Office of the Provost

Proposed New Degree or Credit-Bearing Certificate: Academic Component

NOTE: The Library Impact Statement is required for the review of a new degree program. Proposers should contact the Library as early in the proposal development process as possible.

Title of Degree or Credit-Bearing Certificate (e.g., Bachelor of Arts in History):

MA in Linguistics

1. Please provide the name, title, email address, and phone number of the primary contact person for this academic program:

   Carol Neidle, Professor of Linguistics & French; Director of the Linguistics Program
   carol@bu.edu; 617-353-6218

2. Please briefly describe the proposed new degree:

   Our proposed MA in Linguistics requires 32 credits and is designed to be completed in 2 to 3 semesters. It will provide students with solid grounding in the traditional core areas of Linguistics, as well as a specialization in one of a number of areas. One distinction of our program is its theoretically-based empirical focus. Our core faculty members have significant research commitments and experience in a broad range of empirically-based domains, including: documentation of under-described languages, dialectological or sociolinguistic field research, compilation of audio and video corpora, development of technologies for maintenance and analysis of corpora, and laboratory or computational approaches to linguistic analysis. This focus sets us apart from other prominent local institutions (specifically, Harvard and MIT) and will be attractive to promising students in a changing field where this focus is increasingly the norm.

3. Please provide a rationale for the proposed new degree:

   We already offer a strong BA program in Linguistics, and we have the faculty expertise and resources to extend this program to the MA level. There is currently an MA Program in Applied Linguistics offered by GRS, in which most of our faculty members participate to one extent or another. Our core faculty members unanimously agree, however, that that program is unsatisfactory as currently constituted. The term “Applied Linguistics” is generally used to describe programs that feature training in the teaching of English as a foreign or second language. None of our faculty has any expertise or interest in this area, however. Our intention is to replace the current program with the one proposed here, which more accurately represents what we have to offer.
We have reason to believe that demand for the proposed program will be very strong. We have seen a surge in applications to the existing MA program in the past few years, while at the same time we have become more selective in our admissions process (Figure 1).

Figure 1. Admissions statistics for the BU Program in Applied Linguistics, from 1995 to present. The blue line represents selectivity, measured as the percentage of applicants admitted in a given year. The green line represents the total number of applications received.

Incoming class sizes are generally smaller than in the past, despite increased numbers of applications, and stable or increased yields among accepted students. During the five-year period between 2010 and 2014, the AL MA program averaged 55 applications per year, of which 11 (20%) were accepted. Average yield for this period was 54%.

The steady growth in demand for our current MA program, along with our success in recent years in placing MA students, gives us confidence that, with the added strength of recent hires, an improved and refocused curriculum, and an energetic and accurately targeted marketing campaign, we will be quite successful in attracting and training top students at the MA level.

There is also growing demand for postgraduate degrees in linguistics nationally, as can be seen in data from the Linguistic Society of America’s Annual Report for 2013, showing growth in MA and PhD degrees, and more dramatically, in BA degrees granted in linguistics (Figure 2 on the next page); this has been mirrored at the undergraduate level at BU, as well, over the same period. The terminal MA degree in linguistics, however, is a fairly unusual offering. The fact that few first-rate linguistics programs in North America (and none at all in the Northeastern US) offer a terminal MA means that we can expect strong demand for a high-quality program such as the one detailed below. Our two primary competitors in North America would be the University of California, Santa Cruz, and McGill University.
4. Please describe how the proposed new degree advances the Strategic Plans of the department, school/college, and University:

The proposed new degree program clearly advances the Strategic Plan of the University in three central ways. In what follows, we address the relevant points of the Strategic Plan in order.

**Point 1. To support and enhance a world-class faculty whose members are dedicated to teaching and engaged in research, scholarship, and their professions.** We have already, particularly with a number of excellent hires over the past few years, assembled a first-rate core faculty in linguistics. Many of our faculty members would be competitive for positions at any of the highest-ranked linguistics programs in the world. That they have chosen BU, in several recent cases directly over competing offers from more prominent institutions, is a testimony to the potential for development and achievement that a small, but focused and energetic program like ours has. In order to retain a faculty of this caliber, however, and to create the kind of community in which the research programs of all faculty members can thrive, it is imperative that we develop substantial, first-rate graduate programs.

**Point 5. To strengthen scholarship and research throughout the University by support of key disciplinary graduate programs.** Establishing high-quality graduate programs will be key to allowing BU Linguistics to achieve its full potential. This MA program in Linguistics will put us on a path to become competitive with the best comparably sized programs nationally and internationally. This is a rare opportunity in program development: As far as we know, few other programs at BU currently have the potential to move so far ahead on so (comparatively) little.

**Point 7. To increase our emphasis on interdisciplinary research and graduate education in order to expand our leadership in important fields and the collaborative atmosphere across our campuses.** Linguistics is by its nature a highly interdisciplinary venture, sitting at the interstices
of disciplines ranging from textual criticism, literary theory, and philosophy, to anthropology, psychology, and area studies, to computer science, neuroscience, and acoustic physics. Against this background, our faculty has an extensive track record of interdisciplinary endeavors, not only in research, but also in teaching and mentoring. Within BU, our affiliated (non-core) faculty have primary appointments in Anthropology, Philosophy, Psychology, SAR (Speech, Language and Hearing Sciences), and SED (Deaf Studies and TESOL), and additional affiliations with the African Studies Center, and the Program in Neuroscience. At the undergraduate level, we have joint concentrations with French, Spanish, Italian, Japanese, and Philosophy, and a proposal for a joint major in Linguistics & Speech, Language and Hearing Sciences (SAR) currently under review. We have plans for additional joint concentrations with Classics and African Studies (and are engaged in discussions about development of others). Our faculty members also have longstanding research collaborations with scholars in other disciplines, most notably Computer Science and Psychology/Cognitive Science. Our linguistic research has furthermore taken us all over the world: We have extensive field or research experience with languages spoken across Europe and Asia, in Africa, South America, and in Native and Hispanophone North America. We have also worked extensively on signed languages.

5. Please list the program requirements for the proposed new degree (denote new courses in bold print):

The MA in Linguistics requires 32 credits. Students entering the program without the necessary background to take these courses may be required to take prerequisite courses. Prerequisite courses will not be counted as credit towards the degree. Course requirements are as follows:

1. Three required courses in core areas of linguistic analysis:
   - CAS LX 503 Semantics 2
   - CAS LX 513 Phonology
   - CAS LX 523 Syntax 2

2. Three additional graduate courses in linguistics (excluding CAS LX 502, 510, and 522).

3. Two other graduate courses selected in consultation with an advisor, one of which may be directed research.

Language requirement (would be satisfied by fulfillment of the CAS undergraduate Foreign Language Requirement)

All students pursuing an MA in Linguistics are required to demonstrate graduate-level reading proficiency in a foreign language prior to completion of the degree. Language proficiency can be demonstrated through a language examination, successful completion of a non-credit graduate-level foreign language reading course offered by Boston University, or the equivalent of two years of undergraduate study of the language at Boston University.

6. Please list program learning outcomes:

Students graduating with an MA in Linguistics are expected to demonstrate:
1. The ability to think critically about fundamental issues in the study of language structure, universals, variation, change, acquisition, and social dimensions of language use.

2. A sophisticated command of several core areas of linguistic analysis (e.g., phonetics/phonology, morphology, syntax/semantics).

3. Specialization in a selected subfield of linguistics or interface area.

4. The ability to analyze the empirical patterns found in sets of language data, and to construct well-reasoned linguistic analyses by formulating, testing, and refining hypotheses.

5. The ability to formulate a testable research question, grounded in the prior literature, to carry out the relevant research, analyze the findings, and construct argumentation to support the conclusions.

7. For master’s or professional doctorate degrees, please describe what this program prepares students for after they have graduated:

Many of our MA students will ultimately seek PhD degrees in Linguistics. Our program is designed to give students with great potential, but insufficient background in Linguistics, the training that they will need to be competitive as applicants to top-flight PhD programs.

The MA in linguistics also has the potential to open doors for students hoping for acceptance into a top program in speech-language pathology. Speech-language pathology is a fast-growing profession, rated the #2 "Best Social Services" job and #30 of the "100 Best Jobs" by U.S. News and World Report on the basis of factors like job prospects, salary, and employment rate. Linguistics courses, including courses in phonetics, phonology and language acquisition, are prerequisites for most graduate programs. Further, the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association notes that foundational knowledge in linguistics and the kinds of analytical skills provided by linguistic training are important background for speech-language pathology, and has called for increased training in these areas at the undergraduate level to increase students' preparedness for graduate study (http://www.asha.org/Events/SLP-Summit-Prepare-Future/). The graduate program in Speech-Language Pathology at BU typically accepts several students with a linguistics background each year, and the faculty routinely finds these students to be well prepared for the coursework and critical thinking skills required for success in the program.

Beyond this, there is also some demand for the MA in linguistics as a credential toward work in a variety of other fields, as well. In the technology industry, for example, an MA in Linguistics, combined with some experience in programming, is the desired qualification for many jobs. Several of our former students have gone to work for language technology companies. (For further examples, see, at any given time, the non-academic jobs for linguists advertised at linguistlist.org.) As mobile app development has become a part of work on endangered languages, some of our students have been able to use their experience in this area to obtain jobs outside of linguistics. Other students who have worked in language documentation have sought jobs with NGOs concerned with development of under-resourced languages. Many of our students have also used the MA in linguistics as a credential in some area of education (typically language-related, such as teaching English to speakers of other languages). Finally, some have found work with international translation companies or in educational publishing.
8. Please describe how the proposed new degree relates to existing programs at the University:

The new MA program in Linguistics will supplant the current MA in Applied Linguistics, thus unifying our programs in Linguistics at the undergraduate and graduate levels. We are also submitting a proposal to establish a BA/MA in Linguistics.

The establishment of new graduate degree programs in Linguistics will also give rise to synergies with other graduate programs at BU, similar to those we have been developing at the undergraduate level through our joint majors. Expanded future course offerings will be valuable for students concentrating in other programs as well, perhaps most notably Philosophy, Psychology, and SAR Speech, Language and Hearing Sciences.

Our target date for MA students to enter the new program is Fall 2017. The last class of MA students for the existing MA program in Applied Linguistics will begin in Fall 2016.

9. Please place the proposed program in the context of comparable programs at peer institutions:

Table 1 compares our proposed program to the comparable programs at UC Santa Cruz, McGill and Northwestern. Highly rated Linguistics programs that offer terminal MA degrees are all quite similar to our proposed program in their goals and composition: Each aims to provide students with solid grounding in the core areas of linguistic analysis, a further specialization in one sub-field, and demonstrated success in conducting independent research in that area.

Our program will differ from the three other programs in Table 1 in that we do not require a final research project. We have left this as an option, and will encourage students intending to pursue more advanced degrees to carry out such research. However, in the interest of enabling the program to be completed in 1 year for students seeking a professional credential for non-academic career paths, we have not made this a requirement.

NOTE: In Table 1 “core” courses refer to courses in the areas of phonology, syntax, and semantics, sometimes presented as “sound, structure, and meaning”. All three MA programs require at least one course in each of these (hence the multiples of three in the chart below), and some require more. “Methods” courses typically refer to courses in linguistic field methods, quantitative analysis, experimental design, etc.
Table 1. Properties of Linguistics MA programs at peer institutions in comparison with the proposed program at BU.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PROGRAM</th>
<th>“Core” courses</th>
<th>Additional required</th>
<th>Specialization</th>
<th>Methods courses</th>
<th>Final research project</th>
<th>Guaranteed Financial support</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BU¹</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3 “extended core”</td>
<td>2 electives</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Santa Cruz²</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2 core in separate areas</td>
<td>3 electives</td>
<td>1 (Substitute additional core course possible)</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>McGill¹</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1 core or methods course</td>
<td>4 electives</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes (w/ graduate research seminar)</td>
<td>Yes (1 yr, 8 mo.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northwestern²</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2 electives</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

¹The academic year is divided into semesters; courses listed here are 1 semester in length. 
²The academic year is divided into quarters; courses listed here are 1 quarter in length.

10. Please list the program’s faculty:

1. **CORE FACULTY**

Peter Alrenga, Assistant Professor of Linguistics, College of Arts and Sciences.

Sudha Arunachalam, Assistant Professor of Speech and Hearing Sciences & Linguistics, Sargent College.

Jonathan Barnes, Associate Professor of Linguistics, College of Arts and Sciences.

Charles Chang, Assistant Professor of Linguistics, College of Arts and Sciences.

Daniel Erker, Assistant Professor of Spanish and Linguistics, College of Arts and Sciences.

Paul Hagstrom, Associate Professor of Linguistics, College of Arts and Sciences.

Neil Myler, Assistant Professor of Linguistics, College of Arts and Sciences.

Carol Neidle, Professor of French and Linguistics, College of Arts and Sciences.

Alexander Nikolaev, Assistant Professor of Classical Studies and Linguistics, College of Arts and Sciences.

Catherine O’Connor, Professor of Education, School of Education.
2. AFFILIATED FACULTY

Catherine Caldwell-Harris, Associate Professor of Psychology, College of Arts and Sciences.

Juliet Floyd, Professor of Philosophy, College of Arts and Sciences.

Bruce Fraser, Professor of Linguistics and Education, School of Education.

Deborah Kelemen, Professor of Psychology, College of Arts and Sciences.

Amy Lieberman, Assistant Professor of Curriculum and Teaching, SED.

Jacqueline A. Liederman, Professor of Psychology, College of Arts and Sciences.

Michelle Mentis, Clinical Professor and Director, Master of Science Program in Speech-Language Pathology, SAR.

Fallou Ngom, Associate Professor of Anthropology, College of Arts and Sciences.

Tyler Perrachione, Assistant Professor of Speech, Language, and Hearing Sciences, Sargent College.

Marnie Reed, Clinical Associate Professor of Education. School of Education.

Nancy Smith-Hefner, Associate Professor of Anthropology, College of Arts and Sciences.

Helen Tager-Flusberg, Professor of Psychology, Anatomy, and Neurobiology, College of Arts and Sciences and School of Medicine.

11. Please provide an administrative plan for the proposed new degree:

The MA will be administered through the newly restructured Linguistics Program, with the Program Director and the Director of Graduate Studies assuming primary responsibility for all aspects of program administration.

12. Please provide an advising plan for the proposed new degree:

Students will be assigned an advisor from among the members of the core faculty, with advisors assigned based on student interests.

We will continue current practices of holding annual fall and spring meetings to bring students together for community and for information purposes. Additionally, faculty will meet each year in the spring to assess each graduate student’s progress. The conclusions reached at this meeting will be reported to each student by his or her advisor in the form of a short letter.

Other contexts in which professional advising will take place include the BU Conference on Language Development (BUCLD). All MA students will be expected to participate. The role of the conference in our program’s history and future is hard to overstate. Now in its 40th year,
BUCLD has become widely regarded as the most important annual meeting for researchers in the field of language acquisition. It is the most high-profile, distinctive aspect of our program and provides a focus for many students' specializations. The skills, experience, and connections that come with organizing a major conference are and will be of great value to our students.

13. For a proposed graduate program, please provide the admissions standards involved:

We will be looking for students either with a bachelor’s degree in linguistics, or with less experience in linguistics, but strong evidence of intellectual ability, as demonstrated in another academic discipline, and interests matching our offerings.

14. Please document any implications that the formation of the proposed new degree has on professional accreditation or licensure at the program or school/college level:

Not applicable

15. For a proposed undergraduate program, please provide sample pathways through the new degree or certificate:

Not applicable

16. If the new program includes a new course or courses, please indicate who will teach the course and how the rest of that faculty member’s course load will be affected (courses(s) redistributed to other faculty, taught less frequently, no longer taught, etc.). Please be specific about affected courses. This information should be reflected in the budget form that accompanies the proposal, e.g. the cost for a new faculty member to teach the new course or a redistributed course [NOTE: new courses will need Course Inventory Forms submitted to the Office of the Registrar]:

No new courses are proposed.

17. Please list other resources needed including new staff, IT, technology enhanced classrooms, office space, and other facilities. This information should be reflected in the budget:

No new resources will be required.

18. What charges (tuition, fees, etc.) are to be applied to this program? How will the charges be structured?

Standard BU tuition and fees will be charged.

19. Please describe the proposed enrollment or the enrollment required to cover the start-up costs of the proposed new degree:

Our target MA class size is larger than that of the current Applied Linguistics MA program, namely 10-15 students per year. Increased enrollments will result in better utilization of our existing resources and an increase in tuition revenue. There are no new costs.
MA IN LINGUISTICS

The MA in Linguistics is designed to provide students with a solid foundational knowledge of the traditional core areas of linguistic analysis, as well as a deeper specialization in a chosen subfield or interface area. Our goal is to help students reach a level of preparation suitable for the pursuit of more advanced work in linguistics, or in allied fields with a commitment to the study of language. Many students who complete the MA degree will go on to PhD programs in these areas, while others will instead pursue careers in fields such as speech and language technologies, education, among others. Our program has particular strength in the areas of theoretical syntax and semantics, experimental phonetics and phonology, and language acquisition. Additional areas of focus include language documentation and field linguistics, language change and variation, pragmatics and information status, prosody, Romance linguistics, and sign language linguistics.

The MA program is designed to be completed in one year, though students wishing to complete a major independent research project, akin to a thesis or capstone project, may wish to consider spending three or four semesters in the program instead. The program is appropriate both for students with a limited background in linguistics, and for those holding an undergraduate degree in the field. Entering students must have completed an introductory class in linguistics (e.g., CAS LX 250 at BU). Students who do not have a sufficient background in linguistics must pass an examination or make up the deficiency through coursework prior to entry or during the first semester. Such coursework will not be counted toward the master’s degree requirements.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

The MA in Linguistics requires 32 credits. Students entering the program without the necessary background to take these courses may be required to take prerequisite courses. Prerequisite courses will not be counted as credit towards the degree. Course requirements are as follows:

- Required core courses:
  - CAS LX 503 Semantics 2
  - CAS LX 513 Phonology
  - CAS LX 523 Syntax 2

- Three additional graduate courses in Linguistics, excluding CAS LX 502, 510, and 522.

- Two other graduate courses selected in consultation with an advisor, one of which may be directed research.

LANGUAGE REQUIREMENT

All students pursuing an MA in Linguistics are required to demonstrate graduate-level reading proficiency in a foreign language prior to completion of the degree. Language proficiency can be demonstrated either through a language examination, successful completion of a non-credit graduate-level foreign language reading course offered by Boston University, or the equivalent of two years of undergraduate study of the language at Boston University.