
TEXAS A&M UNIVERSITY

Department of English

Graduate Student Handbook

2023-2024

This handbook

The *Graduate Student Handbook* is an informational guide for graduate students in the Department of English at Texas A&M University. It serves as a supplement to the *Texas A&M University Graduate and Professional Catalog* and to the Texas A&M University Student Rules (<http://student-rules.tamu.edu>). The former details all the policies of Graduate and Professional School (GPS) and the latter outlines the rules of the university at large.

Our programs

The Department of English grants MA and PhD degrees. Students can specialize in any area of English Studies, including literatures from around the world, rhetoric, theory, gender and sexuality studies, race and ethnicity studies. We do not offer specializations in creative writing at this time.

Policies and Procedures, MA and PhD

Residency Requirements for MA and PhD Students: The residency requirement for your degree can be found in the self-service degree evaluation in Howdy. Students who are also working full-time while completing their degree may request an exemption from this requirement with submission of an exemption from the document processing submission system. <https://grad.tamu.edu/>

MA students must be registered full-time (9 hours) in at least one semester, or one 10-wk semester on the College Station campus. PhD students must be registered full-time (9 hours) in at least two consecutive long semesters (fall, spring), or a semester plus its adjacent 10-week summer semester.

Language Requirement:

Both MA and PhD students must demonstrate competency in a minimum of one language. They can do so by

- earning a B in both Old English and Beowulf
- earning a B in a graduate reading course
- passing a translation exam (to be scheduled by the student in consultation with the graduate director)
- earning a B or better in a 300-level (or above) undergraduate literature course taught in the language (within the last five years)
- earning a B or better in 12 hours of undergraduate language coursework completed no more than four years prior to entering the program.

Alternative competency:

Students can petition to fulfill an alternative competency requirement in place of the language requirement. Competencies could include, but are not limited to:

- any one of a number of digital/technological skills, tools, or languages
- paleography or similar training

- analytic bibliography
- ethnography
- statistics
- any disciplinary training (other than English) that a student might need for dissertation work

Students must declare a plan for completing the requirement (either language or competency) no later than the first-year review for doctoral students, and no later than the end of the first year for MA students.

Students should seek advice from a committee chair or other faculty mentor on what language or competency will best prepare the student for future research, writing, and teaching.

After consultation with the committee chair or other faculty members, students wishing to propose an alternative competency must submit a petition to the Graduate Director, endorsed by the committee chair, no later than the end of the fourth semester for doctoral students and no later than the beginning of the third semester for MA students. Petitions must detail how the student plans to fulfill the competency requirement, how the student's performance will be evaluated and by whom, and a date on which the requirement will be complete.

Language and competency requirements should be completed by the end of the third year for doctoral students and before scheduling the final exam for MA students.

Students should consider applying for professional development funds to help cover the cost of fulfilling either the language or alternative competency requirement.

Minimum G.P.R. Requirements and Probation: All graduate students must maintain a 3.0 G.P.R. to remain a graduate student in good standing at the University. All graduate students must maintain a 3.25 G.P.R. to remain eligible for an assistantship in the English Department. Students who fall below the University's minimum will be placed on probation and have one semester in which to earn a G.P.R. of 3.0 or above. Students who fall below the Department's minimum G.P.R. will be placed on probation, and have one semester in which to earn a G.P.R. of 3.25 or above. Students who fail to do so will be asked to leave the program in the first case, and risk losing their assistantship in the second case.

Grade Appeals: The instructor of the class is the primary authority with respect to a student's proficiency and final grade in that course. A graduate student who believes that his or her final grade reflects capricious, arbitrary, or prejudiced academic evaluation may choose to appeal. The procedure to appeal is as follows;

- 1) The student should discuss the matter with the instructor of the class.
- 2) If no satisfactory resolution is reached with the instructor, the student shall appeal to the Director of the English Graduate Program. A grade appeal must be initiated in writing with the course instructor or, if the instructor is unavailable, with the Director of the English Graduate Program within 180 days (six months) of the last day of the semester or

summer session in which the disputed grade was earned. The Director will examine the student's appeal and inform the English Department Head. The student and the instructor will be informed of the decision without delay.

- 3) The student or the instructor may appeal the Director and Head of the English Department's decision to the College of Arts & Sciences. The dean will attempt to resolve the matter by informal means within a reasonable period of time.
- 4) If no resolution can be reached, the dean will notify the student, the instructor, and the head of the English Department. Upon receipt of such notification, the student and/or instructor may file a formal appeal with the Graduate Appeals Panel according to provisions in the *TAMU Student Rules*.

Exam Appeals: The graduate advisory committee is the primary authority with respect to a graduate student's proficiency and level of performance on a departmental examination. These examinations are: MA non-thesis oral exam; MA thesis defense; PhD Preliminary Examination; and PhD Dissertation defense. A graduate student who believes that his or her evaluation reflects a capricious, arbitrary, or prejudiced academic evaluation may choose to appeal. In all instances of an appeal, the Head of the English Department, Dean, or Graduate Appeals Panel may explore or recommend a variety of solutions consistent with the best interests of the student and University. For further information, please consult *TAMU Student Rules* #53 and #59 at [Student Rules – Texas A&M University \(tamu.edu\)](https://www.tamu.edu/graduate-studies/graduate-student-rules)

Course Load: Students on assistantship must enroll for 9 hours per semester. Students normally do not take 691 hours until all coursework is completed

Research Hours: When registering for research hours (691), students must use the instructor-specific code. These codes are available only from the English Graduate Office. MA students cannot register for 691 hours.

Directed Study: Directed Studies (ENGL 685) are approved at the discretion of the Graduate Studies Committee. Students wishing to take a Directed Study must apply by completing the "Application for Directed Study," available in the English Graduate Office. Students are expected to fulfill the majority of their course requirements through regularly scheduled courses. Fall and spring applicants should demonstrate that the objectives their proposed Directed Study is intended to meet could not reasonably be fulfilled in a regular course.

Registration Procedures: Registration begins in April for the fall semester and November for the spring semester. Students will be notified, by email from the Registrar's Office, what day and time they will be allowed to register (this is called a "Time Ticket"). Students may register for classes through the Howdy portal.

Filing the Degree Plan: All Degree Plans should be filed online through the Graduate and Professional School website <https://grad.tamu.edu/> MA students should file their degree plans prior to their third semester. PhD students should file prior to their fifth semester. While summer terms are not included in the number of terms for which students have been registered,

students will be blocked from summer registration if the following fall term would be either their third (MA) or fifth (PhD) semester.

Master of Arts, Non-Thesis Option

Starting in 2020, the Department discontinued the Master of Arts, Thesis Option, and began requiring all MA students (with the exception of PHIL PhD students enrolled in the MA program) to complete 36 hours of coursework, which will include a capstone project.

MA Coursework: All MA students must take *ENGL 603: Bibliography and Research Methods* and fulfill 12 additional hours of distribution requirements. Distribution requirements are as follows:

- One course in any literature, pre-1800
- One course in any literature, post-1800
- One course organized around concepts, issues, or themes, rather than chronologically.
- One course in theory (any kind of theory, including composition/rhetoric and linguistics)

MA Capstone project

All MA students are required to propose and carry out a capstone project, to be completed in the second year. The capstone culminates in an oral exam at the end of the student's second year. Students have two options for the capstone project, but students enrolled in the BA/MA program **must select option B:**

Option A

A paper 50-75 pages, divided into chapters. This is akin to the traditional master's thesis and gives the student the scope to do a research project that would not fit into the 25-page seminar paper format. Such a project might require archival or other historical research, or it might suit a student's desire to discuss a large range of primary or secondary materials. If a student wants to produce a large digital project, such as a big data, and a written account of that project, that could fit under this option.

Option B

A shorter project, of 25-30 pages, not divided into chapters. Students might undertake to write an article to be submitted for publication, which would entail that the student demonstrate understanding of the difference between a seminar paper and an article. Or, the student might complete a pedagogical project, which could include syllabi along with a researched essay on teaching in the student's field of interest. Or, the student could pursue a digital project (such as a digital edition) and produce a written account of that project's construction.

These examples are not meant to be exhaustive, and students might propose different kinds of projects for both the larger Option A or the smaller Option B.

In the semester before starting the capstone project, students will complete and submit the Capstone proposal form, indicating which option they are choosing, and including an endorsement from the committee chair. Proposals should be detailed and, if the student is choosing Option A, the proposal must offer a justification for a capstone project that is the equivalent of two graduate courses.

Students pursuing Option A would register for 6 hours of 685, either in one semester or over two semesters. These students would need to have a committee in place and have an approved 685 proposal before the end of the spring semester of the first year, in order to pre-register 685 hours for the fall. Or, if the student chooses to do all 6 of the 685 hours in the spring of the second year, the proposal would need to be approved before pre-registration begins (usually early November).

Students pursuing Option B would register for 3 hours of 685 in the spring semester of the second year. These students should also have a committee in place by the end of the spring semester of the first year, but would not need to have the 685 proposal approved until pre-registration opens for spring of the second year (usually in November).

Oral Examinations: The oral exam is a defense of the MA capstone project, and should be scheduled for 90 minutes. Oral examinations are the “Final Exam” referred to in the Graduate Catalog. All oral exams are administered by the individual student’s Advisory Committee. In preparation for fulfilling all the requirements for the MA, students should refer to GPS for semester deadlines or pick up a handout from the Graduate Office.

Graduate Certificates: MA students can opt to earn Graduate Certificates in Women’s and Gender Studies, Africana Studies, Digital Humanities, Latino/Mexican American Studies, and Film and Media Studies. Interested students should consult their advisor and the director of the relevant program.

Suggested Timeline for MA students

1st year:

- Make sure that the department and registrar have final transcripts of your B.A. and any graduate coursework to be transferred.
- Make an appointment with the Director or Associate Director for advising at the beginning of the fall semester.
- Take *English 603* as soon as possible. Also work on your distribution requirements.
- Decide how best to meet the language requirement or alternative competency (see page 2, above) and begin work on it. It is strongly suggested that the language requirement be met by the 3rd semester of the MA program.
- Assemble your advisory committee in your 2nd semester. The committee consists of two faculty members in English and one faculty member from another department. File your degree plan, using the GPS Degree Plan System.
- Complete 18 hours by the end of your first year.
- Decide whether to pursue capstone Option A or Option B. For Option B, most students will need to submit the Capstone 685 proposal in the spring in order to register for the

first 3 hours of 685 in the fall. Students who choose Option A and plan to complete all 6 hours in the spring of the second year, and students who choose Option B, can wait until the fall of the second year to submit a Capstone 685 proposal.

2nd year:

- Complete your language requirement or alternative competency in the 3rd semester, if possible.
- Students choosing to take all 6 hours of Capstone 685, Option A, and all students selecting Option B, should prepare and submit the Capstone 685 proposal before pre-registration begins.
- Complete the remaining hours on the degree plan and the capstone project.
- Schedule and take your oral examination in your final semester. Refer to the Office of Graduate Studies calendar for deadlines. This exam cannot be waived.

Assistantship eligibility ends in May of your second year. Note the 7-year limit on completing MA requirements.

BA/MA Program (“3+2”)

Students in the BA/MA program complete a five-year joint degree program that allows them to earn a Bachelor of Arts (B.A.) in English and a Master of Arts (M.A.) in English. In their fourth year in the program, BA/MA students take a combination of undergraduate and graduate courses (maintaining their undergraduate classification); in their fifth year, students take only graduate courses and are classified as graduate students by the university. Students complete a 6hr thesis in their second year.

Timeline for BA/MA Students

First, blended year:

- Students take two graduate courses, per semester, for a total of 6 graduate hours per semester (12hrs for the full year). One of these courses must be 603: Bibliography and the other three courses should be readings courses.
- By the end of the second semester of the first year, students should have identified a supervisor and, ideally, a committee for their thesis project undertaken in their second year. The student should submit a plan for the thesis to the graduate director by June 1. This should be a 2-3 page document that describes the project, identifies its expected form, and includes a preliminary bibliography.

Second, fully-MA year:

- Students should register for 2 graduate courses and 3hrs of 691 (Research) in each semester, for a total of 9 hrs per semester (18hrs for the full year).
- Students must submit a degree plan before the start of the fall semester. This requires the selection of all the members of the committee (2 committee members from ENGL, including the supervisor, and 1 committee member from a different department).
- Students must submit a thesis proposal (no longer than 5 pages but which includes a full bibliography) to the Graduate and Professional School by October 31.

- If the student plans to graduate in May, they file to graduate with both degrees early in the spring semester. They must apply separately for each degree. Check the deadlines with the Registrar and the Graduate and Professional School, but they are typically in early February.
- Students must defend their thesis by the middle of March (this deadline is set by the Graduate and Professional School).
- If a student and their advisor decide they need more time to complete the thesis, the student can put off graduation until August. So long as the final thesis is submitted before the start of the first summer session, the student will not need to register for the summer and will not be charged tuition or fees.

BA/MA Thesis

The MA thesis is a 2-semester project: students will conduct research in the fall of their second year and write a thesis in the spring. The thesis is a chance for the student to work closely with one faculty member on an independent project. Students can design a thesis project that best reflects their areas of interest and/ or career goals. While some students may decide to do an extended critical or theoretical paper for the thesis, they may also decide to do a pedagogical project, a creative project, a digital project, or any project that faculty members are able and willing to supervise. Given the range of projects, there is no absolute page-length, but it may be roughly conceived as around 35-40 pages.

Oral Examinations: The oral exam is a defense of the MA thesis and should be scheduled for 90 minutes. Oral examinations are the “Final Exam” referred to in the Graduate Catalog; **students are not allowed to apply for an exemption from the final exam.** All oral exams are administered by the individual student’s Advisory Committee. In preparation for fulfilling all the requirements for the MA, students should refer to the Graduate and Professional School website for semester deadlines or pick up a handout from the Graduate Office. Students must file a “Request for a Final Exam” with the Graduate and Professional School a minimum of 10 business days before the desired defense date.

Doctor of Philosophy

Students who plan to register full time for five years will pursue a 96 hour degree plan. Students who plan to register part time, and who have earned an MA elsewhere, should pursue a 64 hour degree plan. Students who earn the MA in English here at TAMU and then are admitted into the PhD program can choose between the 64 and 96 hour degree plan. Please note, however, that choosing a 64 hour degree plan means that eligibility for assistantship and tuition funding ends at the end of the fourth year.

96 hour degree plan: 36 hours of coursework and 60 hours of research (691).

64 hour degree plan: 36 hours of coursework and 28 hours of research (691).

96 hour degree plan with MA in English from TAMU: 27 hours of coursework and 69 hours of research (691).

64 hour degree plan with MA in English from TAMU: 27 hours of coursework and 37 hours of research (691).

The 96 hour degree plan requires full-time registration for 10 long semesters, plus two six-week summer terms at some point(s) during those years.

Post-coursework hours are normally accumulated as research hours for registration purposes, although any Directed Studies or additional courses taken beyond regular coursework also contribute to the total.

Required Coursework: To fulfill degree requirements, PhD coursework must include *ENGL 602: First-Year Seminar* and *ENGL 603: Bibliography and Research Methods* (if the student has taken no comparable course at the MA level). Students must also fulfill 12-hours of distribution requirements. Distribution requirements are as follows:

One course in any literature, pre-1800

- One course in any literature, post-1800
- One course in theory (of any kind, including linguistics and rhetoric)
- One course organized around concepts, issues, or themes (as opposed to courses organized primarily according to chronological period)

Courses in each distribution area are offered every semester. A single course is often eligible to satisfy more than one of the distribution requirements, in which case a student has the choice of which one it will fulfill for him or her. PhD students entering with an MA will normally have already met some of these requirements during their MA work; this is certified case-by-case at the discretion of the Director of Graduate Studies. All distribution requirements must be fulfilled prior to or concurrently with the student's First-Year Review process, which occurs in the third semester.

No more than 6 coursework credit hours in other departments, and ordinarily no more than 6 hours of *ENGL 685: Directed Studies*, can be counted toward the total coursework hours. Exceptions to the Directed Studies limitation may be made and certified by the Director of Graduate Studies. Normally students may register for research hours (ENGL 691) only after they have completed their regular coursework.

No more than 6 coursework credit hours in other departments, and ordinarily no more than 6 hours of *ENGL 685: Directed Studies*, can be counted toward the total coursework hours. Exceptions to the Directed Studies limitation may be made and certified by the Director of Graduate Studies. Normally students may register for research hours (ENGL 691) only after they have completed their regular coursework.

Recommended Coursework: All PhD students should take *ENGL 695: Publication and Professionalization* (3 credit hours) in the third or fourth year. All those who intend to pursue an academic career should take the *ENGL 681: Placement Seminar* (1 credit hour) in the spring prior to their entry into the job market; on the 5-year schedule to degree, this means the spring of the fourth year. *ENGL 697: Pedagogy* is offered each fall. This course is not a degree requirement *but must be taken in order to hold a teaching assistantship if the student has not already had a comparable course at the MA level.* It is taken prior to or concurrently with the first semester of teaching.

ENGL 697 counts toward the 36 hours of coursework; ENGL 695 and 681 do not count toward the 36 hours of coursework. Language courses do not count toward the 36 hours of coursework.

Graduate Certificates: PhD students can opt to earn Graduate Certificates in Women's and Gender Studies, Africana Studies, Digital Humanities, Latino/Mexican American Studies, and Film and Media Studies. Interested students should consult their advisor and the director of the relevant program.

First Year Review

Each doctoral student will undergo a review of their work at the very beginning of the second year in the program.

The First Year Review Committee (composed of all faculty teaching graduate courses the previous year) will evaluate each PhD candidate for adequate progress toward the doctoral degree. Each student will be evaluated on the basis of a First Year Review dossier. In addition,

the dossier will include evaluative statements from each of the student's professors from courses taken during the first year of course work, as well as an informal transcript (the graduate office will provide these).

The First-year Review Dossier

1. Course Distribution. A typed list of the courses you've taken to fulfill your distribution requirements, including the semester taken, the grade received, and the professor with whom you took the class. Students must have taken **one course from each of the following four areas**: (1) One course in any literature before 1800; (2) One course in any literature after 1800; (3) One course organized around concepts, issues, or themes, rather than chronologically; (4) One course in theory (any kind of theory, including composition/rhetoric and linguistics). If you have not yet completed your distribution requirements, please indicate how and when you fulfill them.

2. Curriculum vitae. Be sure your CV is presenting your experience and accomplishments in the best possible way. Faculty are always happy to comment on student CVs, so don't be shy about asking for advice.

3. Professional Statement. A one-page, single-spaced statement that addresses your progress in the program so far and your goals for the remainder of the program. This statement may include information not presented elsewhere in the dossier, including a description of research interests, emerging plans for (or initial ideas about) the preliminary exams and dissertation. Evidence of participation in other professional activities—serving on committees, attending guest lectures, participating in working groups, getting involved at the Glasscock Center—can also be included. Such activities are strongly recommended for PhD students. Since only your academic work is being evaluated by the review, details about teaching, for example, are not relevant.

4. Writing Sample. This must be a paper written for a course in the program during your first year and should represent your best work. The paper may be revised and lengthened; it does not have to be identical to the version originally used to satisfy the requirements of the course for which it was prepared. In some cases, students will want to consult with their instructors on how to revise the paper to make it stronger for the purpose of the Review. The paper should integrate research into an original argument, and should be roughly the length of a good scholarly article (20-25 pages). The papers will be judged on the quality of the writing and research and the coherence of the argument. The committee and the faculty are looking for evidence of the critical skills necessary to conduct research and to write papers that follow the conventions of good scholarly writing. The sample should be a clean, typed copy without grades or comments by the professor. If you have questions about what kind of paper to submit, please do not hesitate to contact the Director or Associate Director.

5. Self-assessment of Writing Sample. A statement of approximately one page, single-spaced, providing your own take on the degree to which your writing succeeds in the terms indicated below. What areas are you happiest with? Where do you think improvement might still be possible?

Please note: If you have an Incomplete, you *must* clear it before the start of the review—that is, by the time you submit your dossier.

The Preliminary Exam

The preliminary exam is taken in the fall of the third year. Students will prepare reading lists, in consultation with an advisory committee, toward the end of the second year, in order to start reading and studying in the summer.

The preliminary exam is scheduled with the graduate office. Early in the semester in which you will take the exam, you will need to meet with the graduate office to get instructions on what paperwork needs to be submitted.

The prelim has two parts: a 2-hour oral field exam; a 72-hour take-home exam on the student's area of focus. The two parts of the exam should be scheduled for the same semester (fall of the third year). These are two separate exams with two separate reading lists. Both the oral and the written should be taken in the same semester; the student, in consultation with the committee, can decide how far apart the two exams should be.

Together the readings lists should include 70-90 texts; a minimum of 45 texts need to be on the field list. No text should be included on both lists. The field list should be constructed with an eye to the type of job the student plans to seek; the focus list should be constructed with an eye to the dissertation project. The focus list should not be a second field list; it needs to be tailored to the dissertation project. The lists must be headed by a 1000-word rationale for the student's choices of texts.

The lists must be approved by the entire committee and by the Director of Graduate Studies no less than 30 days before the oral exam. Students are, however, encouraged to consult with the Director early in the process to be sure that the proposed lists adhere to the guidelines for the two lists, field and focus.

The lists:

1) The field list. This list should contain major works in the student's primary research and teaching area—for example, the history and theory of rhetoric; early modern literature; 20th century transnational literature, etc. This list should include all the works that the student and committee agree are important for anyone specializing in this field. The list can be divided into sub-areas if the student and the committee deem this useful, but the field list **does not have a theme or topic**. In addition to primary texts, the field list should also include at least five secondary works that reflect the current state of the field and/or major works in the history of that field. The secondary texts should not have a theme or topic.

2) The focus list. This list should contain works in what the student considers his or her special area—for example, representations of violence in modernist literature; gender and embodiment in medieval literature; race and ethnicity in contemporary American fiction; digital rhetorics and

contemporary media theory. The list can be divided into sub-areas if the student and the committee deem this useful. This list must include the primary texts the student thinks they might discuss in the dissertation. This list should **not** be a second field list. It is more like a dissertation bibliography/reading list.

The exam:

1) Two-hour oral field exam. Prior to the oral exam, the committee members should confer (in person or electronically) about what questions each committee member would like to ask. The student will not be provided with questions in advance, although individual faculty members might decide to discuss possible questions with the student in advance. Students can bring the field reading list to the exam, along with some and pen or pencil for taking notes during the exam, as needed. At the conclusion of the exam, the student will leave the room while the committee deliberates and determines whether the student's knowledge of their field warrants moving on to the focus exam; the committee will then inform the student of the result. If the committee rules that the student's performance on the oral is inadequate, a second oral will be scheduled at time agreed upon by the student and advisor. Students who fail the second oral will be asked to leave the program.

Expectations:

- This exam is about coverage of the student's major teaching field, and the expectation is that the student will be able to demonstrate knowledge of *all* of the works on this list.
- Because there is no written component of the exam, evaluation will be based on student performance during the oral exam. The expectation is that the student can adequately answer all questions posed, can clearly articulate an account of the field, and can talk about all of the works on the list.
- A passing performance on the field exam means that the student is fully enough grounded in the field to move on to the focus exam.

2) 72-hour take-home focus exam. Prior to the exam, the committee members will discuss (either in person or electronically) what kinds of questions should be posed to the student for the focus exam. If the committee deems it appropriate, the student can be asked to submit questions that the chair will consider when constructing the exam. The student will be given the written questions, and asked to answer two (of however many choices the committee would like to offer). The take-home exam in its entirety should be no longer than 20 pages, double-spaced, and should be considered an open-book, open-notes exam. The committee will read the written exam, and will send comments about the exam, through the chair of the committee, within two weeks of the completion of the exam. After hearing from the chair of the committee, students should follow up with each committee member after receiving feedback.

Expectations:

- Students will answer two questions over a 72 hour period. The expectation is that students will spend some time refining, as well as drafting, the answers.
- Careful editing and proofreading are expected.

- Answers should reflect an intellectual engagement in the issues at the heart of the questions, and should not simply report on what the texts on the list have to say about those issues. In other words, answers should present an argument.
- Students should provide full citations for all texts referenced, in MLA style.
- Because the field and focus lists are separate, students can draw primarily on texts from the focus list in answering questions on the focus exam.

After both parts of the exam are complete and committee members have sent comments on the focus exam to the chair of the committee, the results of the exam will be reported to GPS. If more than one person on the committee feels that the written portion of the exam does not warrant a pass, the committee will need to convene to discuss whether the exam, overall, qualifies as a pass.

Dissertation Prospectus

The prospectus should be 6-8 pages, plus a full bibliography. The prospectus should lay out the rationale for the dissertation project, clearly identify the research questions the dissertation will pursue, and indicate how the dissertation will contribute to a field or fields. It should also include brief descriptions of individual chapters, and identify the main texts to be considered in each. A full bibliography will substitute for a review of the literature.

The prospectus must be approved by the student's committee in a 90-minute prospectus defense, which must be scheduled in the spring of the third year. Once the committee has signed off on the prospectus, the student will file it with GPS and, thus, advance to candidacy.

When a student is ready to schedule the prospectus defense, he or she meets with the graduate office to fill out the requisite paperwork and to get instructions on which documents must be downloaded from GPS, filled out, and brought to the defense.

Within one calendar year of the approval of the dissertation prospectus, (that is, no later than spring of the fourth year), the student will give a ten-minute presentation on the dissertation project to an audience of faculty and graduate students. The graduate office will organize one symposium for all 4th year students to present at one time.

The take-home focus exam should enable the student to start working through some ideas that will be developed more fully in the dissertation. The take-home exam will not produce a draft of the prospectus, but it should give the student an opportunity to grapple with some specific questions about the special topic and, ideally, point the way toward that dissertation prospectus.

The dissertation

The dissertation is a substantial work of original scholarship written under the close supervision of the Advisory Committee, particularly the chair. Dissertations must follow the guidelines in the [Thesis Manual](#). Address questions to the [Thesis Office](#).

Students can write a traditional dissertation, composed of individual chapters, and introduction, and conclusion. But students can also propose and carry out alternative forms for the dissertation (with the approval of the committee). Two models for these alternatives include a written dissertation supplemented by a digital project of some kind; and a suite of articles prefaced by an introduction.

We are at present not offering the option to write a Creative Dissertation to incoming students, as the Creative Writing track in the department is being redesigned.

The dissertation defense is typically two hours long. Students should schedule these with the graduate office and get instructions on the forms they need to fill out prior to the defense.

Suggested Timeline for PhD program

1st year:

- Make sure the department and registrar have a final transcript of your MA coursework. (or B.A. coursework for students entering without an MA).
- Make an appointment for an advising conference with the Director or Associate Director of Graduate Studies as soon as you arrive on campus.
- Take the First-Year Seminar in the fall.
- Complete 18 hours by the end of the first year.
- If you have not done so in your MA program, work on completing the distribution requirements; see the relevant Coursework section above for details.
- Prepare to submit your materials for First-Year Review in the summer after the first year of doctoral study. Materials are due on the first Friday of the fall semester.
- The DGS will hold summer workshops to help you prepare your paper for the review.

2nd year:

- Take additional 18 hours (nine hours in both fall and spring). The distribution requirements must be completed within the fall semester. By the end of the year, you will normally have completed your coursework.
- Decide how you plan to fulfill your language requirement or alternative competency.
- Begin planning your area of specialty and choosing your Advisory Committee.
- File your degree plan in the spring. If you fail to do so, you will be blocked from fall registration by the Graduate and Professional School. The degree plan makes your Advisory Committee chair and membership official.
- Begin preparing your preliminary exam reading lists; these should be finalized by the end of the spring semester.

3rd year:

- Schedule preliminary exams for October and/or November. If you need extra time for prelims, you must get permission from the Director of Graduate Studies.
- Structure, format, and expectations for the preliminary examinations are detailed on the department website.
- Take the Publication and Professionalization Seminar (ENGL 695) in whichever semester

it is offered.

- Complete dissertation prospectus and schedule a prospectus defense before the end of the spring semester. File your dissertation proposal as soon as possible following the defense.
- Begin work on the dissertation.
- Be aware that after completing coursework (except ENGL 691), you must maintain continuous enrollment. If you plan to work away from College Station, you must apply to register in-absentia. To do so, you will need to submit a request, including a timeline for completion of the degree and endorsement of that timeline by your director. You must reapply every year to continue to register. If you have an assistantship, you must maintain full-time status (9 hours).

4th year:

- Work aggressively on the dissertation. You must complete your dissertation within four years of passing prelims.
- All students must present their dissertation work-in-progress at a symposium in the spring, to be scheduled by the DGS.
- Take the Placement Seminar (ENGL 681) in the spring semester.

5th year:

- Complete the dissertation.
- Seek a job.

Annual Review of PhD Students

All PhD students (except those finishing the first year) must submit materials for review by the DGS. These materials are due in May of each year. They include: 1) a current CV; 2) a brief narrative description of the year's progress; 3) printouts of AEFIS summaries for classes taught in fall and spring of that year. A form for the review is available on the Google Drive devoted to Graduate Student documents.

These materials must be submitted to the advisor and an annual evaluation meeting scheduled. After that meeting, the advisor writes a report to be given to the student and to the Graduate Office. The entire process should be completed by the beginning of August.

All GATS must have at least one class observed once per year. Beginning graduate students will be assigned a teaching mentor who will conduct class observations. Advanced graduate students are encouraged to invite their advisors and committee members to observe their teaching regularly so that they can comment on their teaching in recommendation letters.

Remember the 10-year limit on all PhD work, including any transfer hours. Assistantship support ends in August of the fifth year. Eligibility for in-state tuition ends after seven calendar years.

Policies and Procedures for GATS (Graduate Teaching Assistants)

Graduate Assistantships: A graduate assistantship may include grading, teaching, and/or research duties. **Students cannot work any hours beyond their assistantship (for English or for another University unit) without written permission of the Graduate and Professional School (GPS).** All requests for approval of hours beyond the assistantship must go through the Director of Graduate Studies. MA students are funded for no more than two years. PhD students are funded for five years,

Graduate Assistants, Teaching (GATs): GATs teach 2 courses during the academic year (a 1-1 load), most often Composition and Rhetoric (104), Writing about Literature (203), and Business and Technical Writing (210). Other courses are available to assistants with experience, training, and seniority. GATs can also grade for professors in large lecture courses. Grading assistants are expected to attend all classes, follow reading assignments, and help write, administer, and assess exams. They may also evaluate papers, meet with students, and occasionally present a lecture. Students teaching for the first time as instructor of record at Texas A&M are required to take ENGL 697 (Pedagogy) no later than their first semester of teaching. Exemptions for teachers with experience but new to the department must be approved by the Director of Graduate Studies.

Graduate Assistants, Non-Teaching (GARs): GARs are assigned to aid with departmental publications and other projects.

Stipends: All GAT and GAR positions are budgeted as half time (20 hours a week). Stipends are awarded for 9 months; additional 1.5-month summer awards are sometimes available.

Tuition Waiver: All assistantships include a waiver of out-of-state tuition.

Cancelling Classes: If you know you are going to miss class, you should find a substitute from among your peers. GATs who must cancel classes due to an unforeseen emergency should do so through the department webpage. Click on the link Class Cancellation and provide all required information. Classes should *never* be canceled in the first week of the semester.

Resources

English Graduate Student Association (EGSA): EGSA is an association comprised solely of English Graduate students (MA and PhD) whose purpose is to represent all graduate students within the department. EGSA voices English graduate students' concerns to the faculty and the department at large. Additionally, EGSA sponsors fundraisers and coordinates social events open for all graduate students. Elections are held in the late spring.

Transportation Services at Texas A&M University: The University provides a bus service to most of the Bryan/College Station area, and also sells a limited number of parking passes for various lots on campus. Please consult <http://transport.tamu.edu/> for further information.

Campus Computing: Campus computer facilities are available to all students, provided by the required computer access fee collected through registration. There is also a computer lab on the fourth floor of LAAH available only to English graduate students.

Fitness Facilities: Students pay a required athletic facilities fee when they register for classes. This fee allows them unlimited access to the athletic department's training facilities as well as the recreation center. Most classes offered through the recreation center require a small additional fee.

Medical Care: A wide variety of preventative and acute medical services are provided through Student Health Services. See <https://shs.tamu.edu/> for more information.

Counseling: The Employee Assistance Program is a confidential source of assessment, short-term counseling, and referral for a broad range of needs. This service is available to all faculty and staff, and their family members through the Human Resources Department (845-4141). Psychiatric and Counseling services are also available to graduate students through Student Counseling Services: <https://caps.tamu.edu>

The Melbern G. Glasscock Center for Humanities Research: The Center is dedicated to fostering the humanities and humanities scholarship among the community of scholars at Texas A&M University. The Glasscock Center arranges thematic lecture series and international conferences throughout the academic year. In addition to bringing scholars together for lectures, conferences, and colloquia, the Center supports humanities faculty and graduate students at TAMU with various fellowships and grants. For more information, please consult <http://glasscock.tamu.edu>.

LANGUAGE REQUIREMENT

Both MA and PhD students must demonstrate competency in a minimum of one language. They can do so by

- earning an B in both Old English and Beowulf
- earning a B in a graduate reading course
- passing a translation exam (to be scheduled by the student in consultation with the graduate director)
- earning a B or better in a 300-level (or above) undergraduate literature course taught in the language (within the last five years)
- earning a B or better in 12 hours of undergraduate language coursework completed no more than four years prior to entering the program.

ALTERNATIVE COMPETENCY

Students can petition to fulfill an alternative competency requirement in place of the language requirement. Competencies could include, but are not limited to:

- any one of a number of digital/technological skills, tools, or languages
- paleography or similar training
- analytic bibliography
- ethnography
- statistics
- any disciplinary training (other than English) that a student might need for dissertation work

Students must declare a plan for completing the requirement (either language or competency) no later than the first year review for doctoral students, and no later than the end of the first year for MA students.

Students should seek advice from a committee chair or other faculty on mentor on what language or competency will best prepare the student for future research, writing, and teaching.

After consultation with the committee chair or other faculty members, students wishing to propose an alternative competency must submit a petition to the Graduate Director, endorsed by the committee chair, no later than the end of the fourth semester for doctoral students and no later than the beginning of the third semester for MA students. Petitions must detail how the student plans to fulfill the competency requirement, how the student's performance will be evaluated and by whom, and what a date on which the requirement will be complete.

Language and competency requirements should be completed by the end of the third year for doctoral students and before scheduling the final exam for MA students.

Students should consider applying for professional development funds to help cover the cost of fulfilling either the language or alternative competency requirement.