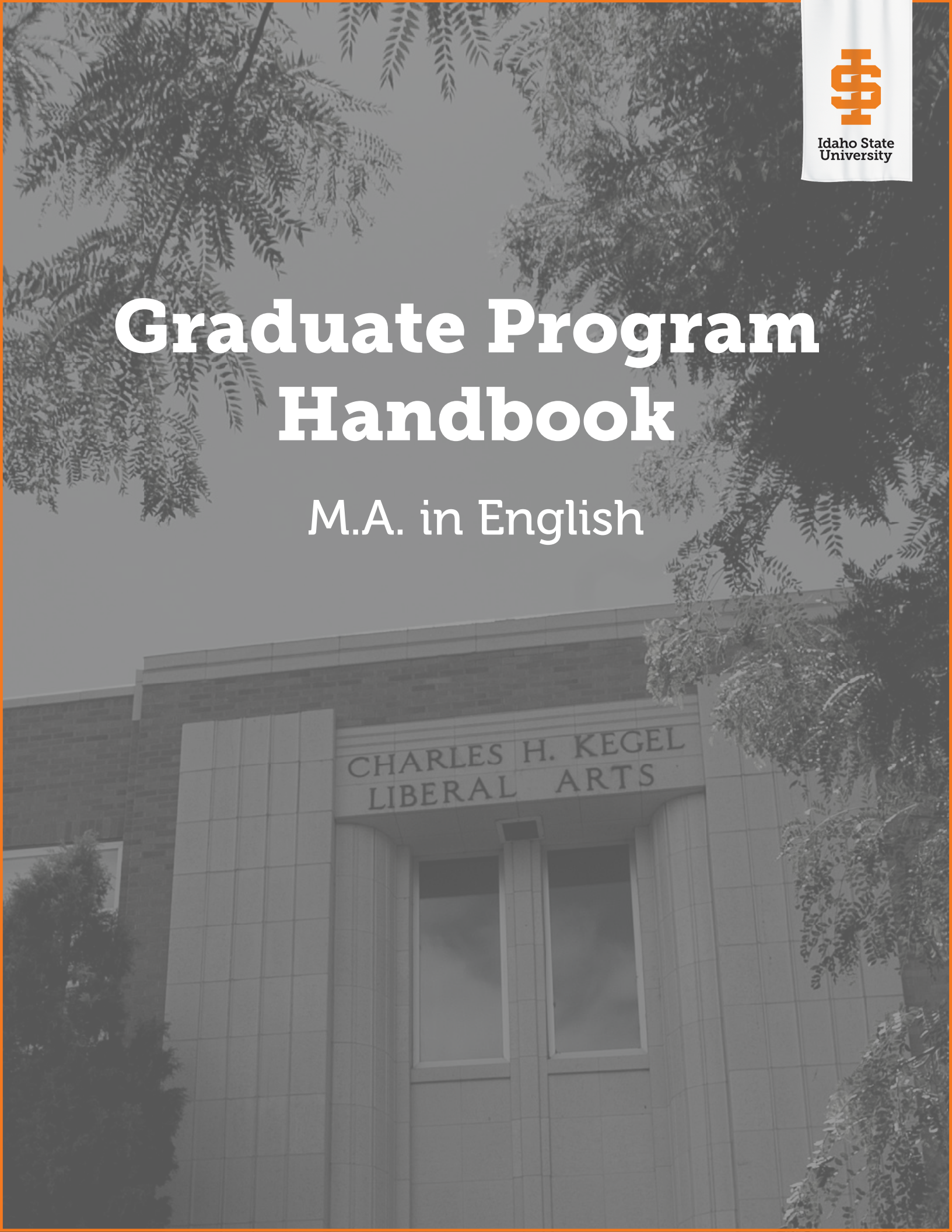
Idaho State University

Graduate Program Handbook

M.A. in English



GRADUATE PROGRAM HANDBOOK
M.A. IN ENGLISH

(revised December 2023)

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INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the M.A. program in English at Idaho State University! The goal of this program is to provide a broad education in literature, composition and rhetoric, linguistics, and pedagogy for students who want Master's level training in English, especially those who want to teach at the post-secondary level or who aim to pursue a doctoral degree. We offer excellent preparation in written and oral communication, research methods, critical and analytical writing, theoretical approaches to English studies, and English pedagogy. As a result, our students graduate with an extremely broad set of skills that makes them attractive candidates for any number of career paths.

The ISU *Graduate Catalog* outlines the official requirements of the program. This *Handbook* supplements the *Catalog*, providing information about departmental policies, procedures, and expectations. Therefore, you should be certain to read the English portions of the *Graduate Catalog*, especially those pertaining to the M.A. in English curriculum and program requirements. If you have questions or need additional information, feel free to ask your faculty advisor or the Director of Graduate Studies.

Please note that this *Handbook* is available online and in print. If you require this material in another format, please contact the Graduate Office at (208) 282-4294, or in person, in the Liberal Arts Building, Room 238.

We strive to make the *Handbook* as complete as possible, but some details may have been overlooked and certain policies may have changed since its most recent revision. If you find that something is missing that would benefit future students, please bring it to the attention of the Director of Graduate Studies so that the *Handbook* can be revised accordingly.

We're excited to have you in our program, and we look forward to helping you complete your M.A. in English. Ours is a rich, diverse community, and we hope you enjoy all it has to offer as you pursue your graduate degree with us.

Matthew Levay
Director of Graduate Studies in English

GRADUATE STUDENT RESPONSIBILITIES

All graduate students are expected to meet all the requirements set out in the current *Graduate Catalog* and all the other requirements specified by the Department. These are subject to change; you will be notified of modifications in Departmental rules and procedures through email, and occasionally through University mail. Copies of any modifications will also be available in the Graduate Office.

You are expected to attend all your classes, keep in touch with your instructors and committee members, and keep up with your assignments. We anticipate that you will maintain a high quality of work and conscientious preparation, all while adhering to the highest standards of academic honesty. Additionally, we hope you will participate in Departmental functions. Many students choose Idaho State's M.A. in English because of the smaller, collegial atmosphere of our program, and we hope you will enjoy that aspect of our community by getting involved early and often.

Students with Graduate Teaching Assistantships bear further responsibilities because they are part of the teaching faculty. Graduate Teaching Assistants are responsible for meeting their classes and conducting them as effectively as possible. Grading of papers and other assignments should be completed promptly and fairly, respecting students' dignity, and you should maintain prompt and regular contact with your faculty mentor throughout the semester (teaching assistantships and the mentoring program are discussed in greater detail in a later section of this *Handbook*).

Please note: *If you are teaching and you must cancel a class for any reason, you must inform the English Office Specialist as soon as possible.*

Assistantships for M.A. students are typically granted for two years, subject to the available resources of the University and depending upon satisfactory academic progress. The latter entails: satisfactory performance of teaching duties, with a particular emphasis on excellence in the classroom and in all communication with students, including grading; maintenance of an acceptable standard of work in graduate classes; and satisfactory progress for meeting degree requirements.

In occasional cases, members of the graduate faculty might conclude that a student cannot continue in the program (reasons may include, but are not limited to: academic dishonesty, regularly receiving unsatisfactory grades in coursework, or failure to meet other departmental or degree requirements). If a student's academic record suggests a problem, the Director of Graduate Studies will meet with the student at the earliest opportunity in order to give all parties time to decide how to proceed. English graduate faculty members believe that we have an obligation in such cases to do whatever we can to help a student improve their record, or to make the transition out of the program as smooth as possible.

HEALTH AND WELL-BEING

The health of our graduate students is very important to us. While we know that stress is a normal and expected part of graduate study, we want all students to feel comfortable and supported in pursuing their educations. ISU offers free, confidential counseling services to

all enrolled students, and we encourage you to take advantage of those services whenever you might need them. Visit Counseling and Testing Services via their website, or by phone, at (208) 282-2130, Monday-Friday, 8am-5pm. For crisis assistance, please call 1-800-273-TALK (8255). There is absolutely no stigma in getting help when you need it.

ADA STATEMENT

The Department of English and Philosophy is committed to working with all graduate students to help them reach their potential in all of the components of the graduate degree. As part of this commitment, a student who has a disability or thinks they might have a disability that could affect their performance on any component of the degree, should contact the Director of Graduate Studies in English as early as possible in the program to prepare for the full range of activities for which they might need accommodation, and should contact Disability Services in order to document the disability and make plans for arranging the services that might be necessary. The Graduate Program in English involves a range of activities, usually traditional, discussion-based seminars, as well as numerous other program-related requirements, which can include independent reading and writing; timed, written exams; extensive research projects; oral defenses, and supervised teaching. Most of these activities are eligible for ADA accommodation, with proper documentation.

Students should be aware that Disability Services determines what accommodations specifically need to be put in place, and course professors, the Director of Graduate Studies, and other faculty and staff members do not provide accommodations to a student without specific, written documentation of their needs from the Disability Services Office. In terms of coursework, the student is responsible for communicating their need for accommodations to course instructors on a semester-by-semester basis, and individual course professors are responsible for coordinating required accommodations, although professors should feel free to ask the Director of Graduate Studies to assist and collaborate with Disability Services when and if needed. In terms of program requirements outside of coursework, such as oral exams, it is the student's responsibility to maintain communication with the Director of Graduate Studies about disability-related issues, and it is the responsibility of the Director to coordinate ADA accommodations.

Students should be aware that most accommodations require some coordination and planning. Moreover, some events, particularly program-related exams and defenses, will require communication and coordination among multiple faculty and staff members, most commonly personnel in the Disability Services Office, the Director of Graduate Studies, and thesis/dissertation committee members. But potentially, this coordination can involve faculty from other departments, who serve as committee members or GFRs, as well as staff in the Graduate School.

For this reason, students who might need accommodations for a specific event should plan to contact their course instructors and/or the Director of Graduate Studies at least **ten (10) workdays** prior to the event with documentation of their needs. This advance notification will ensure that faculty and staff have the time to arrange the necessary accommodations with all of the parties involved. In the unusual event that a student realizes that they need accommodations after the ten-workday time frame, the student should immediately contact the relevant course instructor or Director of Graduate Studies, as well as Disability Services,

to see whether it might be possible nonetheless to coordinate accommodations or, alternatively, to delay the particular event in question in order to ensure there is time to put accommodations in place. In most cases, it is not possible to implement accommodations without lead time, nor is it possible to implement accommodations once an event has begun.

Students should be assured that the faculty and staff in the Department of English and Philosophy are committed to dealing sensitively and confidentially with all student needs. Students may choose to disclose their specific disability to departmental faculty and staff, and this information may help faculty and staff members to better assist them. But a disability is a personal matter, and students are under no circumstances obligated or required to disclose it to Department members. Students are only required to supply written documentation of their needs within a timeframe described above, which will give everyone time to coordinate accommodations.

Students with questions should contact the Director of Graduate Studies in English as well as Disability Services at (208) 282-3599 in the Rendezvous Building, Room 125. Please also see their web page for more information.

ADVISING AND SELECTING COURSES

The Director of Graduate Studies in English will be your primary advisor, although you should also consult faculty within your areas of interest. Near the beginning of your participation in the Graduate Program, the English Office Specialist will assist you in creating a Program of Study that will identify the courses you'll need to take in order to ensure that all program requirements are met. We have also appended to this *Handbook* an advising sheet that will allow you to track your progress through the program (essentially serving as an unofficial Program of Study). It is your responsibility to make arrangements to meet with the Director at regular intervals in order to keep your Program of Study up-to-date and your studies on track.

Coursework Limitations

There are two major limitations on coursework:

- A maximum of 6 credits taken outside of ENGL-prefixed courses may be counted toward degree requirements. Students planning to enroll in a course without an ENGL-prefix should obtain the approval of the Graduate Director before enrolling in that course.
- No more than 12 credits in 5500-level courses may be counted toward degree requirements.

ADDITIONAL WORK REQUIRED IN 5500-LEVEL COURSES

The University's Graduate Council requires instructors to assign specific levels of work in graduate-level courses to justify graduate credit being given. This is particularly true for courses which may be used to count toward a degree. In those courses designated at the 4400/5500 level, for students to receive graduate credit (5500-level courses), specific and

evaluated activities and performances must be identified. For a suggested list of activities which an instructor may use to meet this requirement, please see the *Graduate Catalog.*

WHAT GRADES MEAN IN GRADUATE COURSES

In general, a final grade of "A" or "A-" in a graduate course indicates consistently strong and outstanding achievement. Students receiving an "A" have not only fulfilled all course requirements, but have exceeded them by the skill and originality of their written and oral work.

A grade in the "B" range (B+, B, or B-) in a graduate course indicates adequate completion of course requirements but may also indicate work that has potential greater than the final product demonstrates.

A grade in the "C" range (C+, C, or C-) in a graduate course indicates weak, substandard performance. Students who receive more than two "C"-range grades in their graduate course work will be released from the English Graduate Program. It should be noted that in accordance with the *Graduate Catalog* a grade of C+ or lower is essentially failing at the graduate level so every effort should be made to avoid such a grade. A program GPA must be maintained in accordance with current program requirements (currently 3.0 for M.A. students). An "X" Grade is an "unearned 'F'" (essentially, failure due to nonattendance) and, therefore, will be treated in the same way as a grade in the "C" range or below.

Transferring Credits

In order to count toward the Program of Study, coursework taken as an unclassified student or at another institution must have earned a B- or higher.

INCOMPLETE GRADES

Very occasionally, students cannot complete the work for a graduate course before the end of the semester. In order to make progress toward the degree, it is important that they finish their coursework in a timely way. For this reason, any student seeking an Incomplete must first fill out an incomplete grade contract with the course instructor (these contracts are available in the main English Department Office), and any work for Incomplete grades must be completed within one year. After one year, if the Incomplete grade has not been changed, the Incomplete will become a permanent "F". Students pursuing an Incomplete grade should consult the policy on Incompletes in the *Graduate Catalog*.

Note: Students receiving teaching assistantships must complete any Incompletes within one semester, or their funding will not be renewed. M.A. TAs who receive an Incomplete in December of their first academic year should be sure, by February 1 of the following year, to submit to the Graduate Admissions Committee a plan for completing the Incomplete course by the end of the Spring semester in order for their funding to be considered for renewal.

LANGUAGE REQUIREMENT

Ways of fulfilling this requirement are detailed in the M.A. Program description in the *Graduate Catalog*. Students should note that the M.A. requirements are slightly different than the Ph.D. requirements, so students should be sure to consult the correct section of the *Catalog*.

All students considering a Ph.D. in the future are strongly advised to fulfill the language requirement through coursework in a language other than English, whether in a traditional, face-to-face classroom setting or through an accredited online program.

INDEPENDENT STUDY (ENGLISH 6690)

Graduate students have the option to develop an independent study for 1-3 credits in order to enhance their knowledge in a particular area that is not adequately covered in coursework. Independent Study credits are in addition to (i.e. do not take the place of) the required coursework credits needed for the M.A. or Ph.D. programs. Additionally, an Independent Study cannot replicate a course currently represented in the English department's graduate curriculum (check the *Graduate Catalog* for complete course listings).

Students who want to pursue an independent study must find a faculty member to advise their work and then submit a proposal to the Graduate Committee. The proposal should include:

- The title of the independent study
- A description of the topic and a rationale for pursuing the topic independently
- A reading list, usually a list of both primary and secondary sources, and a rationale for the selection of texts
- A description of the final written work to be submitted
- Signature of proposed graduate faculty advisor for the Independent Study (an email will do)

Except in unusual cases, all proposals for independent studies must be submitted to and approved by the Graduate Committee in the semester before the independent study is to take place, no later than the Committee's penultimate meeting of the semester (dates of these meetings are announced via email at the beginning of every semester, and a list is posted in the English Graduate Office).

FINAL PROJECT OPTIONS

In order to obtain the M.A., each student must complete a final exam or project. The English Department offers three different options: the M.A. Paper, the M.A. Thesis, and the Coursework/Portfolio option. Students should take time to look over each of these options and discuss them with the Director of Graduate Studies as well as faculty members in their area(s) of interest.

The options are designed to appeal to the strengths of different types of learners and the intellectual and professional goals of different students. Regardless of their choice of project (i.e., paper/thesis), students should expect to read 5–8 primary texts and 50–80 critical articles or chapters above their normal 30 credits of coursework. M.A. paper credits (3cr.) or M.A. thesis credits (6cr.) are intended to compensate for the time students need to develop their proposals, synthesize their reading, and refine the paper or thesis into final form.

Early in their program, and preferably in the first year, students should consult the Director of Graduate Studies regarding the final project option that best suits their interests and goals. While each option is available to any student, the M.A. Paper and Thesis will provide excellent preparation for students who want to go on to a Ph.D., although the Coursework/Portfolio option will not disadvantage students who may decide at a later point to apply to Ph.D. programs.

Option A: The M.A. Paper

Purpose

1. To give students the experience of developing a publishable-quality, article-length study of a significant topic in English studies.

2. To allow students options beyond the more standardized Set Text Exam, the more broadly-ranging M.A. Thesis, and the additional coursework required of the Coursework/Portfolio project.

Description/Process

The final M.A. Paper should be a publishable-quality article based on work previously produced for a course. The paper should demonstrate that the student understands and can work within the conventions of peer-reviewed publication. It should

- aim at a well-defined audience, one associated with a peer-reviewed venue that is recognized and meaningful for the field;
- make an original contribution to the field;
- incorporate research in the form of primary and secondary resources;
- demonstrate a command of the trends in the field to which the student is contributing; and
- use a documentation style appropriate for the field in which the paper is written.

In addition to the publishable-quality paper, the student will also write:

- an annotated bibliography
- a letter to the editor of the target journal (if that journal does not require such a letter, the student may produce an abstract of the paper, which is commonly required of article submissions in the humanities, if the paper supervisor deems it appropriate)

- an essay on the nature of the revisions to the paper and the rationale for those revisions
- a CV

Along with the paper itself, these additional documents should be produced and revised in consultation with the supervisor and the other English committee member, and all of them should be included in the final packet of materials given to the committee and the GFR (Graduate Faculty Representative) prior to the oral.

The student who chooses the paper option should aim to submit a paper proposal to the Graduate Committee no later than mid-way through the third semester (usually fall semester of the second year) and to complete the paper no later than just over mid-way through the fourth semester (usually the beginning of April in the second year).

To meet the criteria for the final paper and the timeline, the student should try to follow the process that is outlined below.

1. At the end of the first year, or, at the latest, in the beginning of the second year of the program, the student confers with and secures permission from the Graduate Faculty member under whose supervision they wish to revise and write the paper (normally, the faculty member in whose class the original paper was written). The student, working in consultation with the proposed paper supervisor, works to develop a proposal. (See the M.A. Paper Proposal Guidelines below.)

2. Once the proposal is final, the student should fill out the M.A. Thesis/Paper Declaration Form (see Appendix). The form and the proposal should then be submitted to the Graduate Committee for consideration. The Graduate Committee may remand the proposal for revision or clarification, approve it, or approve it pending minor revisions.

3. Once the proposal is approved, the Graduate Committee will set up a three-member evaluation committee, which is then formally appointed by the Dean of the Graduate School. This committee includes a GFR as well as the paper supervisor and one other member of the English Graduate Faculty. (The Graduate Committee welcomes input from the student and the paper supervisor on the selection of the committee member and the GFR.)

4. Once the proposal is approved, the student may then register for ENGL 6651, M.A. Paper. All students must register for at least one credit of ENGL 6651. Up to three M.A. Paper credits count toward the 18 credits of 6600 hours required for the M.A. degree.

5. After the Graduate Committee approves the proposal, the student will work in consultation with the supervisor to develop the paper.

6. Once the supervisor deems the paper ready for further consultation, the student should share the paper with the other English committee member. The second reader may request changes, and students should build enough time into their

writing process to make sure that they will be able to revise the paper in response to the committee's suggestions.

7. If the supervisor and the second reader agree that the paper is now in its final form, the M.A. Paper may be defended. It is Graduate School Policy that the final project (which for the M.A. Paper includes the accompanying letter/abstract, annotated bibliography, essay detailing the revisions, and the CV) must be distributed to the entire committee, including the GFR, two weeks prior to the oral defense.

8. With the approval of the supervisor, the student will initiate the scheduling of the final oral defense, which is officially scheduled by the English Office Specialist. This is a necessary step in order to ensure that the oral packet and ballots for the paper can be prepared in the Graduate School and distributed to the committee in advance of the defense.

9. In the oral defense the student should be prepared to discuss the strengths and weaknesses of the paper and to defend or explain the design or development of the paper more fully. The student may be asked to make corrections and minor changes, if any, based on the oral defense.

10. Within two weeks of the defense date, the student will prepare a final copy of the M.A. Paper and submit one copy to the supervisor and one copy to the English Graduate Office.

Option B: The M.A. Thesis

Purpose

1. To provide students with an opportunity to explore a topic in depth and to develop expertise in it.

2. To give students an opportunity to learn to develop and carry out a sustained research project, under the guidance of a graduate faculty member.

Description/Process

1. Up to six credits of English 6650: M.A. Thesis count toward the 18 6600-level credits required for the M.A. degree.

2. The M.A. thesis is customarily at least fifty pages in length. It typically consists of three short chapters, an introduction, a brief conclusion, and a bibliography, though organizational frameworks may vary depending on the project.

3. Students who choose the Thesis Option should submit a thesis proposal to the Graduate Committee no later than midway through their third semester (usually fall semester of the second year) and complete the thesis no later than just over midway through their fourth semester (usually the beginning of April in their second year).

4. At the end of their first year, or early in the beginning of their second year of the program, students confer with and secure permission from the Graduate Faculty member under whose direction they wish to write a thesis. (Note: This choice is subject to approval from the Graduate Committee.) The student, working in consultation with the proposed thesis director, develops a proposal. For proposal guidelines, see the section "general guidelines for thesis proposals" below.

5. Once the proposal is final, the student should fill out the "M.A. Paper and M.A. Thesis Proposal Approval/Title Page" (see Appendix). The form and the proposal should then be submitted to the Graduate Committee for consideration. The Graduate Committee may remand the proposal for revision or clarification or approve it.

6. Once the proposal is approved, the Graduate Committee will set up a three-member evaluation committee, which is then formally appointed by the Dean of Graduate Studies. This committee includes a representative of the Graduate Faculty (GFR) as well as the thesis advisor and one other member of the English Graduate Faculty. (The Graduate Committee welcomes input from the student and thesis advisor on the selection of the committee member and GFR.)

7. Also, once the proposal is approved, the student may then register for thesis credits. M.A.-level thesis credits are mandatory for "thesis option" students.

8. Soon after the Graduate Committee approves the proposal, the committee chair should meet with the student to review the approved proposal. Thereafter, the student works in consultation with the chair of the committee.

9. Once the supervisor deems the thesis ready for further consultation, the student should share the thesis with the other English committee member. The second reader may request changes, and students should build in enough time into their writing process to make sure that they will be able to revise the thesis in response to the committee's suggestions.

10. If the supervisor and the second reader agree that the thesis is now in its final form, the M.A. thesis may be defended. It is Graduate School Policy that the final project must be distributed to the entire committee two weeks prior to the defense.

11. With the approval of the supervisor, the student will initiate the scheduling of the final oral defense, which is officially scheduled by the English Office Specialist. This is a necessary step in order to ensure that the oral packet and ballots for the paper can be prepared in the Graduate School and distributed to the committee in advance of the defense.

12. In the oral defense the student should be prepared to discuss the strengths and weaknesses of the thesis and to defend or explain the design or development of the thesis more fully. The student may be asked to make corrections and minor changes, if any, based on the oral defense.

13. The student has two weeks from the date of the defense to file the final version of the thesis with the Graduate School. (Please see the Thesis Filing section located after the proposal guidelines for complete instructions.)

Notes on an M.A. Thesis in Creative Writing

Students should plan to do a critical thesis. While several years ago, occasional students were permitted to complete theses in creative writing, the Department no longer offers that option.

Option C: Coursework/Portfolio

Purpose

1. To give students, particularly those completing the M.A. part-time in service of their professional development, an option to develop a broader knowledge of English studies through additional coursework.

2. To give students an opportunity to develop their writing skills and evaluate their work in the M.A. program by producing a portfolio of written work and reflection upon that work.

Description/Process

This option is intended primarily for students who are completing the M.A. part-time, usually in service of their professional development (e.g., high school teachers pursuing the ECP teaching qualification).

1. To fulfill the requirement for a final project for the master's degree, students pursuing this option will take two additional 6600-level seminars in their last two semesters in the program.

2. Work in each of these seminars must include a research/critical paper that is upwards of 5000 words (approximately 12 pages), plus documentation (i.e., a bibliography). One of these seminars will be designated by the student as a capstone seminar.

3. Near the end of their final semester in the M.A. program, the student will compile a portfolio of major assignments from the two seminars (e.g., the two research/critical papers, plus any other written assignments that constituted a significant portion of the course grade [for example, 20% or more]), along with a 2500-word reflective essay outlining the student's intellectual and professional goals and development throughout the program and assessing the portfolio as a reflection of that development.

4. The instructor in the capstone seminar, along with the Director of Graduate Studies in English and a Graduate Faculty Representative, will constitute a review committee.

The student will submit the portfolio to that committee near the end of their final semester in the M.A. program.

5. With the approval of the three individuals listed above, the student will initiate the scheduling of an oral defense, which is officially scheduled by the English Office Specialist. This is a necessary step in order to ensure that the oral packet and ballots for the portfolio can be prepared in the Graduate School and distributed to the committee in advance of the defense.

6. In the oral defense the student should be prepared to discuss the strengths and weaknesses of the portfolio's contents and to defend or explain the arguments of those pieces of writing more fully. While questions will primarily address the materials submitted, they may also concern relevant theoretical issues, connections between courses and topics taken by the student, and the student's plans for employment or further study.

7. Students choosing this option must complete 24 credits at the 6600 level or above, rather than the 18 credits required for the Thesis, Paper, and Set Text Exam options.

8. Students who choose this option must inform the Director of Graduate Studies of their plans as soon as possible, but certainly before their final two semesters in the M.A. program.

GUIDELINES FOR M.A. PAPER AND THESIS PROPOSALS

The Graduate Committee realizes that most proposals are, of necessity, written at an early stage in the student's progress and so may contain much that is anticipatory and tentative. At the same time, a proposal is, fundamentally, a piece of persuasive writing, and in this case, the student is trying to persuade an audience (consisting of faculty advisors and members of the Graduate Committee) that the project is interesting, feasible, and worthwhile for the student; that it is theoretically informed and bibliographically current; and that the proposer has thought and read enough to form preliminary hypotheses and a projected work plan.

Students should begin planning their proposals by discussing thesis or paper ideas with the graduate faculty member they would like to have as an advisor to the project, so that they can find a topic they are qualified to undertake and that falls within the advisor's area of expertise. Once students have a clear sense of a topic, they should work with the advisor to write the proposal, which will need to be approved by the advisor and then submitted, along with the M.A. Paper/Thesis Proposal Cover Sheet (available from the English Office Specialist and included in this *Handbook*, as an Appendix), to the Graduate Committee for review and approval.

All M.A. Paper or Thesis proposals should include all of the elements below. In both cases, the guidelines are not meant to be a rigid formula, but to offer a general format for casting the proposal in the form of a persuasive, structured argument. Nonetheless, the Graduate Committee recommends that all proposals follow this general outline, so that all the required information is easily found.

Note on Human Subjects Approval. In rare cases, M.A. papers/theses may involve human subjects (surveys, classroom observation and taping, interviews, etc.) and proposals for projects of this sort must also include a letter of approval from the ISU Human Subjects Committee.

A. M.A. Paper Proposal Guidelines

1. *Proposal Approval Form/Title Page* (including the signature of the proposed paper advisor, normally the faculty member for whom the original paper was produced). A copy of this form is available in the back of this *Handbook* or in the English Graduate Program Office.

2. *Abstract* (150 words maximum, outlining the most essential points below). This will help the Committee, but its main purpose is to force you to boil down the important issues of a longer, complex proposal and determine whether or not you have a clear focus and adequate grasp of the issues involved.

3. *Description of the Original Paper*. Describe the extant paper that will form the basis of this project. For which course was it written, and under which instructor? What was its central research question? How did it reference or participate in ongoing conversations in its field? What was its methodology? What conclusion did it reach? What were its limitations, given the seminar paper format?

4. *Description and Justification of Proposed Revision/Expansion*. How will your M.A. Paper build on the original paper? What is your research question? How is this similar to or different from the research question in the original paper? What specific new topics or approaches will be considered? Why is such revision/expansion important, given disciplinary context? To what specific scholarly conversations will the finished paper contribute, and how?

5. *Procedures*. Describe the procedures, materials, and resources you will use to write your M.A. Paper. Provide a substantive bibliography of secondary and primary sources (if relevant) that you will use over and above those used in the original paper (see #10 below). How will you access them?

6. *Dissemination*. To which peer-reviewed publication/journal would you submit your finished M.A. Paper? Describe briefly but concretely why you believe that venue is a good fit for your work. A conference can be a good way to work toward a publication, and if you plan also to present your research at a conference in order to develop its argument in preparation for its article-length publication, describe which conference, and why you have chosen to attend it.

7. *Timeline*. This section outlines the timeline for completing this paper. The timeline should be realistic, and should include the following (other dates might also be useful): a deadline for submitting a first draft of the paper to your supervisor, a timeline for revisions, a deadline for submitting a full draft of the paper to the supervisor and second reader, a timeline for further revisions, a deadline for

submitting a final draft of the paper to the full committee (including the GFR), and a potential oral defense date.

8. *Works Cited*. Provide a list of works cited in the proposal.

9. *Appendix*. Provide a bibliography of 5-8 primary works and 50-80 critical or theoretical articles/book chapters (or equivalent) that you will read for your M.A. Paper (see #5 above).

B. M.A. Thesis Proposal Guidelines

1. *Proposal Approval Form/Title Page* (including the signature of the proposed paper advisor, normally the faculty member for whom the original paper was produced.) A copy of this form is available in the back of this *Handbook* or in the English Graduate Program Office.

2. *Abstract* (150 words maximum, outlining the most essential points of #3 - #5 below.) This will help the Committee, but its main purpose is to force you to boil down the important issues of a longer, complex proposal and determine whether or not you have a clear focus and adequate grasp of the issues involved.

3. *Objectives*. What is the specific purpose of your proposed thesis? What particular research or pedagogical experiment do you wish to pursue? To what specific scholarly conversations or debates do you wish to contribute? In this section, you will define a specific problem, issue, or goal to be addressed. Remember that most proposals are examples of persuasive writing, in which it is necessary to advance a specific thesis (i.e., an arguable claim about or approach to some problem that you have identified.)

4. *Background and Disciplinary Context*. What is the topic of your thesis? What is your research question? How does your project relate to other work in its field? What works have most influenced your thinking or helped you define your objectives? This part of the proposal will explain, to an audience who may not be familiar with all the issues and related works or concepts, the state of the question and the place of your project therein. Remember that, whenever you're providing a bibliographical survey or review of relevant literature on your topic, your purpose is never to "name drop" significant figures in your field, but instead to explain, with clear examples, how your reading has informed your understanding of the project, and, conversely, how a developing sense of the project has directed the choice of readings. (Note: Part of this requirement may be met by an attached bibliography, but the Committee should not be left to guess what the informing principles of such lists are. Some narrative justification is essential.)

5. *Methods & Procedures*. What research methods or disciplinary approaches inform this project? What materials and resources are involved and how will you access them? This part of the proposal shows that you can translate the conceptual matter of #3 into discrete tasks. Obviously the scope of this part of the proposal will vary considerably depending on the type of project, and you shouldn't assume that your

methodology is self-evident. If theories of method have been adequately covered in #5, above, then this part of the proposal can simply cover the practical aspects.

6. *Chapter Outline*. This section provides a brief rationale for the thesis's organization and provides a brief summary of each chapter. The chapter outline should include a tentative title and summary of the subject and argument of each chapter. Note that most M.A. theses include 3 chapters, an introduction, and a brief conclusion (though obviously other organizational models exist).

7. *Significance*. What is the significance of your project? How will it (a) contribute to the current state of knowledge about the subject, and (b) complement your graduate program and (if applicable) your career plans? From the specific thesis outlined under "Objectives" (#3), convince your audience that the project would be worth doing even if it were not a degree requirement.

8. *Timeline*. This section outlines the timeline for completing this thesis. The timeline should be realistic, and should include the following (other dates might also be useful): a deadline for submitting drafts of individual chapters to your supervisor, a timeline for revisions, a deadline for submitting a full draft of the thesis to the supervisor and second reader, a timeline for further revisions, a deadline for submitting a final draft of the thesis to the full committee (including the GFR), and a potential oral defense date.

9. *Works Cited*. Provide a list of works cited in the proposal.

10. *Bibliography*: Provide a bibliography of readings you plan to do for your thesis research. These should include 5-8 primary texts and 50-80 critical or theoretical articles/book chapters (or the equivalent).

THESIS FILING AND BINDING

1. *Pages with Signatures*. When students complete their thesis/dissertation, they must create two (2) separate sets of the front pages containing original signatures. These will include at minimum the copyright page and committee approval page, and may also include the microfilm approval page and human subjects approval page. One set of copies goes to the Graduate School and another set of copies goes to the English Office Specialist.

2. *Electronic Dissertation and Thesis Copies*. Students must submit two (2) electronic, PDF copies of their thesis/dissertation. One goes to the Graduate School and the other goes to the English Office Specialist. These electronic copies must be PDFs and formatted and submitted according to the requirements in the Dissertation and Thesis Filing Guide on the Graduate School web page.

3. *Copies for the Department*. The English Department wishes to keep a hard copy of all master's theses and doctoral dissertations for our files and as a resource for current students. Copies should be made on acid-free paper with plastic or card-stock covers and spiral bound. Information about the thesis (name, title, date, and degree)

should be printed on the front cover or on a cover sheet under a transparent cover. Either one-sided or two-sided printing is acceptable. The English Office Specialist can suggest vendors.

In order to graduate, students must provide the English Office Specialist with proof that they have ordered and paid for at least two copies of their thesis/dissertation, meeting the requirements above, to be bound and delivered to the department. At the time when they order the two hard copies, students may wish to order additional copies for themselves, since most vendors will decrease the cost per book if more books are ordered. In many cases, students can have these additional copies mailed directly to them, but if they must be delivered to the department along with the two, required departmental copies, the department will mail up to two copies to the student at no additional mailing charge.

The English Office Specialist can guide students toward vendors who can bind dissertations and theses in ways that meet the specifications above. Please note that, in general, copy businesses, such as OfficeMax and FedEx-Kinkos are not able to provide hard cover binding.

4. *Dissertation/Thesis Publication Embargo*. With electronic filing, dissertations and theses are now publicly available from the time they are uploaded by the University onto its server. We recommend that you request to have your dissertation/thesis embargoed, preventing public access, which will give you some additional time to publish your work before it becomes publicly available. The English Office Specialist will have the necessary forms.

   If you are unsure whether you should embargo your thesis/dissertation, please speak with your advisor and/or the Director of Graduate Studies. Currently, students can request to embargo their dissertation for one year, and renew their request on an annual basis, at least once and perhaps twice.

THE TEACHING ASSISTANTSHIP/MENTOR PROGRAM

Teaching assistantships are awarded on a competitive basis to students accepted into the M.A. program who have a record of good scholarship, who have demonstrated a potential ability for good teaching, and who have met all other requirements for admission to the M.A. program. The Graduate Faculty of the Department has designed the first two semesters of the teaching assistantship/mentor program to allow teaching assistants to study and observe the teaching of composition at ISU and to allow teaching assistants to demonstrate an ability to teach composition. Teaching assistantships are renewed for a third and fourth semester for students who have maintained a record of good scholarship and who have demonstrated their ability to teach well. Except in extraordinary cases, it is assumed that teaching assistants who perform satisfactorily will teach for three semesters after their initial mentoring semester. During the period of a student's teaching assistantship, faculty mentors and teaching assistants follow the requirements and practices outlined below.

First Semester

1. The teaching assistant (TA) enrolls in English 6631: Seminar in Teaching Composition (3 credits).

2. The TA is assigned a Mentor, a Graduate Faculty member who is teaching English 1101 (or, in some cases, English 1102). In conjunction with this assignment, the TA also enrolls in English 6631L, a one-credit lab section, with their Mentor as the instructor of record.

3. The Mentor uses one of the recommended texts for English 1101.

4. The Mentor follows the department Guidelines for English 1101.

5. The TA attends each meeting of the Mentor's English 1101 class.

6. The TA observes at least two other English 1101 class meetings and writes an account of the observations, to be reviewed and discussed in English 6631.

7. The TA teaches at least five times in the Mentor's English 1101 course.

8. The TA grades at least two sets of essays from the Mentor's English 1101 students. The Mentor also grades these essays for comparison.

9. The Mentor and the TA discuss each of the TA's teaching and grading experiences. Guided by the Mentor's suggestions, the TA adjusts teaching and grading practices.

10. The Mentor writes a one-page report to the Director of Graduate Studies and the Director of Composition on the TA's performance during the semester. The report is due no later than the last day of finals week, and should be submitted to the English Office Specialist. The TA signs the report and may write a response. The report will be kept in the TA's file in the office of the Director of Graduate Studies.

11. The TA will complete a brief assessment of the Mentoring experience for the Director of Graduate Studies.

Second Semester

1. The TA enrolls in English 7731: Practicum in Teaching Composition (3 credits). TAs can expect to meet as a group several times in the semester to discuss pedagogical issues.

2. The TA teaches one section of English 1101.

3. All second semester teaching assistants are supervised by one Mentor, a Graduate Faculty member who is the instructor for English 7731 and who performs the mentorship as an assigned teaching responsibility.

4. After ensuring that the TA is using an approved text and is following the Guidelines for English 1101, the Mentor approves each TA's detailed syllabus before the semester begins.

5. The TA adopts classroom teaching and grading practices consistent with the Department's Guidelines.

6. The Mentor observes each TA's class at least five times, including at least once in the first two weeks and once in the last two weeks of the semester.

7. The Mentor records each class observation in writing. The report of the observation forms the basis for a conference with the TA following each class observed by the Mentor.

8. The Mentor evaluates in writing each TA's grading of at least two sets of compositions. The evaluation forms the basis for a conference with the TA on each set of compositions.

9. The Mentor writes a one-page report to the Director of Graduate Studies and the Director of Composition on each TA's performance during the semester, after reading the student evaluations of each TA's English 1101 course. The reports are due no later than the last day of finals week, and should be submitted to the English Office Specialist. The TA signs the report and may write a response. The report will be kept in the TA's file in the office of the Director of Graduate Studies.

10. Using a departmental student evaluation form for English 7731: Practicum, the TA writes an evaluation of the Mentor's performance during the semester as students do for other classes.

Third and Fourth Semesters

The TA teaches one section of English 1101 each semester. TAs must use a recommended text for English 1101. In order to use a text which is not on the list of required texts, the TA must submit a proposal to the Composition Committee. The proposal, accompanied by a syllabus which follows the Guidelines for English 1101, must be approved during the semester before the TA teaches a course modeled on it. No proposals will be approved after the fact.

1. The Mentor for the TA is a member of the Graduate Faculty, and typically someone the TA did not have as a Mentor in prior semesters.

2. The Mentor approves the TA's detailed syllabus before classes begin.

3. The Mentor observes the TA's class at least two times.

4. The Mentor records each class observation in writing. The observation forms the basis for a conference with the TA following each class observed by the Mentor. The Mentor writes a one-page report to the Director of Graduate Studies and the Director of Composition, which is due no later than the last day of finals week, and should be

submitted to the English Office Specialist. The TA signs the report and may write a response. The report will be kept in the TA's file in the office of the Director of Graduate Studies.

Alternative TA Assignments

In cases where the Department does not have enough open sections of English 1101 to assign to graduate TAs, some TAs may, on the basis of their teaching experience, disciplinary preparation, and/or academic interests, be assigned to teach a section of English 1102: Writing and Rhetoric II. Students asked to teach this course should consult with the Director of Composition for advice on adapting their 1101 training to the 1102 classroom.

In some semesters, TAs may, on the basis of their teaching experience, disciplinary preparation, and/or academic interests, be asked to serve in a more "traditional" TA role by working as a TA in a larger undergraduate class (at the 1100-, 2200-, 3300-level) taught by a member of the Graduate Faculty. Duties in these courses will vary, but they typically consist of some version of the following: attending all class sessions, grading some assignments, teaching some class sessions, and proctoring exams. These TA assignments are rare, but are typically made when the Department has more available TAs than it does available sections of English 1101 or 1102.

APPENDIX 1

TWO-YEAR DEGREE COMPLETION TIMELINE

The Master's degree should be achievable in two years of full-time study. The following timeline is only a sample and is tailored for students with Teaching Assistantships. Consult with the Director of Graduate Studies about planning your own program. Note that if you need to take four semesters of a foreign language course to fulfill that requirement, at least two semesters will need to be taken as an overload in order to complete the degree on time.

	Fall Semester	Spring Semester
Year 1	9 graduate credits: - ENGL 6612 (3 credits) - ENGL 6631 (3 credits) - Pre-1800 Seminar (3 credits) *Optional* - Beginning language course (e.g. SPAN 1101) (4 credits)	9 graduate credits: - ENGL 7731 (3 credits) - Post-1800 Seminar (3 credits) - Linguistics course (3 credits) *Optional* - Beginning language course (e.g. SPAN 1102) (4 credits)
Year 2	9 graduate credits: - ENGL Seminar or Elective (3 credits) - ENGL Seminar or Elective (3 credits) - ENGL Seminar or Elective (3 credits) *Optional* - Intermediate language course (e.g. SPAN 2201) (4 credits) *Other* - Submit thesis / paper proposal to Graduate committee for approval	9 graduate credits: - ENGL Seminar or Elective (3 credits) - One of the following: MA Thesis (up to 6 credits) or MA paper (3 credits) or Set Text Exam (3 credits) *Optional* - ENGL Seminar or Elective (3 credits) - Intermediate language course (e.g. SPAN 2202) (4 credits) *Other* - Defend thesis / paper or complete the coursework/portfolio option

APPENDIX 2

M.A. Paper and M.A. Thesis Proposal Approval Form/Title Page

Student's Name: _____

Type of Proposal (circle one):

M.A. Paper M.A. Thesis

Proposed Title of Paper/Thesis:

_____
_____
_____

Proposed Thesis Advisor: _____

Does the Thesis Involve Research with Human Subjects: ____ Yes ____No
(If so, please attach the Human Subjects Approval Form.)

Signature of Proposed Paper/Thesis Advisor:

I have read and approve this proposal: _____
Signature Date

APPENDIX 3

M.A. Advising Template

Coursework
30 credits in English, 18 of which must be at the 6600-level or higher including:

Distribution Component (12 credits)

Course	Credits	Notes
English 6612 Graduate Studies in English	3	
Linguistics Class (see *Graduate Catalog*)	3	
Pre-1800 literature seminar (6620-level)	3	
Post-1800 literature seminar (6620-level)	3	

Electives Component (18 credits)

Course	Credits	Notes

Language Studies

Equivalent of four semesters at the undergraduate level within four years of beginning the program. See the *Graduate Catalog* for a complete description of how to fulfill this requirement.

Course	Credits	Notes

Final Project

M.A. Paper: A revision of a graduate paper into a 25pp. essay of publishable quality. Note: Up to 3cr. of M.A. paper count toward up to 3 of the required 6600-level credits.

M.A. Thesis: An extended critical study of a topic proposed by the student and developed in consultation with a member of the graduate faculty (a minimum of 50 pages). Note: Up to 6cr. of thesis count toward up to 6 of the required 6600-level credits.

Coursework/Portfolio: Completion of 6 additional credits at the 6600-level in the last two semesters. Work in each of these seminars must include a research/critical paper. In the final semester, the student will compile a portfolio of major assignments from the two additional seminars along with a reflective essay outlining the student's goals and development throughout the program.

Notes