Assessment Plan
Updated 2015
Department: Linguistics
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Mission statement (from course catalog)
Our mission is to help Macalester students develop a scientific understanding of human language. Through classroom activities, as well as hands-on research projects, the curriculum introduces students to the methods of investigation, conceptual analysis, and application most characteristic of a wide range of subdisciplines (e.g., phonetics; syntax; experimental procedures in linguistics; field work). In addition to its contribution to a humanistic and scientific education, linguistics offers students tools for the learning and the teaching of all languages and careers based on this, and for the pursuit of postgraduate studies.

Student Learning Goals
General goals

Students should possess the ability to:
- speak and write with precision, clarity, and organization
- solve problems and analyze data in a systematic way
- acquire basic scientific and technological literacy in linguistics

Knowledge Goals for Linguistics Majors
> The linguistics department aims to teach its students a number of practical and theoretical skills.

- All students should have more than a casual acquaintance with some language other than English.
- All students should understand what is meant by linguistic problem solving: the problems may be either synchronic or diachronic.
- Students should have a fundamental knowledge of the methods used by linguists. Students should be able to apply said knowledge to an unstudied language and, using the skills developed in LING 100 Introduction to Linguistics, 104 Sounds of Languages, 200 Syntax, 204 Phonology, 300 Analysis, and 400 Field Methods, analyze that language and produce an insightful grammar and lexicon of that language, showing how its structure reflects universal properties of human language, and also how it is unique.
- Theoretically, our students should have an acquaintance with the major theoretical schools in linguistics (e.g. the various formalist schools and the various functionalist schools) and be able not only to wield some theoretical apparatus, but to justify their preference for a single or an eclectic approach in analyzing linguistic data of various types.

Student Learning Goals
Learning goals and learning outcomes

- **Learning goal 1:** Students should be able to conduct research in linguistics.
  - **Learning outcome 1**: Students will demonstrate research skills through written and oral presentations, which are required in all classes. In more advanced courses, students will be responsible for creating their own hypotheses or theses and collecting and analyzing their own data.
- **Learning goal 2**: Students should be able to solve problems and analyze data in a systematic way.
  - **Learning outcome 2:** In introductory level courses, students will be given problem sets to analyze. Once these skills are solidified, more advanced students will be expected to collect data from sources and/or speakers and analyze the data.
- **Learning goal 3:** All students should have a fundamental knowledge of the methods used by linguists.
  - **Learning outcome 3:** Students will analyze data from a variety of languages, employing standard linguistic method. All students will have basic knowledge of recording equipment. More advanced students, who choose to complete Experimental Linguistics, will be able to use any of the technologies available in the Linguistics Laboratory for analyzing properties of the speech signal, and be able to recognize and address the theoretically interesting issues that arise in subjecting raw acoustic data from a given corpus to such analysis.
- **Learning goal 4:** Students should be able to confront an unstudied language and analyze its linguistic features
  - **Learning outcome 4:** Students enrolled in the capstone sequence (LING 300 Analysis and 400 Field Methods) will analyze a language and produce an insightful grammar and lexicon of that language, showing how its structure reflects universal properties of human language, and also how it is unique.
- **Learning goal 5**: Students should be acquainted with a language other than English.
  - **Learning outcome 5**: All students will have satisfied the department language requirement - two semesters of a single language, or two semesters of different languages. In addition, students in Introduction to Linguistics will be exposed to numerous foreign languages through daily practice problems. Furthermore, all students who have taken Sounds of Languages, Linguistic Analysis, Field Methods and Experimental Linguistics will have detailed knowledge of the features of a particular language through their own firsthand research project.

Irrespective of their postgraduate ambitions, we hope that our students will go through their lives with a heightened sensitivity to the beauty and complexity of the languages they speak and encounter.

General Assessment Strategies
Student Opinion

At the end of each academic year, we administer an online survey that includes questions related to the learning goals and objectives defined above, as well as questions that concern the curriculum. These surveys will be conducted each year and discussed at the first departmental meeting in the fall.

Faculty Evaluation
Each course in linguistics provides students with an opportunity to acquire and/or develop the learning skills outlined above. Assessment of these goals is based on several course-embedded measurements, such as take-home assignments, projects, class participation, oral and written exams, laboratory proficiency, and presentations. At the end of the academic year, full-time faculty members of the department gather to evaluate each major's learning with regard to the department's learning goals and outcomes.

 The capstone course for majors is Linguistics Field Methods, which usually entails that all students entering this (six credit) class will have taken Introduction to Linguistics, Sounds of Languages, Syntax, Phonology, and Linguistic Analysis. This course is well designed to assess student learning goals. In this course, students are granted access to a speaker of a language other than English. By using the skills that they have acquired in previous courses, students conduct their own linguistic research (**Learning goal 1)** on an understudied language (**Learning goals 4 & 5).** Students are responsible for collecting data to analyze (**Learning goals 2 & 3).** Grading for this course has come to depend on a grammar of the language. While this grammar is reviewed mainly by the instructor of record, it is also read and evaluated by other faculty members. The capstone is a culmination and application of all the skills one should possess by majoring in linguistics, and it is an embodiment of the learning goals that the department has created. In this way then, the capstone experience functions as an exit interview. Through the capstone project faculty are able to evaluate and assess student learning.