

Graduate Student Handbook

Department of Modern Languages

Kansas State University

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1. Mission Statement

Department of Modern Languages

Through quality research and teaching in world languages and literatures, we prepare a linguistically competent and culturally aware citizenry poised to live and work in an increasingly global and diverse society, in accordance with Kansas State University's land grant mission.

2. Concentration Areas of Study

The Department of Modern Languages offers a two-year M.A. program (30 credit hours) in French, German, Spanish, or Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL). Courses are offered in language, language acquisition, pedagogy, (applied) linguistics, literature, culture, film, literary theory, and translation. Graduates are prepared to pursue study at the doctoral level or to seek a career where advanced proficiency in a second language is necessary (e.g., teaching, governmental agency work, international business, etc.)

3. Admission Process

The application process is detailed on the website of the Graduate School: [Application for Admission \(k-state.edu\)](https://www.k-state.edu/graduate-school/admission)

Key information from the website includes:

- The type of Bachelor's degree and Grade Point Average (GPA) applicants should maintain.
- Information for applicants whose degree is from an institution outside of the US.
- The level of English proficiency non-native speakers of English must demonstrate on an exam, for example, the TOEFL exam.
- Application materials that must be submitted: a statement of purpose, transcripts, three letters of reference, and application fee.
- Additional application materials that international applicants must submit: an affidavit of financial support.
- The portal to the online application provided by the Graduate School.

It should be noted that the department's recommended deadline for applications is earlier than the one noted by the Graduate School. For priority consideration for **Fall** admission with a Graduate Teaching Assistantship, applicants should submit all their application materials by **December 15** and for **Spring** admission, by **August 1st**. It is recommended that students apply for Fall semester admission rather than Spring, as the coursework sequence ideally starts in the Fall.

Applicants who do not meet all the requirements of the Graduate School can still apply but may be granted provisional or probationary admittance and be required to complete additional courses before beginning coursework in the program.

Non-native speakers of English who apply to the TEFL program are held to a higher standard of English proficiency than that specified by the Graduate School. They are required to have received a score of 22 or higher on the listening, reading, and writing sections, and a 24 or higher on the speaking section of the iBT TOEFL (internet based) examination, for a total score of 90 or higher.

Additionally, as the Kansas Board of Regents requires students who teach courses at the university to have received a score of 22 or higher on the speaking section of the iBT TOEFL examination or a score of 50 on the SPEAK test, non-native speakers of English who apply for a Graduate Teaching Assistantship (GTA-ship) must submit one of these scores with their application materials. Details about the SPEAK test are available through the English Language Program (ELP): [SPEAK Testing \(k-state.edu\)](http://www.k-state.edu/elp/speak)

4. Advisor, Major Professor, and Supervisory Committee

Upon admission, students are assigned an initial advisor, who is also the current graduate advisor in the student's language of study. This advisor acts as a mentor to the student and advises the student about courses during the first two semesters. Before the end of the second semester, students must form their supervisory committee, which is composed of a major professor and at least two additional committee members. The choice of major professor depends on several factors, including whether the student decides to complete a substantial research project (either the MA report or MA thesis). Ideally, the major professor should have expertise, or at least experience, in the field of study chosen by the student for the large-scale research project. While the major professor must be a professor in the Department of Modern Languages, the two additional committee members may be from outside the department. All members of the supervisory committee must be members of the graduate faculty on campus. The major professor assumes the responsibilities of the graduate advisor, advises the student on coursework, assists with the program of study, directs the student's large-scale research project, where relevant, and helps the student prepare for the comprehensive exams (portfolio or exam). The role of the committee members is to review and respond to the student's comprehensive examination answers and the large-scale research paper (if applicable).

5. Degree Requirements

In consultation with the student's advisory committee, each student will complete the following program of study.

5.1 Coursework

5.1.1 Core Courses

A minimum of 3 credit hours is selected from the courses below. Additional courses from this list may be taken as subspecialty electives.

- MLANG 600 Principles of Linguistics
- MLANG 710 Foreign Language Pedagogy

- MLANG 720 Introduction to Literary Theory and Research Methodology
- MLANG 770 Theories of Second Language Acquisition

5.1.2 Subspecialty Electives

Students will complete 21 hours of coursework at the 600-level or above in the relevant subspecialty (French, German, Spanish, or Teaching English as a Foreign Language), in consultation with committee. Students may substitute Modern Languages topics courses at the 700 and 800 level in consultation with their major professor as appropriate. Students may petition to substitute some hours with courses outside of the department of Modern Languages, with the approval of the committee.

5.1.3 Advanced Study

In addition to the courses above and with approval of the M.A. committee, each student chooses one of the following three options:

1. MA Coursework Option: 6 hours of additional electives.
2. MA with Report: 2 hours related to the report, 4 hours of additional electives.
3. MA with Thesis: 6 hours related to the thesis.

5.1.4. Graduate Certificates

Additionally, graduate students in the Department of Modern Languages may opt to complete the following graduate certificates. A total of 6 credits from the certificate may be added to the MA curriculum, pending approval of the student's advisor.

- MLANG graduate certificate in Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL) for those who wish to teach English domestically or abroad. [Program: Teaching English as a Foreign Language Graduate Certificate - Kansas State University - Acalog ACMS™ \(k-state.edu\)](https://catalog.k-state.edu/graduate/certificates/tefl)
- In partnership with the College of Education: Graduate Certificate in Teaching and Learning (TELRN) in French, German, or Spanish, for those interested in pursuing K-12 licensure in Kansas. [Teaching and Learning Graduate Certificate \(k-state.edu\)](https://catalog.k-state.edu/graduate/certificates/tefl)

5.2. Comprehensive Examination Options

The comprehensive examinations test students' knowledge of the core theories, works, and methodologies in their concentration area of study. The specific questions are created by the student's major professor in consultation with the supervisory committee. Students take their comps before the deadline set by the graduate school for that semester. The scheduling of the examinations is decided in consultation with the major professor. Each question is graded as "pass" or "fail" by each committee member. At least two-thirds of the members of the supervisory committee must award a score of "pass" on all questions for students to successfully pass their comprehensive examination. In the case of a failed attempt, per the university-wide Graduate Handbook, Chapter 2, [Section J.3](#), a student is permitted **one** retake, no sooner than 2

months and no later than 15 months after the date of the failed first attempt. A third attempt is not allowed, and as such, students who fail a second attempt of the examinations do not receive a degree. There are two options:

5.2.1 Traditional Comprehensive Examination

This examination is based on the student's coursework and the student's language and concentration areas of study. The questions appearing on the examination are compiled by the members of the student's MA committee. A student who completes the comprehensive examination must orally defend the exam.

5.2.2 M.A. Portfolio

The portfolio contains three written pieces, plus a presentation in the target language (Spanish, French, German) or English, to be determined by the committee on an individual basis. Portfolio items should be selected in consultation with faculty and committee members beginning as early as the first semester of coursework. Students interested in pursuing this option are asked to discuss this option with their major professor. Students who complete the portfolio must orally defend it before their committee.

5.3.1. MA Report

Generally, the MA report is researched and completed during the student's final semester in the program. Students are strongly advised to begin their research before their final semester. In the final semester, students completing a report enroll in research hours instead of one course. The typical report will have a length of approximately 30-50 pages, including appendices, although the length of the project will be determined in conversation with the student's committee. Students must orally defend the report.

5.3.2. MA Thesis

Generally, the MA thesis is researched and completed during the student's final two semesters in the program. In the final semesters, students completing a thesis enroll in research hours in the place of two courses. It is common for major professors to require students to make a formal proposal on a topic for their thesis to the major professor and the supervisory committee to receive approval on the topic before beginning the research process in earnest. The thesis should have a length of 60 - 80 pages, including appendices. Students are advised to select a topic and a major professor in their second semester. They will then finalize the topic by the end of the second semester, enrolling in research hours in their third semester. Students must orally defend the MA thesis.

6. Graduate Teaching Assistantships and Other Funding

Applicants are encouraged to apply for a Graduate Teaching Assistantship (GTA-ship) when they apply for admission to the MA program. Graduate Teaching Assistants gain valuable hands-on

experience within a supportive and collaborative environment while receiving financial support. During their full-time GTA-ship in the Department of Modern Languages GTAs receive a full-tuition waiver (the details can be viewed at [Assistantships \(k-state.edu\)](http://Assistantships(k-state.edu) and may join the university's health insurance program. In addition to the tuition waiver and health insurance, GTAs receive a stipend for the academic year (August to May). GTAs may also apply to teach in the summer. Details about the application process and stipend are provided by the respective language coordinator. Under normal circumstances, students may hold a GTA-ship for no more than two (2) years.

The continuation of appointments will depend on satisfactory performance of GTA duties, ongoing status as a full-time graduate student in good academic standing (GPA of 3.0 or higher), need for teaching services, and availability of funds.

There are various opportunities for scholarships, grants, and loans available through:

- Department of Modern Languages: [Scholarships & Awards | Modern Languages | Kansas State University \(k-state.edu\)](http://Scholarships & Awards | Modern Languages | Kansas State University (k-state.edu)
- College of Arts and Sciences: [Scholarships \(k-state.edu\)](http://Scholarships (k-state.edu)
- Office of Student Financial Assistance: [Office of Student Financial Assistance \(k-state.edu\)](http://Office of Student Financial Assistance (k-state.edu)

7. Professional Development

Graduate students are encouraged to attend professional development opportunities offered by the Modern Languages Department, the Graduate School, the Teaching and Learning Center, and Kansas State University. These opportunities include pedagogy workshops, professional development workshops, and speaker lectures in relevant content areas.

Graduate students are also encouraged to attend the annual state conferences sponsored by the various language teacher organizations and by the Kansas World Language Association (KSWLA) or other national/international conferences given the students' concentration area or language of interest, including departmental presentations. They can also serve as promising venues for presentation of research projects.

8. Forms

Students or their major professor turn in the following forms to the Graduate School, by the indicated deadlines. Unless otherwise noted, these forms are available on the website of the Graduate School: [Forms \(k-state.edu\)](http://Forms (k-state.edu)

Form	Deadline
Program of Study: This form outlines the student's coursework and creates their Supervisory Committee.	By end of second semester in program.
Program and Committee Change Form: This form is used to change the coursework outlined or the	As needed.

Supervisory Committee previously approved in the Program of Study form.	
Application for Graduation: This is an online form that students complete in the Student Center within their K-State Student Information System (KSIS) account.	Early in last semester in program.
Approval to Schedule Final Examination: The submission of this form prompts the Graduate School personnel to check the records of the student to ensure that all program requirements have been met.	During the last semester in the program, at least two weeks before students take their comps.
Final Examination Ballot: This form is sent by the Graduate School to the student's major professor after the Approval to Schedule Final Examination form is approved by the Graduate School. Students themselves don't submit this form; it is listed here simply for students' reference.	To be submitted by the student's major professor, after the Supervisory Committee has signed it, shortly after a decision has been made about the outcome of the comps.
Electronic Theses, Dissertations and Reports (ETDR): Students who complete an MA report or thesis must submit an electronic copy of their research and several associated forms. Information as well as a Microsoft Word template for writing the report or thesis are available at: Electronic Theses, Dissertations, and Reports (k-state.edu)	The exact deadline varies from semester to semester but is usually three or four Fridays before the end of the semester. Students should check the specific deadline for the semester during which they will graduate at: Electronic Theses, Dissertations, and Reports (k-state.edu)
Graduate Student Exit Survey: A short survey that students must fill out before the Final Examination Ballot can be approved by the Graduate School.	After the comprehensive examination.

Additional forms are available at: [Forms \(k-state.edu\)](http://k-state.edu)

9. Education Abroad

The Education Abroad Office has information about opportunities for students, including graduate students, to study abroad: [Education Abroad \(k-state.edu\)](http://k-state.edu)

10. Graduate Student Association

Students are encouraged to collaborate with each other and enjoy the camaraderie that can be developed among students in a graduate program. To that end, the department sponsors a Graduate Student Association and information about it can be found at: [Graduate Student Organization | Modern Languages | Kansas State University \(k-state.edu\)](http://k-state.edu)

11. Frequently Asked Questions

Question: What is the GRE exam and who should take it?

Answer: The Graduate Record Examination (GRE) tests verbal reasoning, quantitative reasoning (arithmetic, algebra, geometry, and data analysis), and analytical writing. It is not currently required for consideration for admission into the MA degree program in the Department of Modern Languages. However, students planning to pursue a doctoral study should take the GRE examination in fall semester of their second year in the MA program in order to include their GRE scores in their doctoral application materials, as nearly every doctoral program in the humanities and the social sciences in the United States requires these scores for consideration for admission. More information is available from Educational Testing Service, the organization that administers the GRE exam, at [The GRE Tests \(ets.org\)](http://www.ets.org)

Question: How many credit hours must I be enrolled in to be considered a full-time student?

Answer: Graduate students without an assistantship must take at least nine (9) credit hours per semester to be considered a full-time student, while students with an assistantship, such as a GTA-ship, must enroll in at least six (6) hours per semester to be considered a full-time student. International students without a GTA-ship in their last semester should contact the International Student and Scholar Services to verify the number of credit hours that they must be enrolled in to be considered a full-time student, as it may vary in their last semester.

Question: How many credit hours must I be enrolled in to maintain a GTA-ship?

Answer: GTAs in the Department of Modern Languages must be enrolled in at least six (6) credit hours per semester to maintain their assistantship.

Question: I'm an international student. How may I receive information about a visa to study in the United States?

Answer: Details about visas for international students are available from International Students and Scholars Services: [International Student and Scholar Services \(k-state.edu\)](http://www.k-state.edu)