
TEXAS A&M UNIVERSITY

Department of English

Graduate Student 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 the Office of Graduate and Professional Studies (OGAPS) and the latter outlines the rules of the university at large.

For more detailed information about departmental requirements, concentrations, courses, and faculty, visit our website at <http://www.english.tamu.edu/graduate>.

Overview of Graduate Programs in English at Texas A&M University

Master of Arts, Thesis Option
Master of Arts, Non-Thesis Option
Ph.D.

Master of Arts, Thesis Option: 24 hours of coursework and 6 hours of thesis research
Master of Arts, Non-Thesis Option: 36 hours of coursework

M.A. Thesis (Thesis Option Only): The MA thesis is a substantial work, written in close consultation with an advisor. It can be in any topic of literary, cultural, or rhetorical study. MA theses vary in length. Students pursuing the Thesis Option should consult with their advisory committee about the expectations for their thesis.

M.A. Portfolio (Non-Thesis Option Only): In their final semester, non-thesis M.A. students will prepare and submit a portfolio including the following elements: 1) a seminar-length paper selected by the student from his or her coursework, polished and revised for presentation to the committee; 2) an unmarked copy of the original seminar paper; 3) a 500-word statement articulating the intellectual rationale for selecting this paper as representative of their interests and indicating how the paper might be developed or revised further 4) a list of five significant topics for which the student will be responsible for discussing at the oral examination, each with a list of five works drawn from coursework and research; and 5) a statement of approximately 1000 words outlining the ways in which the selected paper, topics, and list of significant texts fit together to create an intellectually coherent area of exploration or study.

Oral Examinations: 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 M.A., students should refer to OGAPS for semester deadlines or pick up a handout from the Graduate Office.

Thesis Option: The oral is a 1-hour thesis defense. The thesis must be in substantially

final form with adequate time allowed for all members to review it. The oral may be waived for students whose GPR is 3.5 or better, with approval by the Advisory Committee, DGS, and OGAPS.

Non-Thesis Option: The oral is a 90-minute examination based on the portfolio, with special emphasis on the paper, topics and reading lists, and statement of intellectual coherence.

M.A. Coursework: All M.A. students must take *ENGL 603: Bibliography and Research Methods* and fulfill 15 additional hours of distribution requirements. Distribution requirements are as follows:

- One course in any literature, pre-1660
- One course in any literature, 1660-1900
- One course organized around concepts, issues, or themes, rather than chronologically.
- One course in theory (any kind of theory, including composition/rhetoric and linguistics)
- One course in English without Borders (transnational and/or diasporic literatures/cultures/theory; interdisciplinary or transdisciplinary study; cultural studies of film, new media, digital technologies, popular culture)

Graduate Certificates: M.A. students can opt to earn Graduate Certificates in Women's and Gender Studies, Africana Studies, Digital Humanities, and Film Studies. Interested students should consult their advisor and the director of the relevant program.

Ph.D.: 96 credit hours with 36 hours of coursework

Students entering with an M.A. in English from TAMU: 27 hours of coursework

The Ph.D. in English requires 96 credit hours. This total can be achieved through full-time registration for five academic years (fall and spring) 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.

Recommended Coursework: All Ph.D. students should take *ENGL 695: Publication and Professionalization* (3 credit hours) in the spring of the third 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 M.A. level.* It is taken prior to or concurrently with the

first semester of teaching.

Required Coursework: To fulfill degree requirements, Ph.D. 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 M.A. level). Students must also fulfill 15-hours of distribution requirements. Distribution requirements are as follows:

- One course in any literature, pre-1660
- One course in any literature, 1660-1900
- 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)
- One course in English without Borders (transnational or diasporic literatures, cultures, or theory; interdisciplinary studies; cultural studies of film, digital technologies, new media, or popular culture)

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. Ph.D. students entering with an M.A. will normally have already met some of these requirements during their M.A. 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.

Graduate Certificates: Ph.D. students can opt to earn Graduate Certificates in Women's and Gender Studies, Africana Studies, Digital Humanities, and Film Studies. Interested students should consult their advisor and the director of the relevant program.

Suggested Timelines, M.A. and Ph.D.

For M.A. Students: Please consult with the Graduate Programs Office for specific requirements or additions and exceptions to the information given below.

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 M.A. language requirement, and begin work on it. It is strongly suggested that the language requirement be met by the 3rd semester of the M.A. 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.
- Complete 18 hours by the end of your first year.

2nd year:

- File your degree plan at the beginning of the fall semester. Complete instructions for filing your plan are available on the OGAPS website.
- Complete your language requirement in the 3rd semester, if possible.
- Complete the remaining hours on your degree plan (24 + 6 research hours for thesis; 36 hours for non-thesis).
- 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 M.A. requirements.

For Ph.D. Students: Please consult with the Graduate Programs Office for specific requirements, or additions and exceptions to the information listed below.

1st year:

- Make sure the department and registrar have a final transcript of your M.A. coursework.
- 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.
- Decide how you will satisfy the foreign language requirement.
- Complete 18 hours by the end of the first year.
- If you have not done so in your M.A. 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 two weeks before the first day of the fall semester of the second year.

2nd year:

- Take additional 18 hours (at least 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.
- If you need foreign language courses, take them now.
- Begin planning your area of dissertation and choosing your Advisory Committee.
- File your degree plan prior to your fifth semester in the program. If you fail to do so, you will be blocked from registration by the Office of Graduate Studies. The degree plan

makes your Advisory Committee chair and membership official.

- Begin preparing your Ph.D. Exam (sometimes called the Preliminary Exam) reading lists; these should be finalized by the end of the spring semester.
- Fulfill the foreign language requirement if you have not already done so.

3rd year:

- Schedule preliminary exams for November or early December. You may not take your Ph.D. Exams until you have satisfied your foreign language requirement. If you need extra time for prelims, you must get permission from the Director of Graduate Studies.
- Take the Publication and Professionalization Seminar (ENGL 695) in the spring semester.
- Complete dissertation prospectus and schedule a prospectus defense for March. File your dissertation proposal as soon as possible following the defense, and certainly by the end of the spring semester.
- Begin work on the dissertation.
- Be aware that after completing coursework (except ENGL 691), you must maintain continuous enrollment. If you are an in-absentia student, you must register for one hour each in fall and spring. 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.
- Take the Placement Seminar (ENGL 681) in the spring semester.

5th year:

- Complete the dissertation.
- Seek a job.

Remember the 10-year limit on all Ph.D. work, including any transfer hours.

Assistantship support ends in August of the fifth year. Eligibility for in-state tuition ends after seven calendar years.

Review Procedures for Ph.D. Students

First Year Review: The First Year Review stands as the Department's qualifying mechanism for continuation in the Ph.D. program beyond 18 hours of coursework for those students who enter with an M.A. and 36 hours of coursework for students who enter with a B.A. The review process thus occurs in the third semester.

The First Year Review Committee (composed of all faculty teaching graduate courses that year) will evaluate each Ph.D. 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 requirements for the first year review dossier are detailed on the departmental webpage.

Annual Checklist : All Ph.D. students must submit an annual checklist for review by the Director of Graduate Studies. This checklist, due at the beginning of each calendar year, is available on the departmental ecampus page.

Annual Evaluation Meeting with Advisor: From their 2nd year until completion of the program, all students must have a formal evaluative meeting with their advisor once per year, usually in the spring semester. Advisors report on these meetings to the Director of Graduate Studies.

Annual Teaching Evaluation: All GATS must be evaluated once per year. Beginning graduate students will be assigned an evaluator. Advanced graduate students are highly encouraged to invite their Advisors and committee members to evaluate their teaching regularly so that they can comment on their teaching in recommendation letters. All evaluations will be submitted to the Director of Graduation Studies for consideration in the Annual Review.

Annual Review: Students will receive a letter from the Director of Graduate Studies at the beginning of each fall term, reviewing their performance and progress to degree as reflected in the checklist, advisor evaluation, and teaching evaluation.

Policies and Procedures, M.A. and Ph.D.

Residency Requirements for M.A. and Ph.D. 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://ogsdps.tamu.edu/>).

M.A. students must be registered full-time (9 hours) in at least one semester, or one 10-wk semester on the College Station campus. Ph.D. 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.

Foreign Language Requirement: Both MA and PhD students must demonstrate competency in a minimum of one language. They can do so by earning an A in both Old English and Beowulf, an A in a graduate reading course, an A on a translation exam, or an A in a 300-level (or above) undergraduate literature course taught in the language. MA students may also demonstrate competency by having earned a B or better in 12 hours of undergraduate language coursework completed no more than four years prior to entering the program. If an MA student then goes on

to the Ph.D., s/he will have to earn an A on a translation exam, in a graduate language course, or in a 300-level (or above) undergraduate literature course taught in the language.

Limitations on Coursework: No more than 6 hours of 685 (directed study) count towards the Ph.D. Exceptions must be approved by the Director of Graduate Studies. Ph.D. and M.A. students may take 6 hours of courses in other departments (cross-listed courses do not count); special permission from the Director is required for more than 6 hours. A student may not register for 691 courses until all coursework is completed.

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 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 Liberal Arts. 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 First-Year Review; 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 <http://student-rules.tamu.edu/>.

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.

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 Office of Graduate and Professional Studies website <http://ogaps.tamu.edu>. M.A. students should file their degree plans prior to their third semester. Ph.D. students should file prior to their fifth semester. While summer terms are not included in the number of terms for which students been registered, students will be blocked from summer registration if the following fall term would be either their third (M.A.) or fifth (Ph.D.) semester.

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 Office of Graduate and Professional Studies (OGAPS).** All requests for approval of hours beyond the assistantship must go through the Director of Graduate Studies. M.A. students are funded for no more than two years. Ph.D. students are funded for five years,

Graduate Assistants, Teaching (GATs): GATS teach 3 courses during the academic year (a 1-2 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 do research for individual professor, or do editorial work in one of the journals housed in the department.

Stipends: Most 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. Summer appointments are almost always made to PhD students who are GATs, and entail teaching a course during one summer session.

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

Cancelling Classes: GATs who need to cancel classes due to an emergency should do so through the department webpage. Click on the link Class Cancellation and provide all required information.

Resources

English Graduate Student Association (EGSA): EGSA is an association comprised solely of English Graduate students (M.A. and Ph.D.) 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 <http://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 (845-3711). Psychiatric and Counseling services are also available to graduate students through Student Counseling Services: <http://counseling.tamu.edu/>

The Melbern G. Glasscock Center for Humanities Research (CHR): The Center for Humanities Research 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 CHR supports humanities faculty and graduate students at TAMU with fellowships and with travel and research grants. For more information, please consult <http://glasscock.tamu.edu>.

Travel Funding

The Graduate program helps fund graduate student travel to conferences and other research trips. Please read the departmental application form carefully to familiarize yourself with the rules for funding travel. You should apply for travel funding as soon as your paper has been accepted to a conference, but no later than 30 days before travel is to begin.