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. The merit of each “inside” application is evaluated using the same criteria as for outside candidates.

Enrollment in the department’s MA program does not guarantee admission to the PhD program. In order to gain admission to our PhD program, you must go through the following steps before you finish your MA (typically during the last semester of your MA studies).

Apply to the Department for admission to the PhD program. All applications must be submitted in accordance with the Graduate Division deadlines (September 1st for Spring admission and January 10th for Fall admission).

Submit to the Department office:
- 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 you admissibility.

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 admission to 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 Graduate Division using their form for permission to enter the PhD program.