

Oral Exam in English Linguistics

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This document describes the procedure involved in the registration and preparation for, and the taking of, an oral exam in English Linguistics. This applies to all programmes offered by the Department of English and American Studies that require students to complete an oral exam.

1. Topics and procedure

Exams for Diplom-Lehramt, Lehramt-B.A. and M.A. programmes are combined exams of English and American Literature, and English Linguistics. Cultural studies and teaching methodology are *not* separate exam subjects. They may emerge in and be linked to literary and linguistic topics, depending on the areas selected for the exam. Typically, the exam will be of 60 minutes' duration (90 minutes for some subject combinations), of which **30 minutes will be dedicated to English Linguistics**. The candidate selects two linguistics topics, each of which will be tested for approximately 15 minutes. Candidates are required to demonstrate broad factual knowledge of the chosen areas, alongside the ability to provide and discuss specific facts and arguments. For example, candidates should be able to display their capacity to use terminology correctly and appropriately, to describe ideas, models and factual connections, as well as to analyse and comment on short examples of language data. **The exam is conducted entirely in English.** Candidates are expected to provide answers using coherent, fluent and correct English.

Although candidates may focus on two topics, they are also required to possess fundamental knowledge and skills in English grammar, and phonetics and phonology; approximately at the level of introductory English Linguistics. They should ensure they can identify parts of speech and sentence constituents, and have a good grasp of important phonetic and phonological terms; for example, vowel, consonant, syllable, phoneme, allophone, etc. To revise the former, you may wish to consult the Internet Grammar of English (<http://www.ucl.ac.uk/internet-grammar/>), and for the latter, refer to your lecture notes for your Introduction to English Linguistics.

2. Exam registration

You will be able to **sign up for your exam with Mrs Freund** (<http://www.uni-salzburg.at/index.php?id=206033>). We have provided Mrs Freund with potential exam dates, from which you can select your preference. Please note that **Professor Schleef is not available for oral exams between 15. July and 17. September**. For each exam, a panel of three people is convened: the subject examiners and the exam chair. Mrs Freund will appoint the chair.

Make sure to **visit Professor Schleef during his office hours** to discuss topics and ask any remaining questions. An appointment for this visit is neither necessary nor desired. This conversation should proceed in English as it is excellent preparation for the exam. You should **make contact at least three months ahead of your preferred date**, and sign up for the exam at least two months in advance. This will ensure careful preparation on your part and facilitate effective planning in our department and school. Moreover, **you will also have to register at the school's exam office for the exam to be legally binding**.

Please **send your reading list to Professor Schleef at least two weeks before the exam**. He will then confirm it and, where necessary, suggest changes. The reading list should include at least **two more substantial books and three journal articles or book chapters for each of the two topics**. Electronic copies of the latter should be sent to Professor Schleef along with the reading list. The selection of texts, thus, allows the candidate to emphasise certain areas within a topic. The reading list must also include the name of the examinee, their degree programme and type of exam. Once the reading list and the topics have been approved, the exam is considered to be agreed upon, provided it has been registered with the school's exam office.

Please also **submit a summary of your topics and subtopics no later than two days before the exam**. Typically, this comprises some two to four single-spaced pages per topic and can be written in the form of bullet points. Under no circumstances should this summary exceed a total of ten pages. The summary should include the major points of your selected topics, which have been covered while revising for the exam. This includes relevant terms, major ideas and explanatory models in addition to examples, if applicable. The summary should be concise and focused, clear, well-structured and complete. It serves the primary purpose of providing the examiner with an overview of the internal logic applied to exploring the exam topics.

3. Selection of exam topics and exam preparation

The candidate selects two exam topics following consultation with the examiner. These topics should derive from larger modules of the curriculum and be based on the student's interests and courses taken. **Professor Schleef examines exclusively in the following areas:**

- 1) Core areas in English Linguistics: e.g. phonetics, phonology, syntax, etc. Note that if you select semantics, you must include logic as one of your subtopics. If you select morphology, you must include theoretical models of word formation as a subtopic.
- 2) Sociolinguistics of English: e.g. language variation and change, language and gender, language contact, multilingualism, language attitudes, intra-speaker variation, and similar topics
- 3) Regional language variation: e.g. accents and dialects in Britain, the US, Australia, NZ, etc., World Englishes, and similar topics
- 4) History of the English language: e.g. Old English, Middle English, Early Modern English, language contact in the history of English, standardisation of English, syntactic change in the history of English, phonological change, and similar topics
- 5) Psycholinguistics: e.g. language production, language comprehension, etc.
- 6) Discourse analysis (widely conceived): e.g. pragmatic markers, intercultural communication, conversation analysis, and related topics

Within each topic, you may **focus on four specific subtopics**. For example, if morphology is one of the selected topics, candidates may choose to focus on: (a) a general introduction to morphology; (b) compounding; (c) derivation; and (d) theoretical models of word formation. For Middle English, one might select subtopics, such as: (a) an overview of the history of English; (b) standardisation of English; (c) language contact in Middle English; and (d) Middle English phonology. It is commonly recommended (but not obligatory) to choose one topic from the core areas of linguistics, see (1) above, and one from another area of linguistics, see (2) to (6) above.

4. Exam process

The exam chair will begin by welcoming and introducing all those present. The candidate can then choose whether they want to begin with linguistics or literature. The exam chair will take notes during the exam, including for all the key questions and answers. When the exam has come to an end, the candidate will be asked to leave the room for a few minutes. At this juncture, the examiners and chair will discuss the exam and determine the final marks - one each for linguistics and literature - before signing the examination form. The candidate will be invited to return to the exam room, and the marks will be announced. The candidate may then leave. The examination form will be sent to the exam office, and a transcript will be issued after a designated period.