

ENGLISH DEPARTMENT GRADUATE HANDBOOK

University of Texas at Arlington

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GENERAL INFORMATION

The English Department's Graduate Handbook supplements but does not supersede policies stated in UT Arlington's Graduate Catalog, UTA's Handbook of Operating Procedures, and the Rules and Regulations of the Regents of the University of Texas System. This handbook specifies policies and best practices approved by the English Department's Graduate Studies Committee and Director of Graduate Studies. In addition to reading it, graduate students should familiarize themselves with the [Graduate Catalog](#), especially the [section for English](#).

Academic Calendar

Students should refer to UTA's academic calendar and graduation resources, which can be found on the [Graduate School website](#), for deadlines for registering for courses, applying for graduation, holding thesis and dissertation defenses, and submitting theses and dissertations to the library.

Forms and Resources

Various forms, guidelines, and resources for graduate students are available on the Graduate School website. Forms for leave of absence requests, petitions for exceptions to graduate policies, and academic grievances can be found on the [College of Liberal Arts Graduate Students](#) page. Students should consult with the English Department's Graduate Coordinator or Director of Graduate Studies to be sure that required forms are completed properly and submitted well before the University's deadlines.

Registering for Courses

Registration is done through the University's MyMav system. Students in their first 12 hours must be cleared for registration by the Director of Graduate Studies or Graduate Coordinator. After completing 12 hours of graduate study, students may register without clearance, but they are encouraged to consult with the Director of Graduate Studies or Graduate Coordinator about course planning. Students taking graduate readings, thesis, or dissertation hours should contact the Graduate Coordinator to be

registered for the appropriate number of hours under the direction of their supervising faculty member.

MA and PhD students are eligible to enroll in any of the English Department's general course offerings at the 5000- and 6000-level.

Independent Study Courses

Subject to approval by the Director of Graduate Studies, students may study topics not ordinarily offered in the Department by arranging with a professor to organize such a course under the catalog designation ENGL 5391. Before registering for ENGL 5391, the independent study course must be approved by the Director of Graduate Studies or Graduate Coordinator. Students may apply no more than six hours of ENGL 5391 to each graduate degree they earn in English.

Enrollment in Undergraduate English Courses

Under extraordinary circumstances, graduate students may enroll for credit in undergraduate English courses when no graduate courses are available to meet their needs. Such enrollments earn graduate credit under the catalog designation ENGL 5391. In such cases, the course instructor, who must have graduate faculty status, will determine which additional requirements students must fulfill in order to earn graduate credit.

Courses in Other Units

With the approval of the supervising committee, if formed, and of the Director of Graduate Studies, students may apply a maximum of 9 credit hours of graduate coursework taken in other departments in the College of Liberal Arts to each graduate degree they earn in English. In some circumstances, courses in departments outside of the College of Liberal Arts may be approved.

Incompletes

Students wishing to take an Incomplete must obtain the instructor's permission and must meet the instructor's requirements for course completion. The grade of Incomplete will remain until the instructor submits a grade change form.

Advising

The Director of Graduate Studies and Graduate Coordinator help students navigate the graduate program, i.e., plan their programs of study, select classes, choose members of their supervising committee, and prepare to apply for jobs. Once the supervising committee is formed, students should work closely with their committee members, who will be important advisors.

MA IN ENGLISH

Outline of Administrative Requirements

The following steps must be taken to satisfy the administrative requirements of the English Department and the University. Deadlines and the necessary forms are available on the Graduate School website.

1. Students wishing to pursue the thesis option should contact the Graduate Coordinator no sooner than the 18th hour and no later than the 24th hour of coursework; the Graduate Coordinator will initiate a petition to switch from the Non-Thesis/Portfolio to the Thesis track on the student's behalf. Before requesting to be moved to the thesis track, students must identify a graduate faculty member who supports the thesis project and agrees to direct it. Students should also provide a brief preliminary statement (roughly 100-200 words) with their request describing the project they hope to pursue.
2. Both MA Thesis and Non-Thesis/Portfolio students must form a three-member supervising committee. Students are encouraged to consult with the Director of Graduate Studies or Graduate Coordinator about selecting committee members.
3. Students in their final semester must complete the Application for Graduation and pay the diploma fee.
4. Students pursuing the Thesis option must arrange a thesis defense; students pursuing the Non-Thesis/Portfolio option must arrange a portfolio defense. After establishing a date when committee members are all available, students should contact the Graduate

- Coordinator to schedule the defense.
5. Students pursuing the Thesis option must work with the Library to submit the thesis according to the specific requirements of the Library and the Graduate School (information is available on the [UTA Libraries website](#)).

Academic Requirements

Course Requirements for MA Students

All MA students, Thesis and Non-Thesis/Portfolio alike, must take two required core courses during the first 12 hours of graduate study, preferably during the first two semesters of graduate work:

1. ENGL 5300: The Profession of English Studies
2. ENGL 5310: Introduction to Critical Theory

No substitutions are permitted for these courses. If a student earns a grade lower than C in ENGL 5300, the class must be retaken.

(Students accepted to the program prior to AY23-24 will be subject to different requirements. Please refer to previous Graduate Handbooks or consult with the Director of Graduate Studies or Graduate Coordinator for guidance.)

Course Requirements for MA-GTAs

In addition to the core courses identified above, students must take ENGL 5389: Topics in Teaching Composition and ENGL 5359: Argumentation Theory in order to be considered for an MA-GTA position.

Non-Thesis/Portfolio Option

All English MA students are admitted by default into the Non-Thesis/Portfolio track.

Students who chose to remain on the Non-Thesis/Portfolio track will complete 36 hours of coursework (12 courses), compose a portfolio of their work under the direction of their committee, and successfully defend their

portfolio in order to complete the program. Students are encouraged to assemble the portfolio as they complete relevant course projects, with final polishing occurring in the last semester of coursework. The Portfolio Defense must be completed by the end of the 36th hour of coursework. The student will present the written portfolio to the committee and participate in an oral defense of its content.

Portfolio Committee

Students on the Non-Thesis/Portfolio track are encouraged to consult with the Director of Graduate Studies or Graduate Coordinator in order to identify members of the graduate faculty who might serve on their portfolio committee. The student is responsible for assembling this committee, which is made up of three faculty members, one of whom is committee chair. The decision to serve is at each professor's discretion. Once the committee is formed, the student should work closely with the chair, who will keep the other members of the committee informed about the student's progress on the portfolio.

Timeline for Submitting the Portfolio

Students should present their complete portfolio to their chair at least 4 weeks before the scheduled Portfolio Defense, and to the rest of their committee members at least 2 weeks before the Defense.

Contents of the MA Portfolio

All contents of the Portfolio are expected to display knowledge, skill, professionalism, and care. These should be highly polished and accomplished materials that demonstrate what students have learned and what skills they have developed through their MA degree.

The student should consult closely with their Committee Chair at every stage of developing and finalizing the Portfolio.

All Portfolios will contain the following (see more detailed descriptions below):

- I. Prefatory materials: table of contents, summary statement, and CV

- II. One major project
- III. Two other, shorter items

I. All Portfolios must include the following three prefatory items:

1. A **table of contents** identifying all parts of the Portfolio.
2. A **summary statement** addressed to an audience of peers, other scholars/practitioners in the student's field, or potential employers. In other words, the summary should be outward facing, reflecting the function of the Portfolio as a collection of artifacts that testify to the student's educational accomplishments.

The summary statement should address the following questions:

- A. How is the work in the portfolio relevant to your educational and/or professional goals?
- B. How does the work in the portfolio show your progress towards these educational and/or professional goals?
- C. What has completing this work taught you about the major issues in your field(s) of study?

The summary statement should demonstrate the student's knowledge of and engagement with the major disciplinary conversations in their field(s), including direct references, citation, and a Works Cited, as appropriate. Length: Minimum of 5 pages, double spaced.

3. An up-to-date **résumé or curriculum vitae**.

(Students are encouraged to identify the intended or anticipated audience for their résumés or CVs in their summary statement, with the understanding that different audiences will require different forms and content.)

II. The Major Project

All Portfolios will center around one major project that displays the student's learning and professional development while completing their MA. It is up to the student to select the best work to include as their major project, in conversation with and with the approval of their Committee Chair. The specific nature of this project and the expectations for satisfactory work (including length) should be agreed upon in advance with the Committee Chair, but **evidence of substantial revision** including additional research, significant development, and engagement with disciplinary norms is expected.

Major Projects may include:

A. An **essay** based on a paper originally written in a graduate seminar, with an eye towards producing an essay of publishable quality. (Students should identify an academic journal or other publication site where they could submit their essay, and tailor its contents, length, and formatting to meet that journal's requirements.)

B. A **creative project** or set of creative materials, such as a selection of poems, a memoir or other life writing, a work of creative non-fiction, a short story or other fiction, or other creative work.

C. A **researched proposal, report, or case study**, such as a proposed solution to an industry-based or employer-generated problem or a white paper for an organization.

D. A **digital, multi-media, or computational project** such as a data set, audio production, sound design project, video, or website, with an accompanying narrative explanation of or analysis based on the project.

E. Another **significant work of research, writing, or design** that grows out of the student's graduate studies and reflects their learning. Must have advance approval by the Committee Chair.

II. Other Items

The Portfolio must also include TWO additional components that also display the student's learning and professional development while completing their MA, but which are shorter in length and/or less time-intensive to produce. These items should also show evidence of revision and polish.

These two components may include:

A. A **single, shorter creative project** (short story, memoir, etc.) or a small selection of poems.

B. An **annotated bibliography** of works relevant to an area of the student's research. (Number of works to be agreed upon in consultation with the Committee Chair.)

C. A **book review** of a recent publication in the student's field. (Students should identify a journal or other publication site where they could submit the book review and tailor its contents, length, and formatting to meet that journal's requirements.)

D. A **teaching portfolio**:

Should include:

- A statement of Teaching Philosophy
- One original syllabus
- One original assignment (or set of scaffolded assignments), plus a short narrative explaining the assignment, its rationale and/or how it will be assessed
- Other teaching-related materials, as agreed upon with the Committee Chair

E. The **creation of the MA Portfolio as a website**, such as a public-facing professional website. Should students elect to build a website to host their MA Portfolios, the intellectual work and design choices employed to create the site should be explained and contextualized in a narrative introduction (either on the website or submitted separately).

F. Other shorter **works of research, writing, or design** that grow out of the student's graduate studies and reflects their learning. Must have advance approval by the student's Chair.

The Portfolio Defense

The student will present the portfolio to their committee, as well as defend its contents at a scheduled Portfolio Defense. At the defense, the student will make a short oral presentation (approximately 10 minutes) and then faculty will have the opportunity to ask questions. Like all defenses, the Portfolio Defense is a public event and the student is welcome to invite guests to be in the audience during the conversation. Guests might include family members, fellow graduate students, potential employers, or members of the student's professional network.

Thesis Option

The Thesis option requires 24 hours of coursework and a *minimum* of 6 hours of thesis credit; students should be aware that it takes most students at least a year to plan and write the thesis. It is recommended only for those students who have identified a clear thesis project early in their program of study and who demonstrate that they can complete this project in a reasonable time frame (one or two semesters). A student wishing to pursue the Thesis option should contact the Graduate Coordinator no sooner than the 18th hour and no later than the 24th hour of coursework.

Before requesting to be moved to the Thesis track, students must identify a faculty member who supports the project and agrees to direct it. In addition, they should provide a brief preliminary statement (approximately 100-200 words) describing the thesis project they are proposing.

The Graduate Coordinator will initiate a petition to switch to the Thesis track, which is subject to approval by the faculty with whom the student has taken courses. Should the faculty determine that the student is not prepared to write a thesis, the student may pursue the Non-Thesis/Portfolio option in order to complete the MA degree.

While writing their MA thesis, students may enroll in ENGL 5398 (3 thesis hours) or ENGL 5698 (6 thesis hours). During the semester in which they

complete and defend their thesis, students must enroll in ENGL 5698 (6 hours), because it allows the grade of "P" for successful completion of the thesis.

Master's Thesis

A Master's thesis should be an essay (50-60 pages) that provides a cogent and original analysis of available materials and is informed by a thorough knowledge of relevant methodologies and scholarship. If previous scholarship on the specific topic does not exist, the student must be thoroughly familiar with the scholarship on closely related texts or issues. In either case, setting the thesis in the context of previous scholarship is essential.

The thesis may be a critical analysis of one or more texts or other cultural objects; an investigation of a theoretical problem or historical context; an essay based on archival research; an examination of a topic in the history of rhetoric, rhetorical theory, or digital rhetoric; a study of pedagogical theory or practice; or another kind of essay along the lines of those published in major print or electronic journals in literary studies, rhetoric and composition studies, critical theory, cultural studies, or technical and professional communication. The completed thesis should be of a quality suitable for submission to an academic journal.

Thesis Committee

To form a thesis committee, students should acquaint themselves with the background, interests, and scholarship of the graduate faculty and then consult with the Director of Graduate Studies in order to identify professors with areas of expertise most relevant to the likely thesis topic. The student is responsible for assembling a group of three professors to serve on the thesis committee, including the committee chair who has already agreed to direct the thesis. The decision to serve is at each professor's discretion.

Thesis Prospectus

After forming a committee, each student must write a thesis prospectus. The prospectus must be approved by the committee. While writing the prospectus, the student should work closely with the committee chair, who

is responsible for keeping the other committee members informed of the student's progress and deciding when to distribute copies of the prospectus to them. Because this process involves the participation of many people and may require a significant amount of drafting, the student would be wise to begin as soon as possible.

The format of the thesis prospectus should be as follows:

1. **Statement of Problem:** Specify the problem, question, claim, topic, or texts to be investigated. Make a case for the importance of your project, explaining what it contributes and why scholars should find this work valuable.
2. **Preliminary Review of Scholarship:** Summarize, in no more than four pages, the relevant scholarship on your thesis subject, and demonstrate your project's distinctiveness from previous research.
3. **Methodology:** In no more than three pages, identify and defend your critical methodology. That is, indicate how you will investigate the subject of your thesis and why your method is appropriate for the subject.
4. **Feasibility:** Show briefly that you have access to resources that you will need in order to complete the thesis in a reasonable time frame.
5. **Tentative Organization:** Briefly outline the structure of your thesis, indicating chapters or sections if relevant.
6. **Preliminary Bibliography:** List sources relevant to your project in an appropriate documentation style, taking into account that what constitutes an acceptable minimum or maximum number of sources cannot be determined in advance but will depend entirely upon the subject matter of the thesis.

Thesis Drafts and Defense

The student should work closely with the committee chair while writing the thesis, determining together whether it is best to submit individual chapters as they are completed or the entire thesis at one time. In either

case, the student will provide such drafts first to the committee chair. Once the chair approves the draft, the student will provide the other committee members with copies. Each committee member will report necessary revisions, if any, to the chair, to be passed on to the student. This process repeats itself, if necessary, with revised drafts going first to the chair and then, if they approve, to the other committee members for examination, and so on. Once the entire manuscript has been approved by all committee members, the student meets with the committee for an oral thesis defense, conducted by the chair.

Although students are understandably eager to complete the thesis, they should maintain reasonable expectations, based in part on discussions with the chair, about the time required for committee members to read and evaluate drafts of chapters and the entire thesis. Students should keep in mind that faculty members have limited, if any, availability during summer and winter recesses.

PHD IN ENGLISH

Admission to the PhD program in English at UTA requires a Master's degree. Students holding or expecting an MA from UTA must make a special application for admission if they seek to enter the PhD program. Contact the Director of Graduate Studies or Graduate Coordinator for details.

Outline of Administrative Requirements

The following steps must be taken to satisfy the administrative requirements of the English Department and the Graduate School. [Dissertation resources and deadlines](#) can be found on the Graduate School website.

1. Form a three-member supervising committee before completing 24 hours of graduate study. To form their dissertation committee, students should acquaint themselves with the background, interests, and scholarship of the graduate faculty and then consult with the Director of Graduate Studies or Graduate Coordinator in order to identify professors with areas of expertise most relevant to the likely dissertation topic. Each student will then ask a graduate faculty member whose research is relevant to the dissertation topic to chair the committee. The chair will assist the student in considering faculty to constitute the rest of the committee, the decision to serve being at each professor's discretion. The committee is responsible for writing and evaluating the comprehensive examination and for evaluating the dissertation prospectus and the dissertation. (In rare cases, it is possible to change the makeup of PhD committees when students transition from the comps to the dissertation stage.)
2. Submit proof of completion of language requirements to the Director of Graduate Studies or Graduate Coordinator. The PhD program in English requires basic proficiency in one natural language other than English that is relevant to the student's dissertation research. Basic proficiency may be demonstrated in one of the following ways:

- . a) earning an acceptable score on the CLEP test;
 - . b) earning a grade of B or higher in two 4000-level language courses at UTA or the equivalent from another university;
 - . c) earning a grade of B or higher in four semesters of a language at UTA or the equivalent from another university;
 - . d) passing MODL 5301 with a grade of B or higher (offered every summer, alternating between French and Spanish). The course itself may not be applied to any degree program in English;
 - . e) passing Old English with a grade of B or higher. The option must be approved by the student's committee;
 - . f) submitting documentation of fulfillment of the graduate-level language-proficiency requirement at another university;
 - . g) being a native speaker of a language other than English that is relevant to the student's dissertation research. The student's committee may require an additional language, depending on the student's area of specialization.
3. After the student passes the comprehensive exam, the Graduate Coordinator will submit the comprehensive exam report.
 4. Complete the application for graduation and pay the diploma fee.
 5. Schedule the dissertation defense with the Graduate Coordinator.
 6. Submit the approved dissertation to the Library. Dissertations must be submitted in accordance with the specific requirements of the University and Library (information is available on the [UTA Libraries website](#)).

Academic Requirements for PhD Students

Course Requirements for PhD Students

Thirty semester hours of course work beyond the MA are required, along with a minimum of nine hours of dissertation enrollment under any combination of the catalog designations ENGL 6399: Dissertation, ENGL 6699: Dissertation, ENGL 6999: Dissertation, and ENGL 7399: Dissertation. Students must consult with the Director of Graduate Studies and the chair of their PhD committee to carefully construct a coherent focus for their coursework and comprehensive exam.

All PhD students are required to take three classes:

1. ENGL 5300: The Profession of English Studies (within first 12 hours of coursework)
2. ENGL 5310: Introduction to Critical Theory (within first 12 hours of coursework)
3. Either ENGL 5311: Foundations of Rhetoric or ENGL 5359: Argumentation Theory (as early in the program as possible)

Students who have already taken these courses in the MA program and passed them with a grade of C or above do not need to retake them.

(Students accepted to the program prior to AY23-24 will be subject to different requirements. Please refer to previous Graduate Handbooks or consult with the Director of Graduate Studies or Graduate Coordinator for guidance.)

Course Requirements for GTAs

In addition to the core courses identified above, all GTAs must take ENGL 5389: Topics in Teaching Composition in the first year of graduate study and ENGL 5359: Argumentation Theory by their second year. GTAs who wish to teach sophomore literature courses must hold the MA and have completed ENGL 5337: Literary Pedagogy with a grade of B or higher. (Note: If ENGL 5337 has not been offered recently, this requirement may be waived with departmental permission. Completion of this course does not

guarantee assignment of sophomore literature courses.) ENGL 5337 will be counted toward the 30 hours needed to complete PhD coursework.

Before passing the comprehensive exam, GTAs must enroll for nine credit hours each semester; after passing the exam, six hours is the normal enrollment.

Milestone Agreement

All PhD students, whether holding GTAships or not, must have a completed milestone agreement form on file by the end of their first year, preferably in their first semester. The milestone agreement should be reviewed annually and revised if necessary based on student progress. New students will initially complete the form in consultation with the Graduate Coordinator or Director of Graduate Studies. After students have established a PhD committee, their committee chair will become their primary advisor, responsible for reviewing the milestone agreement timeline with them. It is the student's responsibility to maintain close contact with the Graduate Advisor and the committee chair and ensure that the milestone agreement is up to date.

Comprehensive Exam

After completing coursework and satisfying the foreign language requirement, the student will take a written comprehensive exam. The student must be enrolled for at least one graduate credit hour, usually under the catalog designation ENGL 6191: Independent Study, during the semester in which the exam is taken.

The comprehensive exam tests the student's knowledge of three areas of study in order to determine whether the student is prepared to conduct research and to teach in those areas; consequently, the scope of the exam will be much broader than the topic of the student's dissertation. To prepare for the exam, the student must develop a reading list for each of three fields of specialization in consultation with the PhD committee. Each list will consist of forty to sixty books and articles, including both primary and secondary sources. Students should consult with their committee as to the specific format of each exam. It is up to the student and the committee chair to work out a method of studying for the exam, which may include

the delineation of particular subfields or topics, but will not include questions that will form part of the exam. The comprehensive exam must be taken on three days, which need not be consecutive, for five hours each day. The student will be tested on one field each day. All three fields of the exam must be completed within a seven-day period, which may include a weekend. Students will use a computer available in the department to take the comprehensive exam. They may not use texts, notes, or the Internet during the exam. Office staff and/or the Graduate Coordinator will ensure that time limits for individual parts of the exam are observed.

The student's written responses will be evaluated by all members of the PhD committee. There are four options for reports of the comprehensive exam's results: a) pass, with approval and recommendation to proceed to the dissertation prospectus; b) pass, with approval to remain in the program conditional upon the student's meeting specified additional requirements; c) fail, with permission to retake the comprehensive exam after a certain period as specified by the PhD committee; or d) fail, with recommendation not to continue in the program.

Note: If the student is given a conditional pass or fails with permission to retake the exam, the committee may ask the student to rewrite the same question(s), or parts thereof, with some direction from the committee; OR the committee may ask the student to answer a new question(s). The decision is at the discretion of the committee.

Dissertation Prospectus

By the end of the first semester after successfully completing the comprehensive exam, students must submit a prospectus to the PhD committee for a dissertation that will be an original, substantial, and significant contribution to scholarship.

The prospectus typically includes the following elements:

1. Statement of Problem, Research Question, or Thesis. Specify the problem, question, claim, topic, or texts to be investigated. Describe what you will do and explain why scholars should find this work valuable or important.

2. **Summary Review of Scholarship Relevant to the Dissertation:** Summarize briefly existing scholarly writing about your topic. Specify what is distinctive about your proposed study.
3. **Methodology:** Indicate the critical methodology or methodologies that you will employ and explain why such an approach is appropriate for the subject being examined.
4. **Tentative Organization:** Provide a brief chapter outline indicating what each chapter will cover.
5. **Preliminary Bibliography:** Provide a preliminary bibliography listing scholarship to date relevant to the project proposed. Where appropriate, indicate whether sufficient resources for the research project are readily available.

Dissertation Course Requirements

While researching and writing the dissertation, students must enroll in Dissertation hours under the catalog designation ENGL 6399: Dissertation, ENGL 6699: Dissertation, or ENGL 6999: Dissertation. Students are required to take a minimum of 9 credit hours of dissertation work overall in order to graduate. In the final semester of dissertation work, students may enroll in the 3 credit hour course ENGL 7399: Doctoral Degree Completion. This course may only be taken once and may not be repeated. ENGL 6699 or 6999 may also be taken in the final semester of dissertation work.

Dissertation Draft

Students should work closely with the chair of their committee while researching and writing their dissertation. The chair of the supervising committee will make arrangements with the student regarding the submission of drafts, i.e., whether the student will submit partial or completed chapters as they are completed, or a draft of the entire dissertation. In either case, the student will provide such drafts to the chair only. Once the chair approves the draft and indicates its readiness for the other committee members to read, the student will provide them with copies. Each committee member will report to the chair such revisions as are necessary, if any. This information is then passed on to the student to

be acted on. This process repeats itself until the dissertation is approved, first by the chair, and then by the other committee members.

Although students are understandably eager to complete the dissertation, they should have reasonable expectations—based in part on discussions with the chair—about the time required for committee members to read and evaluate drafts of chapters or the entire dissertation. Students should keep in mind that faculty members have limited, if any, availability during summer and winter recesses.

Dissertation Defense

Once the chair and the committee agree that the dissertation is ready to be defended, the student and the chair schedule an oral defense with the Graduate Coordinator. The student must furnish each committee member with a copy of the dissertation, including notes and bibliography, at least four weeks prior to the defense date. The defense, which is directed by the chair, is open to all members of the faculty, to graduate students, and to invited guests of the University community. Questions will be directed to the candidate by the student's committee, but any person attending the defense may participate.

The committee may require that the dissertation be further revised and may withhold final approval until satisfactory revisions have been made.