

Important points to consider when submitting an application for graduate studies in Linguistics

1. General

Applicants are judged on the basis of: (a) the research or study proposal; (b) references; (c) transcripts; (d) past achievements; and (e) departmental ratings (where applicable). Different judges may put emphasis on different components. However, if the package as a whole is not convincing, the student's chances are not good. Strong recommendations cannot counterbalance weak grades or a poor proposal, and vice versa.

First impressions are important. Make sure your application is complete, and free of grammatical and spelling errors.

2. The research or study proposal

It is essential that applicants articulate a clear and focused plan of study. (This is especially true for applicants to the PhD program.) What area(s) of linguistics do you plan to specialize in? Why would the University of Calgary be a good place to pursue your plan of study? You may want to mention specific faculty members you plan to work with, and their areas of research.

Study the information about the School of Languages, Linguistics, Literatures and Cultures, available on our website so that you can tailor your plan of study. Feel free to contact the Graduate Program Director or individual faculty members to find out more about their research and teaching, and how your study and research plans may fit in with that.

Highlight your strengths and achievements. Explain how your previous studies have prepared you for pursuing your plan of study.

The writing of the proposal must be clear and concise. The people who judge the scholarship applications may not be linguists, so the proposal needs to be accessible to non-specialists.

Ask faculty members who are providing a reference to read your application/research proposal and give feedback.

3. The References

A good referee knows you and your work well and ideally has supervised you on an individual basis, for instance, for a research project or honours or master's thesis.

All other things being equal, the more senior the referee, the better.

A good letter of reference is enthusiastic and focuses on the applicant's strengths, past achievements, and future potential.

An effective reference will: (a) identify the relationship between referee and student; (b) reinforce things that the proposal says; and (c) connect the student's qualities with specific experiences, rather than just offering glowing generalities.

All references must be submitted online and should include a fully completed reference form (both pages), along with a signed and dated reference letter (to be included as an attachment).

A referee who refuses to rate the student comparatively may put her or him at a disadvantage.

Addressing GPA deficiencies or anomalies in courses may be helpful; as certainly, less-than-sterling grades will be noticed.

It is a good idea to provide your referees with a copy of (a) your proposal; (b) your transcripts; (c) these tips. Be sure to give referees as much time as possible to complete their on-line references.