

Graduate Degree Program Self-Study

Department

Languages, Philosophy, & Communication Studies

Degree Program

Master of Second Language Teaching

For each graduate degree program in your department, complete this self-study by entering responses and data in the table boxes in this document. Please respond as concisely as possible. The total length of this completed document should not exceed 14 pages, 12-point font.

The self-study is organized into questions regarding the overall nature of each graduate degree program and the critical components of recruiting, mentoring, management, and funding.

Overall

What is the purpose and mission of this graduate degree program?

The MSLT is a professional degree, aimed at preparing language teachers to help learners acquire a second or foreign language effectively. Students in the MSLT include native and proficient non-native speakers of a variety of languages. This linguistic diversity is complemented by a diversity of professional contexts in which our graduates aim to teach, ranging from preschool to the college level. The synergies afforded by this diversity of backgrounds in the MSLT program enable students to learn from and with each other. This diverse learning environment also equips MSLT graduates to prepare their students to enter a multilingual, multicultural workplace.

What are the core strengths of this graduate degree program?

One core strength of the MSLT program is the focused nature of the program. Since graduate programs cannot be all things to all people, the MSLT is designed to train language teachers in instructional strategies that help the learners in their classrooms build proficiency in the target language. The MSLT program at Utah State University is distinct from MA programs in TESL (which are focused solely on the teaching of English to non-native speakers), and MA programs in French, Spanish, etc. (which tend to be focused more on literature and not on how to teach nonnative speakers of the target language).

A second strength is the diversity of language backgrounds among those teaching and studying in the MSLT program. Faculty and students come from at least eight different language backgrounds. This diversity allows students the opportunity to see issues related to second language acquisition from a variety of angles.

A third strength is the applied nature of the program, which is evidenced in the student portfolios. The MSLT program is particularly attractive to students who do not come from an educational background, but have existing language proficiencies and are seeking a teaching career. The program does an excellent job of helping the students connect the why (theory) to the how (direct application).

A fourth strength is our relationship with the World Languages department of the Utah State Office of Education, specifically in the area of Dual-Language Immersion (DLI) programs. With an explosive growth in DLI programs state-wide, there is a critical need for well-trained teachers. Recognizing our expertise in training such teachers, representatives from the USOE are eager to hire our graduates for these specialized positions. This reflects the MSLT program's reputation at the state level.

What are the primary needs to achieve and advance the purpose/mission of this degree program?

- More paid teaching opportunities. For a program of this nature, the more opportunities to put teaching principles into practice, the better it is for our students.
- Larger stipends for graduate students in order for the MSLT program to compete with comparable programs at other institutions.
- Faculty schedules that allow them to contribute to the MSLT program. Our language faculty members are stretched thin covering undergraduate demands in their specific language programs, making it difficult to free up time for teaching in the MSLT program and mentoring MSLT students.

Recruiting

Recruiting criteria include, but are not limited to, academic preparedness (GPA, standardized test scores, prerequisite degrees); diversity (gender, race, ethnicity, citizenship); number of applied/admitted/enrolled students

What types and numbers of students are you targeting for this graduate degree program?

Our goal is to have 18-20 students in the program at all times.

What recruiting strategies are you currently using?

The main aim of the MSLT program is to train effective language teachers with a deep understanding of theoretical issues and practical considerations involved with the teaching of second and foreign languages. In addition to SGS criteria for admission, we look for applicants who have 1) attempted to learn another language in addition to their native language, 2) spent a significant amount of time abroad or have interacted

extensively in their home country with people from other linguistic and cultural backgrounds, and 3) have at least some teaching experience. Applicants with a teaching license receive special consideration, as do applicants with advanced proficiency in more than one language.

We recruit these types of students in person as well as through technology and SGS representation. Specifically, we communicate in person with promising USU undergraduates, and promote the program in person at regional professional gatherings such as Intermountain Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages, Utah Foreign Languages Association, and Southwest Council on Language Teaching. We maintain an up-to-date website and distribute flyers and posters at appropriate venues. Our program is represented by SGS staff at graduate fairs throughout the region. We follow up promptly with inquiries received from potential applicants.

How effective are these strategies?

Since the program's inception in 1999, our recruiting strategies have proven effective in the sense that we have been able to maintain a total enrollment of around 20 students each year. The vast majority of students who begin the program stay, and most finish within a 2-year time frame.

How do you evaluate recruiting effectiveness?

Applicants who meet SGS criteria and MSLT-specific criteria tend to do well in our program. By this we mean that they finish the program in a timely manner (typically 16-22 months) with a thoughtfully composed professional portfolio (the MSLT program's alternative to the traditional thesis), and subsequently find relevant jobs or gain admission to a PhD program.

What would be required to be more effective in recruiting students for this graduate degree program? (list in rank order)

1. More graduate instructor positions in a variety of foreign languages and ESL.
2. Larger stipends for graduate instructors, so that the MSLT program at USU is the first choice of those who qualify for admission at other institutions.
3. Increased staff assistance in contacting potential undergraduate programs with information about the program.

Mentoring

Mentoring criteria include, but are not limited to, preparation for future career; scholarly development; professional community participation; appreciation for diversity; collaborative opportunities

Please provide the following supporting data on students in this graduate degree program:

	2008-2009	2009-2010	2010-2011
Number of research/scholarly presentations (or exhibitions, performances, etc. as appropriate) made by students in this program at state, regional, national, or international meetings	1*	5**	2***
Total number of peer-reviewed publications whose primary author is a student in this program	0	1****	0
Total number of peer-reviewed publications where a student in this program is a co-author	0	0	0
Number of students from the previous year's graduating class that have found employment in the field	12	7	10

Comment on data relevant to mentoring students in this degree program not captured in the table above.

Other presentations not noted above include:

Research/scholarly presentations:

*2008-09: Two students at LPSC Student Research Symposium; one student at Utah Foreign Languages Association.

**2009-10: Five students at Intermountain Graduate Research Symposium; five students at LPSC Student Research Symposium;

***2010-11: Two students at Intermountain TESOL; Seven students at LPSC Student Research Symposium; six students at First Annual Lackstrom Linguistics Symposium.

Peer-reviewed publications:

****2009-10 Two former MSLT students had a paper published that they originally wrote while in our program (International Multilingual Research Journal)

Found employment:

We have counted both those who have found regular teaching positions and those who were admitted to PhD programs with funded teaching positions.

What mentoring strategies are you currently using?

Four main mentoring strategies are currently in place:

1. Each student receives intensive one-on-one mentoring from MSLT program co-directors and faculty regarding coursework, scholarly presentations, and career options.
2. Those who hold a graduate instructor position also benefit from the thoughtful coaching and mentoring of a faculty member in the language section to which the GI is assigned. In recent years, these languages have included Spanish, French, German, Chinese, Arabic, and English (in USU's Intensive English Language Institute).
3. The English Language Center of Cache Valley has an internship agreement with the MSLT program. Students selected for the internship receive coaching and mentoring from the co-directors of the English Language Center.
4. Beginning with the First Annual Lackstrom Linguistics Symposium in 2011, two graduate students under the supervision of an MSLT faculty member will be in charge of organizing the yearly symposium, which helps them learn the ropes in terms of designing and implementing professional development opportunities.

How effective are these strategies?

Our mentoring strategies are very effective, as judged by the feedback received on the survey of current graduate students, and by the fact that all our graduates who have sought employment or admission to a PhD program have been able to obtain it within 12 months of completing the program. Another indicator of the effectiveness of our mentoring strategies is the receipt of persistent requests from the Utah State Office of Education for our graduates.

How do you evaluate mentoring effectiveness?

By the reputation of the PhD programs and/or the teaching positions that our students enter.

What would be required to be more effective in mentoring students in this graduate degree program? (list in rank order)

1. It would be beneficial to MSLT students if a language pedagogy specialist or an applied linguist were on the faculty in each of the language sections. People whose specializations are in literary analysis are not always the most suited for training those who will likely be teaching beginner-level and intermediate-level language courses.
2. Funded opportunities for shadowing faculty members in all the languages that our department teaches would help prepare graduate students for teaching independently at the college level. Over the course of a semester, the shadowing experience would ideally lead to supervised co-teaching.
3. Our graduate students could be put in professional leadership roles through the

creation of workshops, led by graduate students, for novice high school and middle school teachers.
4. Effective partnerships between seasoned language teachers from local K-16 settings and our graduate students could be fostered through brown bag lunches during which expert teachers discuss teaching strategies, innovative methodologies, and practical classroom approaches.

Management

Management data and criteria include, but are not limited to, the faculty and their scholarship, opportunities for and placement of graduates; average time to degree completion; degree completion rates; frequency of course offerings; graduate enrollment numbers (headcount and FTE); retention; number of degrees conferred; credit requirements; specializations offered; faculty resources

Please provide the following supporting data on faculty with a terminal degree who teach courses or mentor students in this graduate degree program:

	2008-2009	2009-2010	2010-2011
Number of faculty	6	3	5
Average number of peer-reviewed publications (or books, exhibitions, performances, etc. as appropriate) per faculty member	1.3	0	1.2
Number of faculty who received extramural grants for research	0	0	2 grants, same faculty member
Average dollar amount per faculty member of extramural grants received	0	0	342,000 189,000

Comment on the data relevant to managing this graduate degree program not captured in the table above.

The MSLT is not a research degree, so more important than research output is the teaching expertise and experience of the faculty involved. The table above does not ask for conference presentations or workshops presented, only “publications.” However, faculty members have been active in making presentations at professional conferences. In addition, although the numbers above only include those with terminal degrees, we do have one or two faculty members who have taught a course for us who do not have a terminal degree.

What are the professional/career opportunities for graduates of this degree program? Comment on the need for and viability of this program in terms of the graduate placement market.

Most MSLT graduates enter language-teaching careers in educational settings varying from preschool to college level, both in the USA and abroad (e.g., Korea, Thailand, Germany, China, Taiwan, Brazil, the Dominican Republic, Mexico, and Namibia). Others have found employment at the prestigious Defense Language Institute in California, and still others have gone on to pursue doctoral degrees at renowned institutions, including the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, the University of Texas at Austin, the University of Minnesota, the University of Colorado, the University of Arizona, and the University of Wisconsin.

How is this information communicated to potential and current students?

Brochure, website, in-person conversations, in classes, graduate school recruiting materials, via email.

What strategies are used to keep this degree program current in terms of its:

a) Philosophy?

Our faculty members are up-to-date on all the latest scholarly perspectives in second-language acquisition (SLA). All MSLT faculty members attend regional and national conferences on a yearly basis to learn about the latest developments in their respective fields.

b) Methodology?

Our courses are intertwined with the most recent SLA research regarding pedagogical approaches to the teaching of second and foreign languages.

c) Technology?

Our program includes a course on using computer-assisted language learning (CALL), which all students take. Our most recently hired faculty member has specific expertise in this research area. Moreover, all MSLT faculty members model the effective use of technology for teaching and learning purposes.

What is the targeted time to completion for students in this degree program?

Two years.

How is this information communicated to potential and current students?

Brochure, website, in-person conversations, in class, via email.

In the past 3 years, how many students have completed their degrees within this targeted time? (numbers of students completing on time vs. total number of students)

28 out of 29

What are the factors that affect completion?

Economic pressures: students who are not supported by graduate stipends tend to take longer to complete the degree or drop out.

If improvements are needed, what are they?

More graduate instructor positions and larger stipends for graduate instructors, so that they can devote themselves to their coursework.

What is the minimum number of credits currently required for this graduate degree program?

30

How does the number of required credits comply with standards in the discipline/field (e.g., accrediting agency, professional certification board and/or peer degree program)? Would you increase or decrease required credits to degree, and why?

There is no accrediting agency for the general field of second/foreign language teaching. We would not recommend increasing or decreasing the current credit requirement.

What changes, if any, should be made to the current specializations offered for this degree?

n/a

What would be required to make this graduate degree program more effective?

If we had more and better paid graduate instructor opportunities, several goals could be accomplished. First, the graduate students would be able to teach lower-division language courses, freeing up faculty members to teach in the graduate program. Second, our graduate students' experience would be expanded and hence their resumes would be strengthened. Third, if our stipends were larger, we could compete for highly qualified students with comparable programs at other institutions.

Funding

Funding criteria include, but are not limited to, funding sources (departmental, institutional, contracts, grants); percentage of students receiving support via tuition awards, assistantships, fellowships; average level and duration of support; selection process for tuition awards, fellowships, assistantships

Please fill in the following chart to show the number of students funded by type and level of funding (FTE), and the average amount of funding per student for 2008-2009, 2009-2010, and 2010-2011:

		2008-2009	2009-2010	2010-2011
Number of students funded by type and level of funding (FTE) per year				
a) Externally funded fellowships, traineeships, & internships only	Full support (0.5 FTE)			
	Partial support (<0.5 FTE)			
b) USU fellowships only	Full support (0.5 FTE)			
	Partial support (<0.5 FTE)			
c) Teaching assistantships (departmental) only	Full support (0.5 FTE)	6	6	7
	Partial support (<0.5 FTE)			
d) Research assistantships from internal sources only (UWRL, UAES, department, etc.)	Full support (0.5 FTE)			
	Partial support (<0.5 FTE)			
e) Research assistantships from external grant/contract sources only	Full support (0.5 FTE)			
	Partial support (<0.5 FTE)			
f) Administration or other assistantships only	Full support (0.5 FTE)			
	Partial support (<0.5 FTE)			
g) Combination of external support (a) <u>with</u> fellowships (b), or assistantships (c, d, e, &/or f)	Full support (0.5 FTE)			
	Partial support (<0.5 FTE)			
i) Combination of USU fellowships (b) <u>with</u> assistantships (c, d, e, &/or f)	Full support (0.5 FTE)			
	Partial support (<0.5 FTE)			
j) Combination of different types of assistantships (c, d, e, &/or f)	Full support (0.5 FTE)			
	Partial support (<0.5 FTE)			
k) Other Describe:	Full support (0.5 FTE)			
	Partial support (<0.5 FTE)			
Number of self-funded students per year		14	15	11
Total numbers of students per year		20	21	18
Average amount of funding per student per year		\$	\$	\$
a) Full support (0.5 FTE)		6,600	6,600	6,600
b) Partial support (<0.5 FTE)				

Comment on data relevant to funding students in this graduate degree program not captured in the table above.

The average amount of funding noted above is based solely on stipends of those getting
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funding. If we were to take all of the students in our program and divide by the official amount of stipend support it would average a little over 700 dollars per student per year.

Currently, GIs are funded at the rate of 825 dollars per credit hour that the GI teaches. Typically, this means \$3,300 each semester for a four credit course and \$4,125 for a five credit course. GI's teach lower-division language courses that are required for all students who wish to earn the Bachelor of Arts degree. Most of these courses are four credit courses, but there are a couple of five credit courses that are occasionally taught.

Over the past few years, the department has received on average \$14,337 in our annual budget labeled "Graduate Assistant Reserve." However, the money it takes to pay the GI stipends every year averages between 41,000 to 45,000 (this does not include anything for insurance, etc.). Obviously, the designated amount of funding for GI's is about one-third of what it takes to fund just the stipends. The department funds these additional costs through other sources, such as our language testing fees, because it is committed to the graduate program. There is large demand for language courses among our undergraduate students and GI's play an important role in helping to meet some of this demand.

In addition, some MSLT students will be funded this summer (and have been funded the last two summers) through grant monies and short-term international scholarship programs for international students. In Fall of 2011, an MSLT student was funded part-time on a one-time grant project for training international English teachers. This grant may be renewed in Fall 2012.

The other funding for graduate students, not listed above, comes in the form of graduate student tuition awards (Non-resident and resident tuition awards). For non-resident tuitions we received the following: In 2009-2010 we received \$10,512.27. In 2010-2011 we received \$12,181.60. In 2011-2012 we received \$32,531.85. For resident tuition awards we received two semesters worth of funding each year (this could be one person for the full year or two people for a semester each). The amount would vary depending upon tuition.

Comment on the sources and relative proportions of funding available to students in this graduate degree program.

The department receives only a small amount to help fund graduate student stipends. Only about one-third of our graduate students receive any form of stipend support. The graduate students who come from out of state or out of the

country (which is an important population for our program) have received some tuition help. This has been very valuable, but is still very limited in nature when we are competing with other universities for top students.

Describe the adequacy and appropriateness of the current level of funding for recruiting and retaining graduate students to completion in this degree program.

The funding is quite low at present, both in terms of how many GI we can fund and the level at which they are funded. This puts us in a difficult spot as we compete for the best candidates. We can continue to run the program at this level and have been successful in many ways, but increased funding would be helpful.

Describe the adequacy and appropriateness of the current level of funding for recruiting and retaining faculty to build and sustain this degree program.

The funding for faculty directly related to the program is very minimal. We depend in many ways on the ability of faculty hired to support other language programs to give some time to the MSLT program as well.

What could be done to more effectively fund graduate students in this degree program? (list in rank order)

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| 1. Increased support for Graduate Instructors |
| 2. Hiring faculty members in the languages who also have a primary area of focus in applied linguistics. |
| 3. Additional grant monies that could help support graduate students for language teaching positions. |

Are there any important aspects in evaluating this graduate degree program that have not been captured in the information above? If so, please comment.

Proficiency in a second or foreign language is an asset for job seekers, whether they wish to pursue careers in the public or the private sector. Most businesses, government agencies, and non-profit organizations in the 21st century find themselves interacting with people from across the globe. This internationalization of the work place has raised the need for competent cross-cultural communicators in all careers. To help train effective communicators in languages other than English, specifically-trained language teachers are needed at the elementary, secondary, and tertiary levels of education. Since its founding, the mission of the MSLT program has been to train language teachers who can help language learners acquire the skills needed for communication competence.

MSLT students fill a vital need in our department with respect to the teaching of the 1000- and 2000-level foreign language courses needed for the Bachelor of Arts requirements. As such, MSLT students help the department fill a substantial service role to a large percentage of undergraduate students.