We accept applications for Spring transfer (deadline September 1<sup>st</sup> of the preceding year) and Fall transfer (deadline the preceding December 1<sup>st</sup>), although you are strongly advised to apply in the Fall semester (December 1<sup>st</sup> deadline). Furthermore, you are strongly advised to wait until your second year before submitting a petition. This is summarized below:

<b>Semester Admitted to MA program</b>	<b>When to Petition for Transfer</b>
Fall semester (e.g., Fall 2016)	End of 3 <sup>rd</sup> semester in the program (e.g., December 2017)
Spring semester (e.g., Spring 2016)	End of 2 <sup>nd</sup> semester in the program (e.g., December 2016)

### What to expect

Enrollment in the department’s MA program does not guarantee successful transfer to the PhD program. Historically, we admit roughly 15% of external applications, and 30% of internal applications. The merit of each application - internal or external - is evaluated using the same criteria, with the strongest candidates selected from amongst all applications. For internal applicants, the full faculty are polled as to your suitability for transfer to the PhD program, with comments solicited and potential advisors sought. The admissions committee considers the

results from this poll, as well as the Statement of Purpose, writing sample and any other information available to the committee.

Criteria: For each criterion listed below we have added a self-evaluation question for you to ask yourself.

- a) A record of academic accomplishment as reflected in outstanding work in previous linguistics courses. *Have any of my professors suggested I go on to PhD? How many? Have my grades been very strong?*
- b) A match between the interests of the student and the strengths of the faculty. *Does the Department currently have faculty who are willing and able to support the kind of research I hope to do?*
- c) Analytic (problem-solving) skills. *Have I demonstrated my skill at analyzing linguistic data and critically evaluating hypotheses proposed to explain the workings of language?*
- d) Evidence of an ability to work independently and to think critically. *Can I think critically and work independently with minimal direction?*
- e) Writing ability. *Can I express myself clearly in writing?*
- f) *Do I speak out in class, asking incisive questions and offering novel insights?*
- g) *Have I made any presentations to the department (e.g. Tuesday Seminars, LLL conference)?*

- Upon successful transfer into the PhD program, you must notify the Department office of your decision to either By-pass the MA degree or be awarded the MA degree. By-passing your MA means that because you will NOT be awarded the degree your already-earned course credits can be used towards your PhD. In this case you need to write a memo to the Department stating that you accept 'admission' to the PhD program and have decided not to be awarded the MA.
- Awarding of the MA means that credits used towards that degree will NOT count towards your PhD. In this case you must notify the department office of your decision and petition to the Office of Graduate Education using their form for permission to enter the PhD program. You must also pay the application fee.

Important Note: A *petition for transfer* will automatically convert into an *application for admission* (see above) if you apply for graduation at any time while in the MA program. We therefore urge you **not** to apply for graduation until you know you are leaving UH for certain.

A common scenario is the following: a student petitions for transfer to the PhD program in December. The deadline to apply for graduation (from the MA program) is in February, but the student will not learn of the outcome of their petition for transfer until March or April. The student therefore applies for graduation, just to be safe. If the petition is successful and they are offered a position in the PhD program, they will now have to pay an application fee, since the university sees this student as having a terminal MA degree at the time of entrance into the PhD program (the petition for transfer converted into an application for admission when the student applied for graduation). We therefore recommend that unless you are certain you will be leaving UH, that you **not** apply for graduation while a petition for transfer is pending. If your petition for transfer is unsuccessful, you may file a late petition for graduation. The only penalty for a late petition for graduation is that you will not have your name listed in the official graduation handbook.