

Linguistics BA Honours & Postgraduate Diploma

Overview

The BA Honours and the Postgraduate Diploma in Linguistics require a full-year dissertation of 15,000 – 20,000 words. A dissertation is largely independent research: your supervisor does not plan it for you, but guides your efforts. Therefore you need to be self-directed and highly motivated to write a dissertation. You also need excellent reading and writing skills and familiarity with library information searches. It is assumed that you will have acquired these skills during your first three years of study, so do not expect your supervisor to teach you how to do these things. The Central Library and Student Learning Centre offer workshops that may be helpful.

Admission

Students are typically admitted to Honours at stage 4 upon completion of their BA. A B+ average or better is required in four stage 3 Linguistics papers. Admission is by application through the Humanities Division. Applications are due 10 December but late applications are accepted. See the following websites for further information.

<http://www.otago.ac.nz/subjects/ling.html>

<http://www.otago.ac.nz/courses/qualifications/bahons.html>

<http://www.otago.ac.nz/courses/qualifications/pgdiparts.html>

[http://www.otago.ac.nz/humanities/policies/appln_forms/ba&musb\(hons\).pdf](http://www.otago.ac.nz/humanities/policies/appln_forms/ba&musb(hons).pdf)

http://www.otago.ac.nz/humanities/policies/appln_forms/pgdip_arts_mus.pdf

Please make an appointment to see the linguistics postgraduate coordinator, Dr Anne Feryok, in Burns 1N4, or contact her at anne.feryok@otago.ac.nz to discuss your plans before you apply. You should have some idea of the general area you intend to research in your dissertation. The postgraduate advisor will look at your academic record to ascertain if you are likely to be admitted. If this record suggests that you have borderline marks, she will try to dissuade you from enrolling for postgraduate/honours studies. Experience has repeatedly demonstrated that students who do not have outstanding academic literacy skills, as reflected in outstanding marks in stage three linguistics papers and on specific assignments in those papers, struggle to successfully complete the 490 dissertation. The postgraduate advisor in linguistics will also review some of the information in this document and she will suggest that you discuss your topic with a potential supervisor if you have not already done so.

External Assessment

Honours and Postgraduate Diploma students have their work externally assessed. This means all marks for your work are only provisional until they have been externally assessed and approved by the HOD. At the end of each semester you **MUST** submit all **MARKED** assignments worth 20% or more to the Postgraduate Coordinator. This is your responsibility, although typically your lecturers will retain these. It is wise to keep copies of all major assignments for your own records.

LING 490 Dissertation

Supervision

You should speak to one of the lecturers in linguistics to arrange for a possible supervisor, based on your dissertation topic. A general guideline is that your topic should be in an area covered in a 200, 300, or 400-level linguistics paper. However, some of us have additional areas in which we are prepared to supervise. Consult our research interests and publication lists on our staff webpages on the Linguistics website. Supervision workloads as well as student and supervisor preferences must be considered, so supervision arrangements may differ from what you suggest. If no one is willing to supervise your topic you may have to change your topic.

It is your responsibility to initiate and maintain contact with your supervisor. You should meet with your supervisor during the first week of classes in semester one. At your first meeting you should discuss the supervision process. Your supervisor will probably ask you to sign the same agreement that MA and PhD students sign. Key points in this agreement include you initiating regular meetings (usually every two to four weeks), proofreading drafts before turning them in for comments, allowing your supervisor sufficient time to read and comment on drafts of chapters, and not expecting your supervisor to read and comment on a draft more than twice (one of these being the final draft of the complete dissertation before submission). You should also discuss a timeline in your first meeting with your supervisor. The milestones that should be included in your timeline and suggested due dates are listed below.

The student and supervisor should complete a form (see below) outlining the progress made on the thesis. It should be signed by both the supervisor and the student and sent to the postgraduate coordinator by the end of the third week of the second semester. If progress is unsatisfactory, it should be discussed and measures for addressing any problems should be outlined in the form. If discussions between the student and the supervisor are unsatisfactory, a discussion will be held between the postgraduate coordinator, supervisor, and student. If necessary, matters will be referred to the HOD.

Dissertation Timeline

Semester One

Week 2-3	Proposal or introduction (discuss with supervisor)
Week 7-8	Draft one of literature review to supervisor
Week 11-12	Draft one of methodology to supervisor
Variable	Ethical approval (if necessary; must be completed prior to data collection)
Variable	Collecting and analysing data

Semester Two

Variable	Collecting and analysing data
Week 2-3	Formal review of progress
Week 4-5	Draft one of results/findings to supervisor
Week 6-7	Draft one of discussion to supervisor
Week 9	Complete draft including list of references, appendices to supervisor
Week 13	Formal submission (end of formal classes--discuss with supervisor)

When your supervisor approves your dissertation for submission, you must officially submit two softbound copies of the complete dissertation for marking. See the reception desk staff in English for advice on binding, and allow at least two or three days for binding. One copy goes to your supervisor and one copy goes to the Postgraduate Coordinator. You **MUST** submit an electronic pdf copy to the Postgraduate Coordinator.

Please note that if you do not submit a complete draft in time for your supervisor to read it and return it to you for revision prior to the last day of formal classes in the second semester, it will be noted in the examination report, and if you do not follow your supervisor's recommendations in making revisions this will also be noted in the examination report. Your marks are likely to suffer under these circumstances.

Dissertation Expectations

Your dissertation must be based on original research—you must collect and analyze data yourself. It is not collected or provided by your supervisor or anyone else. You may, of course, use data from a corpus, but you must plan and conduct the search of the corpus yourself. You may replicate or adapt a previous study, possibly one that has been discussed in one of your linguistics papers. Some topics which students have dealt with in recent years that involved replicating or adapting previous studies include the accessibility hierarchy for relative clauses, New Zealand language and identity, New Zealand language attitudes, explicit and implicit grammar teaching methods, project-based language learning, pragmatic particles in NZ and US English, and designing a test for dyslexia. Some past dissertations are in the English Department library where you may look at (but not remove) them.

Your research and dissertation are governed by all applicable University and Department of English policies and regulations. It is your responsibility to be aware of these and to follow them. In particular, your research must be conducted ethically and your dissertation must not be plagiarized. Consult the university policy on ethics in research and the university policy on plagiarism.

Your dissertation must meet all conventions and norms for dissertations and other academic work. It must be clearly written in error-free English, correctly use an author-date citation and reference system (we recommend APA, but Chicago or Harvard are also acceptable), and be appropriately organized and formatted.

Ethics Procedures

Any study that involves human beings, even one using anonymous questionnaires, **MUST** have approval from the University of Otago Human Ethics Committee before any data is collected. The committee only meets once a month so careful planning is essential; aim for the April meeting. The form is actually signed and submitted under your supervisor's name, but you are expected to complete as much of the application as you can, provide any other necessary information to your supervisor, and photocopy and deliver the applications to the Academic Committees Office in the Clocktower

Building. See the website at <http://www.otago.ac.nz/research/otago004138.html> for further information, including application forms, guidelines, and submission due dates.

Plagiarism

See the English-Linguistics Policies and Procedures handbook and the website at <http://www.otago.ac.nz/study/plagiarism/> for further information.

Dissertation Organization

The traditional organization of a research-based dissertation is:

Introduction: This provides a general background and explains the issue or problem that motivates the topic of your dissertation.

Literature review: This is critical review (not just a summary) of the published literature most relevant to your topic. This typically ends with the research questions.

Methodology: This sometimes begins with the research questions if they have not been placed at the end of the literature review. This presents a brief general background of the paradigm or theoretical framework of your study that explains why the methodology you have chosen is suited to your topic. Most of the methodology covers the research design of your study. It should cover who the subjects/participants are, or other origins of the data you use, and how they were selected; any pilot study that you may have done; the instruments/tools and procedures used for collecting data; the procedures used for analyzing data; ethics procedures (if applicable). It does not present the actual findings or results.

Results (quantitative) or Findings (qualitative): This section describes what you discovered when you analyzed the data. If quantitative, this includes descriptions of the statistical testing and corpus search as well as their results, supported by charts and graphs. If qualitative, this includes descriptions of the analyzed data, appropriately supported by extracts.

The short length of dissertation does not preclude you from the responsibility to analyze your data and present that analysis in standard ways. For example, if statistical tests of significance are the norm for research in the area of your topic then you must do them if you want a good mark. If you are doing a quantitative analysis you may want to consult with the statistician who provides assistance in Maths and Statistics.

Discussion: This chapter answers the research questions and then relates the findings or results to the literature review.

Conclusion: This provides a summary of the answers to the research questions; limitations; implications (theoretical and/or pedagogical as relevant); and future research directions.

(Please note: not all chapters apply to all dissertations/theses; consult your supervisor.)

Dissertation Length

The LING 490 dissertation is 15,000-20,000 words exclusive of list of references and appendices. Suggested lengths for chapters are below, but please note these are very general guidelines, with the lower figures equaling 12,500 and the upper figures 24,000, (based on 300-350 words per page) as different topics may require different lengths.

Introduction (500-1500 words, about 2-5 pages)

Literature review (3000-6000 words, 10-20 pages)

Methodology (1500-4000 words, about 5-15 pages)
Findings or Results (4000-7000 words, about 15-25 pages)
Discussion (3000-4000 words, 10-15 pages)
Conclusion (500-1500 words, about 2-5 pages)

Dissertation Formatting

You need to use an author-date system, such as APA, for your thesis. Be consistent in your use of the style you choose. This includes notes, headings, figures and tables, punctuation, and pagination.

There is a sample title page for your dissertation below.

The final copy of your thesis **MUST** include a signed plagiarism statement.

Your thesis should be 12pt Times New Roman or Cambria (or similar sized fonts) or 11pt Arial (or similar sized fonts). (Do not use fancy or unusual fonts, e.g., cursive, calligraphic, or shaded fonts). Spacing is 1.5-2 spaces. Margins are 2.5-3.5 cm (1-1.5 in) on all sides, plus a gutter (.3-.5 cm) for binding on the left side. Use one side of the paper only. Either left or justified alignment is acceptable.

You may want to consult the library webpage for information on the formatting for a thesis, not all of which apply to a dissertation (e.g., no hard binding).

Examination

Typically, two examiners will read and mark your work provisionally, with one of them usually being your supervisor and the other either someone here at Otago or possibly at another university. Their provisional marks and reports are then sent to an external assessor from another university who will assess whether the marks are appropriate. All reports are then sent to the HOD who confirms the mark based on the external assessor's report. Marks are submitted at the same time as marks for second semester papers.

If you need an extension you must formally apply for it. This requires a genuine documented reason, such as a major medical event during the period of the dissertation.

LING 490 Progress Report Form

Name of Student:

Name of Supervisor:

Topic of Dissertation:

Progress:

The topic has been clearly and appropriately formulated	Y	N
Supervision meetings have taken place regularly (as agreed)	Y	N
Written work is progressing satisfactorily (as agreed)	Y	N
=written work has been submitted for feedback		
=feedback has been provided on written work		
=feedback has been responded to appropriately		
Original research is progressing satisfactorily (as agreed)	Y	N
Have there been specific problems with progress?	Y	N
Comments:		

If yes, have measures been discussed with the student to address progress? Y N
Comments:

Are there any foreseeable problems that may interfere with completion? Y N
Comments:

Supervisor's signature and date

Student's signature and date

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Postgraduate Coordinator's signature and date

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(Forward to Postgraduate Coordinator by the end of week three of second semester.)

LING 490 Dissertation Title Page Guide

Title (about halfway)

Your Name

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of (either) Bachelor
of Arts with Honours (or) Postgraduate Diploma

Linguistics Programme
University of Otago
Month Year