

M.A. Comprehensive Exam
Department of Linguistics and Asian/Middle Eastern Languages
San Diego State University
(revised 8/15/2017)

In lieu of a thesis, an M.A. comprehensive exam option is available to M.A. students in the General and TESOL/Applied Linguistics specializations.

The Comprehensive Exam consists of **two short ‘sit-down’ exams** and **one week-long take-home exam**. The format of each exam type is described below.

On each portion of the exam, students will be given one of the following scores: **Commendable**, **Pass**, or **Fail**. To pass the whole exam, the student must receive a score of ‘pass’ or ‘commendable’ on all three exams. A student whose score on an exam is good but still not passing may be asked to revise his/her answer after receiving feedback. If an exam is failed, it cannot be re-taken until the follow semester. (Exams are not administered during summer.)

Sit-Down Exams

The sit-down exams are available in two formats, depending on the preference of the professor who administers the exam: a short 24-hour take-home exam or a 3-hour sit-down exam. The student chooses the areas in which to take the two sit-down exams from a list provided by the Graduate Advisor (see below). Students should only choose exam areas in which they have **completed** *at least one* relevant course. (Note: for topics associated with two or more relevant courses, it is only necessary to take *one* of the relevant courses). The reading list for each topic is available on the Department website.

General Linguistics

Students in the General Linguistics specialization must choose **one** of the following topics for the first sit-down exam.

<u>Sit-down exam Topics</u>	<u>Relevant Courses</u>
Formal Syntax	522, 620
Functional Syntax	622
Phonology	521, 621

General students must choose **one** of the following topics for the second sit-down exam.

<u>Sit-down exam Topics</u>	<u>Relevant Courses</u>
Computational Linguistics	571, 581
Formal Syntax (if not chosen for exam #1)	522, 620
Functional Syntax (if not chosen for exam #1)	622
Historical Linguistics	610
Morphology	523
Phonology (if not chosen for exam #1)	521, 621
Psycholinguistics/Language Acquisition/ Language & Cognition	552, 554, 652, 654

Semantics/Pragmatics	525, 626
Seminar (with General or Computational content)	795
Sociolinguistics	551, 651

**Available topics are subject to change. Please consult the Graduate Advisor for the most up-to-date list when declaring your intent to take M.A. exams.*

IMPORTANT: General Linguistics students can only be tested on the same topic once. For example, if a student wishes to choose formal syntax for one of the two sit-down exams, formal syntax may not be chosen as an exam topic for the week-long take home exam, even if the student has taken more than one course in formal syntax (e.g., 522 and 620).

Exception: Linguistics 610 and 795 are variable topics courses. A student who repeats 610 or 795 with different content may—in consultation with the graduate advisor and examining faculty—select one topic for a sit-down exam and the other for a week-long take-home exam. If 795 is the repeated course, both must contain General or Computational content.

Applied Linguistics

Students in the Applied Linguistics specialization must take at least **one** sit-down exam in an area from List A and may choose to take both sit-down exams in areas from List A. A maximum of one sit-down exam may be taken in an area from List B.

<u>List A</u>	<u>Relevant Courses</u>
Computer-Assisted Language Learning/Teaching	556
Research Methods	656
Second Language Acquisition	652
Seminar in Linguistics (w/Applied Content)	795

<u>List B</u>	<u>Relevant Courses</u>
Formal Syntax	522, 620
Functional Syntax	622
Historical Linguistics	610
Morphology	523
Phonology	521, 621
Psycholinguistics	552
Semantics/Pragmatics	525, 626
Sociolinguistics	551, 651

**Available topics are subject to change. Please consult the Graduate Advisor for the most up-to-date list when declaring your intent to take M.A. exams.*

Week-Long Take-Home Exam

The content of the week-long take-home exam depends on the specialization courses that the student took. The student should consult the Graduate Advisor and the faculty of his/her specialization for additional information about the exam format.

General Linguistics

Students in the General Linguistics specialization are required to take one 600- or 700-level class in at least two different topics chosen from the list below. The format of the week-long take-home exam can vary. It can consist of one integrated question that requires the examinee to incorporate and/or apply material about the two topics chosen. Alternatively, the exam can consist of two independent questions that are not integrated.

<u>Topics</u>	<u>Relevant Courses</u>
Historical Linguistics	610
Advanced Formal Syntax	620
Discourse and Syntax	622
Pragmatics	626
Sociology of Language	651
History of Linguistics	660
Seminar (General or Computational content)	795

IMPORTANT: Students can only be tested on the same topic once. For example, if a student wishes to choose Advanced Formal Syntax (LING 620) as one of the areas for the week-long take-home exam, formal syntax may not be chosen as one of the two sit-down exams, even if the student took other courses in formal syntax (e.g., 522). Likewise, if a student wishes to choose Sociology of Language (LING 651) as one of the topics for the week-long take-home exam, sociolinguistics may not be chosen for a sit-down exam, even if the student has taken another course in sociolinguistics, such as 551.

Exception: Linguistics 610 and 795 are variable topics courses. A student who repeats 610 or 795 with different content may—in consultation with the graduate advisor and examining faculty—select one topic for a sit-down exam and the other for a week-long take-home exam. If 795 is the repeated course, both must contain General or Computational content.

Applied Linguistics

Students in the Applied Linguistics specialization are required to take one 600-level course in at least two different topics chosen from the list below. The week-long exam is based on integration of the two topics chosen. It involves a synthesis of literature encompassing the areas of research covered in both topics and an application of relevant literature in the construction of pedagogical materials (tests, curriculum, lesson plans etc.) to be used in a specific ESL context. In essence,

the exam allows students to discuss the current research in the chosen areas and create materials for a specific ESL population employing this current research.

<u>Topics</u>	<u>Relevant Courses</u>
Materials Development	650
ESL Reading and Writing	653
English for Specific Purposes & Content-Based Instruction	655
Foundations of Language Assessment	657