LINGUISTICS (LING)

Graduate Degree Program
College: Arts and Humanities

Abstract

Research on language has proven to be one of the most fruitful means to cast light on the nature of human cognition. Building on recent developments in the field, the Maryland Linguistics (https://linguistics.umd.edu) program trains students to pursue and answer research questions about language as a component of the mind. How do particular languages reflect general properties of our linguistic capacity? How is this capacity instantiated in the mind, as a computational, psychological or neurological system? How does it reflect properties which are encoded genetically, and how does it support the acquisition of languages by young children? And how can linguistic knowledge be used to improve human language technology?

The Department of Linguistics (https://linguistics.umd.edu) at the University of Maryland has an internationally recognized Ph.D. program. The Department combines current theoretical research in phonology, morphology, syntax and semantics with state-of-the-art experimental research in psycholinguistics, first language acquisition, language processing, neurolinguistics, and computational linguistics. An interdisciplinary background enables students to evaluate proposals critically and make a lasting contribution to the field. Many students choose to split their major and minor areas between theoretical and experimental linguistics. Many students also choose to concurrently pursue the Certificate Program in Neuroscience and Cognitive Science (https://nacs.umd.edu/landingtopic/nacs-certificate/).

The Department encourages applications from students with an interest in the Department's areas of expertise.

Students with a primary interest in Neurolinguistics and Cognitive Science may also want to consider applying to the Neuroscience and Cognitive Science (https://nacs.umd.edu/) (NACS) Ph.D. program.

Students seeking a Ph.D. in other areas of linguistics may want to consider a range of other strong programs at the University of Maryland. The PhD program in Second Language Acquisition (https://sllc.umd.edu/sla/), based in the School of Languages, Literatures and Cultures, has a strong cognitive science and research focus. Students with a focus on ESL should consider the Applied Linguistics and Language Education Program (https://education.umd.edu/academics/departments/tlpl/llsi/applied-linguistics-and-language-education-phd/), based in the College of Education. Students with a clinical focus should also consider the Hearing and Speech Sciences Program (https://hesp.umd.edu/).

Students interested in human language technology and computational linguistics should also consider the PhD programs in the iSchool (https://ischool.umd.edu/) or the Department of Computer Science (https://academiccatalog.umd.edu/graduate/programs/computer-science-cmsc/). The Computational Linguistics and Information Processing (https://wiki.umiacs.umd.edu/clip/index.php/Main_Page/) (CLIP) laboratories contain state of the art computing facilities and data resources.

Financial Assistance

Initial offers of admission and financial aid are normally made in February-April. Further offers are sometimes made at a later date, if additional funds become available. In recent years, around 6 new students have started the Ph.D. program each year.

Financial aid (tuition + stipend) is available on a competitive basis. The department aims to provide graduate students with financial aid (stipend + tuition) during their full course of study (5 years), provided that the student makes satisfactory academic progress. Graduate funding comes from a number of sources. The Department offers Graduate Assistantships (GAs) and Research Assistantships (RAs). GAs typically involve teaching service in undergraduate linguistics courses. RA positions typically involve research associated with a grant-supported faculty research project. Also available are Graduate Fellowships. The University offers a number of these to outstanding applicants, which release the student from GA or RA responsibilities for 1-2 years of study. Other sources of funding are occasionally available through the Department or University. Also, a number of students come to the Department with funding of their own from external fellowships.

Fellowships and GAs generally provide 10 credits of tuition assistance respectively per semester. In additions to tuition assistance, the Graduate Assistantship comes with Health benefits. The student is responsible for approximately $440.00 in mandatory student fees per semester.

The Department sets aside a portion of its operating budget to support travel by faculty and graduate students to present papers at conferences. Any member of the Department can request support for this purpose. Graduate students may also apply for university travel awards for this purpose.

Contact

The Department's website, Maryland Linguistics (https://linguistics.umd.edu), contains a good deal of information on the program, but if you have further questions about Graduate Study in the Department, you should contact Dr. Jeffrey Lidz (jlidz@umd.edu). Alternatively, if you have a particular interest in the research of an individual faculty member, you may want to contact that person directly via email.

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Courses: LING **(**https://academiccatalog.umd.edu/graduate/courses/ling/**)**

Relationships: Hearing and Speech Sciences (HESP) **(**https://academiccatalog.umd.edu/graduate/programs/hearing-speech-sciences-hesp/**)**   Neurosciences and Cognitive Science (NACS) **(**https://academiccatalog.umd.edu/graduate/programs/neurosciences-cognitive-science-nacs/**)** Second Language Acquisition (SLPH) **(**https://academiccatalog.umd.edu/graduate/programs/second-language-acquisition-slph/**)**

ADMISSIONS

General Requirements

- Statement of Purpose
- Transcript(s)
- TOEFL/IELTS/PTE (international graduate students (https://gradschool.umd.edu/admissions/english-language-proficiency-requirements/))

Program-Specific Requirements

- Letters of Recommendation (3)
- CV/Resume
- Supplementary Application (https://gradschool.umd.edu/sites/gradschool.umd.edu/files/uploads/admissionsforms/umdsupplementaryapplicationling2021.pdf)
- Description of Research/Work Experience
- Writing Sample (one required, up to two more optional)

All students must hold a Bachelors or Masters degree (or international equivalent) prior to starting the Ph.D. program. Although the student's previous degrees may be in a field other than linguistics, it is essential that a student have some previous experience in linguistics.

Applicants should check the University's admission requirements (https://gradschool.umd.edu/admissions/) and the department's web site (https://linguistics.umd.edu/academic-programs/graduate/) for the most up-to-date information on graduate applications. Electronic submission of application materials is strongly preferred. Applicants are encouraged to submit the initial on-line application form well before the application deadline, preferably by mid-December, since this form must be processed before an applicant is able to submit other electronic materials. Note that the January 7th target date applies to all applicants, domestic and international.

For more admissions information or to apply to the program, please visit our Graduate School website: www.gradschool.umd.edu/admissions (https://gradschool.umd.edu/admissions/)

Application Deadlines

Type of Applicant	Fall Deadline
Domestic Applicants	December 5, 2025
US Citizens and Permanent Residents	December 5, 2025
International Applicants	December 5, 2025
F (student) or J (exchange visitor) visas; A, E, G, H, I and L visas and immigrants	December 5, 2025

Other Deadlines: Please visit the program website at https://linguistics.umd.edu

REQUIREMENTS

- Linguistics, Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.) (https://academiccatalog.umd.edu/graduate/programs/linguistics-ling/linguistics-phd/)
- Linguistics, Master of Arts (M.A.) (https://academiccatalog.umd.edu/graduate/programs/linguistics-ling/linguistics-ma/)

FACILITIES AND SPECIAL RESOURCES

In addition to university and departmental library facilities, linguists at Maryland have ample office and meeting spaces. The department has outstanding resources for interdisciplinary research (https://linguistics.umd.edu/research/) that bridges theoretical, experimental, and computational linguistics. The Cognitive Neuroscience of Language (CNL) Laboratory has the specific purpose of bridging the gap between theoretical/computational models of human language and the brain-level mechanisms that support language. The research in the CNL Lab combines the study of linguistics, cognitive neuroscience, language acquisition and psycholinguistics, genetic disorders and computational modeling. The CNL Lab is housed in around 5000 sf. of labs and offices and includes the following:

1. Event-Related Potentials (ERP) Lab: 128-channel Neuroscan ERP facility for recording electrical signals originating in the brain by measuring electrical activity at the scalp.
2. Magnetoencephalography (MEG) Lab at the Maryland Neuroimaging Center: a 160-channel whole-head MEG facility that is used for non-invasive measurements of the magnetic fields associated with neuronal activity in the brain.
3. Head-mounted Eye Tracking Lab: lightweight eye-tracker suitable for use with children and adults.
4. Fixed Eye Tracking Lab: eye-tracker suitable for on-line studies of reading.
5. Center for Young Children: state-of-the-art on-campus preschool for 3-6 year olds, with testing rooms suitable for study of language acquisition.
6. Infant Language Lab: for testing infants and young children.
7. Phonetic/Speech Analysis facilities: equipment for generation, recording, manipulation and analysis of speech sounds.

In addition to the facilities available at the CNL Lab itself, Maryland linguists have taken advantage of the many additional research opportunities in closely affiliated departments and institutions, in particular at the National Institutes of Health (NIH), located in nearby Bethesda, Maryland. These include fMRI brain imaging, PET brain imaging and TMS (transcranial magnetic stimulation) at NIH, and aphasia research in collaboration with NIH researchers.