All primary majors in Linguistics must write a Senior Thesis to complete their degree. Students with an additional major in Linguistics may write a thesis, but are not required to. The purpose of a senior thesis is for you to engage deeply with a specific research topic of your own choosing for the space of (at least) a full semester. (See below on the time line for the thesis.) In the course of this work, you will need to develop a level of expertise in the existing literature on your chosen topic, to develop skills in working on the type of topic you have chosen, and to produce a final piece of work that includes some novel insight, proposal or data.

The thesis may take the form of a standard academic paper, but may also include a programming project, computational modeling, psychological experiment, fieldwork, or any other type of research work appropriate to the chosen topic. The final form of the thesis should be appropriate to the domain in which you are carrying out your research. For example, if your topic is in core linguistics, your paper should follow standard conventions for a linguistics paper. If your topic is in psycholinguistics and you will be carrying out and writing up an experiment, then your paper should follow standard conventions for papers in psychology. If your topic is computational, your research might include an implementation and a research paper following standard conventions in computational linguistics.

The topic of the thesis can be in any area of linguistic research which a faculty member is willing to supervise. The topic must be specific and concrete; it should delineate a particular issue which you can think about independently. So, for example, “Discourse Analysis” is an area of research, but not a thesis topic. However, something like: “What discourse strategies are used by presidential candidates to avoid answering questions during a debate?” is a possible topic. Similarly, “Spanish syntax” is an area, but not a topic. However, the analysis of a particular construction in Spanish is a possible topic.

Once a topic is chosen, you should ask your thesis advisor for clear guidelines as to the scope of the project and the form and length of the final product.

**Suggested time line for thesis preparation and work:**
The thesis will typically be written during your senior year. You should begin to think about what area you would like to work on at the very beginning of the Fall semester. (The Spring of your junior year is not too early, either!) By the **middle** of the Fall semester, you should begin to focus in on a topic. This is a good time to talk to some member of the linguistics faculty to get help in narrowing down your topic appropriately. If you don’t have definite ideas for a thesis, you should feel free to talk to several faculty members to get ideas and to find the best match for your interests.

**Before** the end of the fall semester, you should ask a faculty member to serve as advisor for your thesis, and finalize the topic with them. You **must** have an advisor for your thesis.

**Spring semester:** You should register for 80-595 (Senior Thesis) or for an independent study with your thesis advisor. In either case, you are entitled to enroll for 12 units. **You must register for a course number in order to get appropriate credit for the thesis!**
**Working with your advisor:** The goal of a senior thesis is not merely to produce a final product, but to go through an extended process of developing an idea, receiving feedback, and refining your work. At the beginning of the Spring semester, you should discuss with your advisor what schedule of meetings or communication he or she thinks is appropriate, and you must maintain that schedule. Typically, your advisor will expect to meet with you every week or two, and will expect you to demonstrate progress between meetings. If you do not attend meetings, or do not show consistent progress on your topic, this will impact negatively on your thesis course grade, even if the final result is acceptable.

**Meeting of the Minds:** Students working on a Senior Thesis are strongly encouraged to submit their work for presentation at the Undergraduate Research Symposium *Meeting of the Minds*, which takes place at the end of the Spring semester each year. For information, see http://www.cmu.edu/uro/MoM/

**Combining a Linguistics Senior Thesis with an Honors Thesis**

Students may use a single piece of work as both an Honors thesis and a Senior Linguistics Thesis, assuming of course that the topic is appropriate for linguistics. The following guidelines apply.

**Applying for the Dietrich College Senior Honors Program**

Students interested in working on an Honors Thesis must apply to the Dietrich College Senior Honors program. An Honors project is required to span two semesters, typically Fall and Spring of senior year. Applications to the Honors Program are due in March of the prior Spring semester. So, if you intend your senior thesis to also serve as an Honors thesis, you will have to develop your topic at the beginning of the Spring semester of your junior year. For details on the application process, see http://hss.cmu.edu/seniorhonorsprogram.html.

**Advising for a combined thesis**

If the advisor for your Honors thesis is not one of the linguistics faculty, you must have an additional linguistics advisor, who will provide guidance and feedback on the linguistics portion of your project. If the Honors thesis is not focused on linguistics, it must have a clearly identifiable linguistics component, which must be approved by the Linguistics Major advisor as adequate to satisfy the requirements of a linguistics thesis. You must inform your primary advisor of the double role of the thesis, and give them the name of your linguistics advisor.

**Registration details for combined thesis**

In addition to registering for the Honors thesis, you must register for 80-595 (Senior Thesis) or for an independent study with your linguistics advisor. You should register for 3-6 units, depending on the amount of additional work you will do with this advisor. Discuss with your linguistics advisor what expectations he or she has about the linguistics component of your thesis and how he or she intends to evaluate it.