

# LINGUISTICS, B.A.

**Begin Campus:** Any Penn State Campus

**End Campus:** University Park

## Program Description

This major would allow students to receive a BA degree in Linguistics. Linguistics, which is the study of language as a structural, cognitive, historical, and cultural phenomenon, intersects with many different academic disciplines and career paths. Linguists study how people acquire their knowledge of a language (or multiple languages), how this knowledge interacts with other cognitive processes, and how best to model this knowledge. They study how to represent the structure of the various aspects of language (such as sounds or meaning), how to account for different linguistic patterns theoretically, and how the different components of language interact with each other. Since every language is spoken across multiple communities of practice, linguists also study variation in language based on region, ethnicity, gender, or any number of other social factors. In order to learn about as many of the world's 7000 languages as possible, many linguists do fieldwork. This means that they work with speakers of little-studied languages to discover grammatical patterns and/or to document the language. Other linguists search databases (or corpora) of spoken and written language to find patterns there. Yet others run carefully-designed experiments with children and adults in schools, in the field, and in university labs. Linguistics is the scientific study of language in all its complexity.

## What is Linguistics?

Linguistics is the scientific study of language: how it is structured, how it is acquired, how it is used to convey information, and how it changes over time. While many linguists do speak more than one language—or at least know how to approach the study of other languages—linguistics is much more than this. Through courses and a wide variety of research opportunities, our students explore how languages are structured (sentence structure, sound patterns, meaning and more), and how those structures are processed by the human brain. Since language is integral to all societies, linguists are interested in how language affects culture, and how social factors (place of birth, social class, ethnicity, gender, age, etc.) impact language use. We approach language from a global perspective, investigating commonalities and differences across languages in order to increase our understanding of what makes human communication unique.

## You Might Like This Program If...

- You enjoy studying languages, particularly finding and applying linguistic patterns.
- You are interested in communication, and learning more about the function of language(s) in society.
- You like to think about how the human brain functions, and want to know more about language and cognition.
- You like logic, computer programming, and/or abstract puzzles.

## Entrance to Major

In order to be eligible for entrance to this major, a student must:

1. attain at least a C (2.00) cumulative grade-point average for all courses taken at the University; and

2. have at least third-semester classification (<https://www.registrar.psu.edu/enrollment/semester-classification.cfm>).

READ SENATE POLICY 37-30: ENTRANCE TO AND CHANGES IN MAJOR PROGRAMS OF STUDY (<https://senate.psu.edu/students/policies-and-rules-for-undergraduate-students/37-00-entrance-to-a-college-or-major/>)

## Degree Requirements

**For the Bachelor of Arts degree in Linguistics, a minimum of 120 credits is required:**

Requirement	Credits
General Education	45
Electives	21
Bachelor of Arts Degree Requirements	24
Requirements for the Major	33-34

**3-4 credits of the 45 credits for General Education are included in the Requirements for the Major. This includes: 3-4 credits of GQ courses.**

**3 of the 24 credits for Bachelor of Arts Degree Requirements are included in the Requirements for the Major, General Education, or Electives and 0-12 credits are included in Electives if world language proficiency is demonstrated by examination.**

## Requirements for the Major

A grade of C or better is required for all courses in the major. To graduate, a student enrolled in the major must earn at least a C grade in each course designated by the major as a C-required course, as specified by Senate Policy 82-44 (<https://senate.psu.edu/students/policies-and-rules-for-undergraduate-students/82-00-and-83-00-degree-requirements/>).

Code	Title	Credits
<b>Prescribed Courses</b>		
<i>Prescribed Courses: Require a grade of C or better</i>		
LING 100	Foundations of Linguistics	3
LING 402	Syntax I <sup>1</sup>	3
LING 404	Phonology I <sup>1</sup>	3
LING 449	Semantics I	3
<b>Additional Courses</b>		
<i>Additional Courses: Require a grade of C or better</i>		
STAT 200 or appropriate statistics course		3-4
Select one of the following:		3
LING 405	Introduction to Historical Linguistics	
LING 448	Sociolinguistics	
APLNG 200	Introduction to Language, Culture, and Social Interaction	
Select one of the following:		3
FR 316	French Linguistics	
FR 417	French Phonology	
FR 418	French Syntax	
FR 419	French Semantics	
GER 412	Introduction to German linguistics	
GER 430	History of the German Language	
LATIN 450W		
LING 493	Field Methods	

SPAN 314	Spanish Sounds	
SPAN 315N	Spanish and Spanish-speakers in the U.S.	
SPAN 316	Building Words and Sentences in Spanish	
SPAN 418	The Evolution of Spanish	
Select 6 additional credits in Linguistics at the 400 level (list kept in department)		6
Select 6 additional credits from Linguistics courses and/or approved related fields		6

<sup>1</sup> A grade of C or better per course is required for teacher certification.

## General Education

Connecting career and curiosity, the General Education curriculum provides the opportunity for students to acquire transferable skills necessary to be successful in the future and to thrive while living in interconnected contexts. General Education aids students in developing intellectual curiosity, a strengthened ability to think, and a deeper sense of aesthetic appreciation. These are requirements for all baccalaureate students and are often partially incorporated into the requirements of a program. For additional information, see the General Education Requirements (<https://bulletins.psu.edu/undergraduate/general-education/baccalaureate-degree-general-education-program/>) section of the Bulletin and consult your academic adviser.

The keystone symbol appears next to the title of any course that is designated as a General Education course. Program requirements may also satisfy General Education requirements and vary for each program.

### Foundations (grade of C or better is required and Inter-Domain courses do not meet this requirement.)

- **Quantification (GQ):** 6 credits
- **Writing and Speaking (GWS):** 9 credits

### Breadth in the Knowledge Domains (Inter-Domain courses do not meet this requirement.)

- **Arts (GA):** 3 credits
- **Health and Wellness (GHW):** 3 credits
- **Humanities (GH):** 3 credits
- **Social and Behavioral Sciences (GS):** 3 credits
- **Natural Sciences (GN):** 3 credits

### Integrative Studies

- **Inter-Domain Courses (Inter-Domain):** 6 credits

### Exploration

- **GN**, may be completed with Inter-Domain courses: 3 credits
- **GA, GH, GN, GS, Inter-Domain courses.** This may include 3 credits of World Language course work beyond the 12th credit level or the requirements for the student's degree program, whichever is higher: 6 credits

## University Degree Requirements

### First Year Engagement

All students enrolled in a college or the Division of Undergraduate Studies at University Park, and the World Campus are required to take 1 to 3 credits of the First-Year Seminar, as specified by their college First-Year Engagement Plan.

Other Penn State colleges and campuses may require the First-Year Seminar; colleges and campuses that do not require a First-Year Seminar provide students with a first-year engagement experience.

First-year baccalaureate students entering Penn State should consult their academic adviser for these requirements.

### Cultures Requirement

6 credits are required and may satisfy other requirements

- United States Cultures: 3 credits
- International Cultures: 3 credits

### Writing Across the Curriculum

3 credits required from the college of graduation and likely prescribed as part of major requirements.

### Total Minimum Credits

A minimum of 120 degree credits must be earned for a baccalaureate degree. The requirements for some programs may exceed 120 credits. Students should consult with their college or department adviser for information on specific credit requirements.

### Quality of Work

Candidates must complete the degree requirements for their major and earn at least a 2.00 grade-point average for all courses completed within their degree program.

### Limitations on Source and Time for Credit Acquisition

The college dean or campus chancellor and program faculty may require up to 24 credits of course work in the major to be taken at the location or in the college or program where the degree is earned. Credit used toward degree programs may need to be earned from a particular source or within time constraints (see Senate Policy 83-80 (<https://senate.psu.edu/students/policies-and-rules-for-undergraduate-students/82-00-and-83-00-degree-requirements/>)). For more information, check the Suggested Academic Plan for your intended program.

## B.A. Degree Requirements

**World Language** (0-12 credits): Student must attain 12th credit level of proficiency in one world language in addition to English. This proficiency must be demonstrated by either examination or course work. See the Placement Policy for Penn State World Language Courses (<https://bulletins.psu.edu/undergraduate/general-information/academic-information/advising-planning-degree-program/course-placements/placement-policy-world-language-courses/>).

**B.A. Fields** (9 credits): Humanities, Social and Behavioral Sciences, Arts, World Languages, Natural Sciences, Quantification (may not be taken in the area of the student's primary major; world language credits in this category must be in a second world language in addition to English or beyond the 12th credit level of proficiency in the first language). Credits must be selected from the list of approved courses.

**World Cultures** (0-3 credits): Select 3 credits from approved list. Students may count courses in this category in order to meet other major, minor, elective, or General Education requirements, except for the University Cultural Diversity (US/IL) requirement.

## Program Learning Objectives

- **Analytical Ability:** Students will be able to find and describe patterns in language data using methodologies common in any subfield of linguistics

- **Communication:** Linguistics students will be able to communicate their knowledge and understanding efficiently and clearly
- **Content Knowledge:** Students will be able to explain and use major concepts, theories, and empirical findings within the field of linguistics
- **Creativity:** Students are able to apply their understanding of language structure through the design of testable research questions in relation to the structure of a non-English language

## Academic Advising

The objectives of the university's academic advising program are to help advisees identify and achieve their academic goals, to promote their intellectual discovery, and to encourage students to take advantage of both in-and out-of class educational opportunities in order that they become self-directed learners and decision makers.

Both advisers and advisees share responsibility for making the advising relationship succeed. By encouraging their advisees to become engaged in their education, to meet their educational goals, and to develop the habit of learning, advisers assume a significant educational role. The advisee's unit of enrollment will provide each advisee with a primary academic adviser, the information needed to plan the chosen program of study, and referrals to other specialized resources.

READ SENATE POLICY 32-00: ADVISING POLICY (<https://senate.psu.edu/students/policies-and-rules-for-undergraduate-students/32-00-advising-policy/>)

## University Park

### Liberal Arts Academic Advising

814-865-2545

Use the Liberal Arts Meet the Academic Advisers web page (<https://la.psu.edu/student-services/academic-advising/meet-the-academic-advisers/>) to see the contact information for the specific adviser(s) of this program

## Suggested Academic Plan

The suggested academic plan(s) listed on this page are the plan(s) that are in effect during the 2025-26 academic year. To access previous years' suggested academic plans, please visit the archive (<https://bulletins.psu.edu/undergraduate/archive/>) to view the appropriate Undergraduate Bulletin edition.

## Linguistics, B.A. at University Park Campus

The course series listed below provides **only one** of the many possible ways to move through this curriculum. The University may make changes in policies, procedures, educational offerings, and requirements at any time. This plan should be used in conjunction with your degree audit (accessible in LionPATH as either an **Academic Requirements** or **What If** report). Please consult with a Penn State academic adviser on a regular basis to develop and refine an academic plan that is appropriate for you.

### First Year

Fall	Credits	Spring	Credits
ENGL 15, 30H, 137H, CAS 137H, or ESL 15 (GWS) <sup>‡</sup>	3	CAS 100, CAS 100A, CAS 100B, CAS 100C, CAS 138T, or ENGL 138T (GWS) <sup>‡</sup>	3
LING 100 (IL/US) <sup>*</sup>	3	General Education Course (GQ) <sup>‡</sup>	3

LA 283	1.5	Linguistics Social Science Requirement <sup>*</sup>	3
General Education Course	3	World Language Level 2	4
World Language Level 1	4	Elective	3
Elective	3		
	<b>17.5</b>		<b>16</b>

### Second Year

Fall	Credits	Spring	Credits
LING 404 <sup>‡</sup>	3	LING 402 <sup>*</sup>	3
General Education Course	3	STAT 200 (GQ) <sup>‡†</sup>	4
General Education Course	3	LA 283	1.5
World Language Level 3	4	BA Field Course	3
Elective	3	BA Field Course	3
		Elective	3
	<b>16</b>		<b>17.5</b>

### Third Year

Fall	Credits	Spring	Credits
LING 449 <sup>*</sup>	3	Non-English Linguistics Course <sup>*</sup>	3
ENGL 202 <sup>‡</sup>	3	General Education Course	3
General Education Course	3	BA Field Course	3
General Education Course	3	BA World Cultures Course	3
Elective	3	Elective	3
	<b>15</b>		<b>15</b>

### Fourth Year

Fall	Credits	Spring	Credits
Any LING 4XX Course <sup>*</sup>	3	Any LING 4XX Course <sup>*</sup>	3
Related Area Course <sup>*</sup>	3	Related Area Course <sup>*</sup>	3
General Education Course	3	General Education Course	3
General Education Course	3	Elective	2
General Education Course (GHW)	1.5	General Education Course (GHW)	1.5
	<b>13.5</b>		<b>12.5</b>

### Total Credits 123

\* Course requires a grade of C or better for the major

‡ Course requires a grade of C or better for General Education

# Course is an Entrance to Major requirement

† Course satisfies General Education and degree requirement

### University Requirements and General Education Notes:

US and IL are abbreviations used to designate courses that satisfy Cultural Diversity Requirements (United States and International Cultures).

W, M, X, and Y are the suffixes at the end of a course number used to designate courses that satisfy University Writing Across the Curriculum requirement.

General Education includes Foundations (GWS and GQ), Knowledge Domains (GHW, GN, GA, GH, GS) and Integrative Studies (Inter-domain) requirements. N or Q (Honors) is the suffix at the end of a course number used to help identify an Inter-domain course, but the inter-domain attribute is used to fill audit requirements. Foundations courses (GWS and GQ) require a grade of 'C' or better.

All incoming Schreyer Honors College first-year students at University Park will take ENGL 137H/CAS 137H in the fall semester and ENGL 138T/CAS 138T in the spring semester. These courses carry the GWS designation and satisfy a portion of that General Education requirement. If the student's program prescribes GWS these courses will replace both ENGL 15/ENGL 30H and CAS 100A/CAS 100B/CAS 100C. Each course is 3 credits.

**Bachelor of Arts Requirements:**

Bachelor of Arts students must take 9 credits in Bachelor of Arts (B.A.) Fields (Humanities; Social and Behavioral Sciences; Arts; World Languages [2nd language or beyond the 12th credit level of proficiency in the 1st]; Natural Sciences; Quantification). The B.A. Fields courses may not be taken in the area of the student's primary major. See your adviser and the Degree Requirements section (<https://bulletins.psu.edu/undergraduate/general-information/academic-information/>) of this Bulletin.

Bachelor of Arts students must take 3 credits in World Cultures. See your adviser and the full list of courses approved as World Cultures courses (<https://bulletins.psu.edu/undergraduate/general-education/course-lists/ba-world-cultures/>).

**Advising Notes:**

- 24 credits within the major must be completed at University Park (policy 83-80). Talk with your academic adviser for additional details.

## Linguistics, B.A. at Commonwealth Campuses

The course series listed below provides **only one** of the many possible ways to move through this curriculum. The University may make changes in policies, procedures, educational offerings, and requirements at any time. This plan should be used in conjunction with your degree audit (accessible in LionPATH as either an **Academic Requirements** or **What If** report). Please consult with a Penn State academic adviser on a regular basis to develop and refine an academic plan that is appropriate for you.

### First Year

Fall	Credits Spring	Credits
ENGL 15, 30H, 137H, CAS 137H, or ESL 15 (GWS) <sup>‡</sup>	3 CAS 100, CAS 100A, CAS 100B, CAS 100C, CAS 138T, or ENGL 138T (GWS) <sup>‡</sup>	3
LING 100 (IL/US) <sup>*</sup>	3 General Education Course (GQ) <sup>‡</sup>	3
General Education Course	3 Linguistics Social Science Requirement <sup>*</sup>	3
World Language Level 1	4 World Language Level 2	4
Elective	3 Elective	3
	<b>16</b>	<b>16</b>

### Second Year

Fall	Credits Spring	Credits
LING 404 <sup>‡</sup>	3 LING 402 <sup>*</sup>	3
General Education Course	3 STAT 200 (GQ) <sup>‡†</sup>	4
General Education Course	3 BA Field Course	3
World Language Level 3	4 BA Field Course	3
Elective	3 Elective	3
	<b>16</b>	<b>16</b>

### Third Year

Fall	Credits Spring	Credits
LING 449 <sup>*</sup>	3 Non-English Linguistics Course <sup>*</sup>	3
LA 283	1.5 General Education Course	3
ENGL 202 <sup>‡</sup>	3 BA Field Course	3
General Education Course	3 BA World Cultures Course	3
General Education Course	3 Elective	3
Elective	3	
	<b>16.5</b>	<b>15</b>

### Fourth Year

Fall	Credits Spring	Credits
Any LING 4XX Course <sup>*</sup>	3 Any LING 4XX Course <sup>*</sup>	3
Related Area Course <sup>*</sup>	3 Related Area Course <sup>*</sup>	3
General Education Course	3 General Education Course	3
General Education Course	3 Elective	2
General Education Course (GHW)	1.5 General Education Course (GHW)	1.5
	<b>13.5</b>	<b>12.5</b>

**Total Credits 121.5**

\* Course requires a grade of C or better for the major

‡ Course requires a grade of C or better for General Education

# Course is an Entrance to Major requirement

† Course satisfies General Education and degree requirement

### University Requirements and General Education Notes:

US and IL are abbreviations used to designate courses that satisfy Cultural Diversity Requirements (United States and International Cultures).

W, M, X, and Y are the suffixes at the end of a course number used to designate courses that satisfy University Writing Across the Curriculum requirement.

General Education includes Foundations (GWS and GQ), Knowledge Domains (GHW, GN, GA, GH, GS) and Integrative Studies (Inter-domain) requirements. N or Q (Honors) is the suffix at the end of a course number used to help identify an Inter-domain course, but the inter-domain attribute is used to fill audit requirements. Foundations courses (GWS and GQ) require a grade of 'C' or better.

### Bachelor of Arts Requirements:

Bachelor of Arts students must take 9 credits in Bachelor of Arts (B.A.) Fields (Humanities; Social and Behavioral Sciences; Arts; World Languages [2nd language or beyond the 12th credit level of proficiency in the 1st]; Natural Sciences; Quantification). The B.A. Fields courses may not be taken in the area of the student's primary major. See your adviser and the Degree Requirements section (<https://bulletins.psu.edu/undergraduate/general-information/academic-information/>) of this Bulletin.

Bachelor of Arts students must take 3 credits in World Cultures. See your adviser and the full list of courses approved as World Cultures courses (<https://bulletins.psu.edu/undergraduate/general-education/course-lists/ba-world-cultures/>).

### Advising Notes:

- 24 credits within the major must be completed at University Park (policy 83-80). Talk with your academic adviser for additional details.

## Career Paths

A linguistics major can help students in a variety of career paths. The critical thinking and language analysis skills gained by our students provide good preparation for careers in information science and technology (especially when combined with computer science courses), education (especially language teaching), speech pathology, or audiology. Linguistics also provides good preparation for legal studies, law enforcement and related careers, as well as fields requiring precise use of language, such as advertising, publishing, or journalism. Students interested in international business or global studies would also benefit from studying linguistics.

## Careers

Courses in linguistics provide students the opportunity to practice and hone skills such as analytical reasoning, critical thinking, formulating hypotheses and argumentation, so linguistics students can easily pursue a variety of different career paths. The skills gained by our students provide good preparation for careers in information science and technology, education (especially language teaching), speech pathology, or audiology. Linguistics also provides good preparation for legal studies, law enforcement and related careers, as well as fields requiring precise use of language, such as advertising, publishing, or journalism. Students interested in international business or global studies would also benefit from studying linguistics.

### Information Science and Technology

The analytical tools taught in linguistics have many parallels to the tools needed for programming and related IT skills. In addition, there are many job opportunities relating to helping computers understand language or using computers to analyze language.

#### **Language Teaching**

Students who study linguistics are uniquely positioned to understand language structures, particularly grammar and pronunciation. These skills transfer very well into the language classroom, whether teaching English as a Foreign Language, or helping English speakers learn another language.

#### **Advertising and Publishing**

The ability to understand language at a structural level, particularly regarding meaning, is useful in pursuing careers that require the creative use of language.

#### **Law Enforcement and Intelligence Agencies**

Agencies value employees with backgrounds in fields like linguistics that teach crucial analytical skills. Additionally, linguistics students gain skills that can help with learning languages quickly and training others in language learning, which is a crucial skill in a globalized world.

#### **Legal and Forensic Consultation**

An understanding of dialects, language variation, and speech analysis are often crucial in making legal arguments, and forensic linguistics is an important aspect of the field.

#### **Speech Pathology/Speech and Hearing Science**

Training in linguistics is a key to understanding speech, and thus majoring or minoring in linguistics is a useful complement to study in the Department of Communication Sciences and Disorders.

#### **Government Services and NGO Work**

Course work in sociolinguistics and language variation are attractive qualifications for public sector jobs, and crucial for development projects around the world.

## **Contact**

### **University Park**

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