

English Department MA Student Handbook

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Program Overview

The MA in English offers three distinct Plans of Study. These share a common core of 24 required hours, with different additional requirements that make each of these Plans particularly suitable for students with different professional goals.

Thesis Plan: 30 hours of course work, a committee of three faculty members, a thesis (one long paper or two shorter papers), and a foreign language requirement. This plan is usually selected by students who want to continue on with a PhD in English, often with the further goal of a teaching/research position at a university or four-year college.

Teaching Composition Plan: 36 hours of course work (no committee, no thesis, no foreign language requirement). This plan, which includes a Teaching Internship, may also serve those who plan to go on to a PhD, but is especially suitable for those who wish to teach writing and English studies at community colleges. We have a long-standing relationship with Guilford Technical Community College and some advanced MA students may apply for an internship through their FIT (Faculty-in-Training) Program.

Careers in the Humanities Plan: 36 hours of course work (no committee, no thesis, no foreign language requirement). This plan, which includes an internship and offers cross-disciplinary study, serves a wide range of career goals. MA candidates with strong interests in fields such as Women’s and Gender Studies, the School of Education, and the College of Visual and Performing Arts can build an official credential and design an internship reflecting those interests. Those teaching in, or planning to teach in, secondary schools or community colleges often choose this plan, building coursework with the School of Education or selecting the Teaching Internship.

MA Degree Requirements

Required Courses for all Plans of Study / 24 hours:

Only three courses may be at the 500 level. ALL OTHER COURSES must be at the 600 or 700 level.

Bibliography and Methods / 3 hours:

English 601: English Studies: Contents, Methods, and Bibliography (3)

Critical Theory / 3 hours, ONE from the following, or a special topics course pre-approved by the Director:

English 531: Feminist Theory and Women Writers (3)

English 549: The Critical Canon and Contemporary Issues (3)

English 650: Modern Literary and Cultural Theory (3)

English 663: Postcolonial Literary and Cultural Theory (3)

English 704: Studies in Contemporary Literary and Cultural Theory (3)

English 705: Cultural Studies (3)

Literature / 9 hours, THREE courses in literature:

One before 1800 (3)

One after 1800 (3)

One in any era (3)

Electives / 9 hours, THREE electives, usually in British or American literature.

In the remaining 6-12 hours of coursework, you elect ONE of the following three plans.

Thesis Plan / 6 hours, for a total of 30 hours:

In this option, a FOREIGN LANGUAGE IS REQUIRED. A reading knowledge of one modern foreign language, equivalent to completion of the first semester of the intermediate course (usually 203), by examination OR prior course work pre-approved by the Director. Note: computer courses do not count for this requirement. (The Department of Languages, Literatures and Cultures requires a score of 324 on its computerized examination to place out of French 203, and a score of 349 to place out of Spanish 203. Written examination in other foreign languages offered at UNCG will have to be arranged through faculty in those departments, and you may be required to pay a fee.)

English 699: Thesis (6)

The TWO-PAPER THESIS, also 6 hours, is an option for those admitted into the Ph.D. program or those who have permission from the Director and their thesis committee.

Teaching Composition Plan / 12 hours, for a total of 36 hours

English 680: Teaching Internships in English (3)

THREE electives in rhetoric and composition and/or language and linguistics (9), ordinarily drawn from the list below. These may overlap with or be in addition to electives in English or American literature. Special topics courses may be allowed with pre-approval of the Director.

English 590: Literacy, Learning, and Fieldwork (3)

English 661: Second Language Writing (3)

English 688: Women's Rhetoric and Feminist Pedagogy (3)

English 689: Institutional History of Composition Studies (3)

English 690: History of Rhetoric: Classical through Renaissance (3)

English 691: History of Rhetoric: Enlightenment through Contemporary (3)

English 693: Classical Rhetoric (3)

English 697: Composing Theories in Reading and Writing (3)

English 742: Studies in Rhetorical Theory and Practice (3)

English 744: Seminar in Composition Studies (3)

English 746: Studies in Contemporary Rhetorical Theory (3)

Careers in the Humanities Plan / 12 hours, for a total of 36 hours

English 622 OR 680: Internship OR Teaching Internship (3)

THREE courses in a minor or collateral field (9)

Planning for successful completion of the MA in English

Students working toward the MA may have very different timelines to completion, depending on life circumstances, professional goals, and many other individual factors. As long as the degree is completed within 5 years (the Graduate School's deadline for program completion), any timeline that fits students' personal and professional needs can lead to successful completion of the MA. Some students take as few as one course (3 hours) per semester, pursuing the MA over years as they maintain their full-time jobs and family lives. Some students may be enabled by financial aid or assistantships to enroll in two or three courses (6 or 9 hours) per semester, and so complete their degree in two academic years. There are many variations in between these two common timelines.

Students should remain in close touch with their advisors throughout their program about their progress toward degree. In addition to regular advising sessions with the Director of Graduate Studies, students should regularly consult with those professors with whom they work most closely—especially the thesis advisor(s), if the thesis plan is chosen—to be sure that they are on track to successful degree completion.

Examples of completion timelines for the MA Plans of Study

<https://english.uncg.edu/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/MA-Timelines.pdf>

Additional Information

Each of the three Plans of Study presents some distinctive timing elements, which are described below. Students who wish to change from one Plan of Study to another should do so no later than the completion of 15-18 hours of coursework to avoid delays in completing their program.

Thesis Plan: the Foreign Language requirement and Thesis

(1) Foreign Language requirement:

Students should discuss their completion of the Foreign Language requirement with the Director of Graduate Studies (DGS) at their very first advising session and identify a plan for completion. Early planning is especially important for this degree requirement because the language proficiency is certified in the Languages, Literatures and Cultures Department, and/or confirmed by official transcripts that may need to be ordered from other universities. There are many paths to the completion of this requirement, and LLC has always worked closely to assist English MA students. Early planning, in consultation with the DGS, is essential.

(2) Thesis:

Whether students wish to write a single-paper thesis or take the two-paper option, *they should have identified their directing professor(s) and/or committee members no later than the end of their first year of study* (or roughly 15 hours, if students are on a longer timeline). First steps include: advising with the DGS to help identify possible thesis directors; meeting with the potential director(s) to discuss the project(s) and gain the faculty member(s) agreement to direct; and filing appropriate forms to identify the thesis committee.

For the single-paper thesis, students may identify a single director or two faculty who may co-direct. The thesis committee consists of the director plus one other faculty member, or two co-directors,

plus the DGS (who is third member on all MA committees). The thesis director(s) will work with students to develop appropriate timelines for drafting, revising, and submitting the thesis. While there are no specific requirements governing the length of a single-paper thesis, a common standard is 40-80 double-spaced pages, inclusive of notes and bibliography. The level of development might be compared to a longer book or dissertation chapter. For digital and multimodal theses, where the length or amount of production does not correspond to printed pages, judgments about the target amount of production and appropriate level of development will be made by the thesis committee. Thesis committees should work to maintain a general equivalence in effort, complexity, and substance across print, digital, and multimodal thesis projects.

For the two-paper thesis, the thesis committee consists of two faculty who are co-directors plus the DGS. Most often, the two faculty have been students' teachers in graduate courses, and the two papers derive from research papers done in those faculty member's courses. However, students may elect to work on new material, directed by faculty with whom they have not taken classes. The papers should be developed in line with students' interests and the directing faculty members' advice. The thesis director(s) will work with students to develop appropriate timelines for drafting, revising, and submitting the thesis. While there are no specific requirements for length, each paper of the two-paper thesis commonly runs 20-40 double-spaced pages, inclusive of notes and bibliography. The level of development for each resembles that of an essay for an academic journal. For digital and multimodal theses, where the length or amount of production does not correspond to printed pages, judgments about the target amount of production and appropriate level of development will be made by the thesis committee. Thesis committees should work to maintain a general equivalence in effort, complexity, and substance across print, digital, and multimodal thesis projects.

All thesis students are strongly urged to attend one or more of the Thesis and Dissertation workshops provided by the Graduate School. The formatting of the thesis is a demanding, detailed process requiring significant time before the first Graduate School submission deadline, with significant revisions usually required by the Graduate School after that first submission, and then a final fully-corrected submission. Besides attending these workshops, students should work with their committees to build in sufficient time for these challenging formatting requirements.

Approval of the thesis does not require an oral defense. The written thesis is approved by the student's committee, which may be done with or without a formal meeting of the full committee, as the director(s) decide, and the committee has signed the approval pages. When the faculty-approved thesis has been finally submitted to and approved by the Graduate School, the thesis requirement has been met.

Teaching Composition Plan: Teaching Internship

English 680, Teaching Internship in English, is designed to introduce MA students to college teaching by placing them as interns in lower-division courses (100 or 200-level) taught by tenured or tenure-line English faculty. *Students ordinarily enroll in 680 after at least 12 hours of MA coursework*, which gives them time to identify faculty with whom they might wish to intern. For instance, students with particular interests in American literature might wish to intern with a professor teaching one of the American literature surveys, English 251 or 252. Please see the "Teaching Internship" section of the "Master of Arts" page on the English department website for details.

Well in advance of registration for the desired internship semester, students should talk with potential faculty mentors to learn whether they will be teaching an appropriate undergraduate course in that semester, and whether they are willing to have an intern in that course. Early contact with potential

faculty 680 mentors is very strongly recommended: students should not count on arranging enrollment in 680 as the semester of that enrollment begins, or over winter or summer breaks. It is up to individual professors to decide whether they are willing to accept 680 students. Students are encouraged to consult with the DGS if they would like help in identifying appropriate faculty mentors for the Teaching Internship.

Careers in the Humanities Plan: Teaching Internship or Internship in English

For advice on planning the Teaching Internship, please see "Teaching Composition Plan," above.

Internship in English (English 622) is designed to give students practical experience in writing, editing, or other fields related to English studies. Students work in the field under the direct supervision of professionals, with additional oversight by a faculty supervisor. Students who select the 622 Internship ordinarily enroll in the class after at least 12 hours of MA coursework. Please see the "Internship" page under "Master of Arts" on the English Department website for the specific expectations for this internship experience. [this page does not yet exist but I have a description from JF I will load]

Primary responsibility for planning this internship lies with the student who, in consultation with the DGS, identifies a professional venue that will accept and supervise an intern. In the past English MA students have interned at the Greensboro News and Record, at Scuppernong Books, and at the Oxford University Press (Carborro office). However, the department does not have any permanent relationships with professional venues suitable for interns: the prospective intern must identify and then work with their desired internship location to set the terms of that internship.

As in the case of the Teaching Internship, *students selecting the 622 Internship should begin working well in advance of registration for the desired semester* to identify their professional internship venue and supervisor.

Students must also identify and secure the approval of the faculty supervisor, usually but not necessarily the DGS, who will receive the professional supervisor's report (which may include a suggested grade) and then decide and file the grade for 622.

Advising throughout your MA in English

All students sign up for a formal advising meeting with the Director of Graduate Studies, assisted by the Administrative Assistant for Graduate Studies, each semester. These formal advising sessions are essential: they allow students and the DGS to be sure that proper progress toward the degree is continuing, and to register for the right number and type of hours for the next semester.

But many questions and concerns may come up throughout the year. *Students are strongly encouraged to consult with the DGS or the GS Administrative Assistant* by email, by phone, or in person, about any issues or confusions that may arise. Individual faculty members will be able to contribute valuable advice and perspectives, especially toward the completion of the thesis or the Teaching Internship; more advanced students may also have good advice. But in every program, a certain amount of "lore" circulates that may or may not be accurate. Not sure how many foreign language hours you need? Uncertain whether a thesis has an oral defense? Check our website, or this Handbook, and then, if you still feel unsure, check in with the DGS or GS Administrative Assistant.