# English M.A. Program Handbook

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INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the M.A. in English. The goal of this program is to provide a broad education in literature for students who want Master’s level training in English, especially those who want to teach at the post-secondary level or aim to pursue a doctoral degree. The ISU Graduate Catalog outlines the official requirements of the program. This Handbook supplements the Catalog, providing information about departmental policies, procedures, and expectations. If you have questions or need additional information, please talk to your faculty advisor or the Director of Graduate Studies.

Please note that this Handbook is available in print and online. Every effort is made to keep the online edition current, but the official version of the Handbook is the printed copy in the English Graduate Office. If you require this material in another format, please contact the Graduate Office at (208) 282-4294 or English Office at (208) 282-2478.

We have tried to make the Handbook as complete as possible, but some details may have been overlooked. If you find that something is missing that would benefit future students, we would appreciate it if you could bring it to the attention of the Director of Graduate Studies so that the Handbook can be revised accordingly.
GRADUATE STUDENT RESPONSIBILITIES

All graduate students are expected to meet all the requirements set out in the current Graduate School 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 inter-office mail or email correspondence. Copies of any modifications will also be available in the Graduate Studies Assistant’s office.

You are expected to attend your classes, keep in touch with your instructors and committee members, and we hope you will participate in Departmental functions. Many students have particularly enjoyed the smaller, collegial atmosphere of our program, and we hope you will as well. We anticipate that you will maintain a high quality of work and conscientious preparation, as well as adhering to the highest standards of academic honesty.

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. Please note: If you are teaching and you must cancel a class for any reason, you must inform the Graduate Studies Assistant as soon as possible.

Assistantships are granted for one year periods (or shorter) and are considered for renewal annually based upon a competitive review and evaluation. Students must reapply for fellowships and assistantships each year: the deadline is February 15. We remind students that Teaching Assistantships are not automatically renewed from one semester to the next. Renewal will depend upon satisfactory performance of teaching duties, with a particular emphasis on excellence in teaching; maintenance of an acceptable standard of work in graduate classes; and satisfactory progress for meeting degree requirements. Further information related to assistantships and mentoring appears in later sections of this handbook.

In occasional cases, members of the graduate faculty might conclude that a student cannot continue in the program. If a student’s academic record suggests that there is a problem, the graduate director will meet with the student at the earliest opportunity so that he or she will have time to decide how to proceed. The graduate faculty members believe that we have an obligation in such cases to do whatever we can to help a student to improve his or her record or to make the transition out of the program as smooth as possible.

ADA STATEMENT

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. 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 he or she might have a disability that could affect his or her 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 he/she might need an accommodation, and should contact Disability Services in order to document the disability and to plan for the services that might be necessary.

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 specific courses, 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 Graduate Director to assist and collaborate with Disabilities 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 Graduate Director about disability issues, and it is the responsibility of the Director of Graduate Studies to coordinate ADA accommodations.

Students should also 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 he or she needs accommodations after the ten-workday time frame, the student should immediately contact the relevant course instructor or Graduate Director, 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 private matter and students are never 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 Graduate Director in English as well as Disability Services at 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 own areas of interest. Near the beginning of your participation in the Graduate Program, the Director will assist you in creating a Program of Study that will identify those courses to be taken in order to ensure program requirements are met. 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.

**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’” and, therefore, will be treated in the same way as a grade in the “C” range or below.

*On 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.

**ADDITIONAL WORK REQUIRED IN g5500 COURSES (Graduate Council Policy)**

The Graduate Council expects instructors to require specific work to be done in a graduate level course 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 g4400/5500 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.
INCOMPLETE GRADES

Very occasionally, students cannot complete the work for a graduate course. 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 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 grades should consult the policy on Incompletes in the Graduate Catalog.

Note: Teaching assistantships and fellowships must complete incompletes within one semester, or their funding will not be renewed. Those TAs and fellows who receive an incomplete in December of the academic year and then apply for funding the subsequent February should be sure to include a plan for completing the incomplete course by the end of the Spring semester with their funding/renewal funding application.

(FOREIGN) LANGUAGE REQUIREMENT

Ways of fulfilling this requirement are detailed in under 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 consul 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 foreign language in a traditional classroom setting or through an accredited on-line 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.

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:

- 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 e-mail will do)
Except in unusual cases, all proposals for independent studies must be submitted and approved by the Graduate Committee in the semester before the independent study is to take place. The proposal due dates are:

- Nov. 1: Proposals due for spring semester
- April 1: Proposals due for summer and fall semester

**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 Set Text Exam, the Paper, and the Thesis. Students should take time to look over each of these options and discuss them with the Graduate Director 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 goals of different students. Regardless of their choice of exam or project (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 English Graduate Director 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 Set Text exam will not disadvantage students who may decide at a later point to apply to Ph.D. programs.

**Option A: The M.A. Set Text Examination**

**Purpose:**

1. To test M.A. students' ability to address specific critical problems regarding set texts from various genres and periods. The candidate can be expected to apply principles from the required courses in literary theory and methods of scholarship.

2. To afford M.A. students the opportunity to study independently a few texts in depth, thus practicing sustained inquiry and critical synthesis as M.A. Paper and Thesis students do.

**Description/Process:**

1. A student who chooses the Set Text option must complete all of the required coursework for the M.A., including 18cr. of coursework at the 600-level.

2. The Set Text Examination will normally be taken in April of the student's last semester and will consist of a written examination.
3. If the examining committee warrants the exam passing, an oral examination will take place which may address the student's written response as well as any of the set texts for that year, even if the student did not write on them. The oral examination will be scheduled within two weeks after the student has passed the written examination.

4. The Set Text Exam committee is made up of three appropriate members of the Graduate Faculty appointed by the Graduate Committee. The Graduate Committee also appoints one committee member to be chair of the examination committee. This committee makes up the test questions, which are reviewed by the Graduate Committee, and is responsible for evaluating the student’s written response. If the student passes the written, then two members of the committee will be assigned to the student’s oral defense. The Graduate School will also assign a GFR (Graduate Faculty Representative) for the oral.

5. The Set Text Examination will be based on a list of 5-8 works announced at the end of each academic year for the next year. These texts will be chosen by the M.A. Set Text Examination Committee. The list of 5-8 texts will change each year, but every list will include different genres and literary periods.

6. To prepare, students are expected to survey on their own secondary materials about each of the 5-8 texts. It is recommended that students read ten articles/book chapters on each of the texts, and one or two good critical introductions.

7. Students will be allowed three hours to write the Examination; they will be given at least three questions and will select one of these to answer. Students will likely be asked to do the following:
   - Place each work in its literary historical and socio-historical context;
   - Describe a recent line of criticism about each work and note possible counter-arguments;

8. Students will take the exam in a designated computer lab. If needed, students may arrange to take the exam in an secure, proctored, off-campus location, such as the testing center at a local university.

9. Students may consult test questions and sample answers from previous years.

10. For the oral defense, students will receive a copy of their own written responses before the oral examination. They may confer with members of the Set Text Exam committee prior to the oral about the format of the oral and for suggestions for preparation.

11. If a student fails the Set Text Examination, one retake is allowed. Retakes may be given in the fall, spring, or summer terms. The retake will be on the same list of 5-8 texts as the initial Set Text Examination. The M.A. degree will not be awarded until students who choose the Set Text option successfully pass the Set Text Examination.
Option B: The M.A. Paper

Purpose:

1. To give students the experience of developing a publishable-quality, article-length study; and
2. To allow students options beyond the more standardized set text exam and the more broadly-ranging M.A. thesis.

Description/Process:

The final M.A. paper should be a publishable-quality paper 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 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
- 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 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 he or she wishes to revise and write the paper (normally, the faculty member in whose class the original paper was written). (NOTE: This choice is subject to
approval from the Graduate Committee. 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 or approve it.

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 Graduate Studies. 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 in 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, annotated bibliography, as well as the annotated bibliography, letter of submission, essay of the revisions, and the CV,) must be distributed to the entire committee two weeks prior to the 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 Secretary to the Graduate Director. 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 for the GFR to pick up.

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 one 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 Studies Office.
**Option C: The M.A. Thesis**

**Purpose:**

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

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

**Description/Process:**

1. Up to six thesis credits of English 650 count toward the 18 600-level credits required for the M.A. degree.

2. The M.A. thesis, customarily at least fifty pages in length.

3. Student 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 to 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 Secretary to the Graduate Director. This is a necessary step in order to ensure that the oral packet and ballots for the thesis can be prepared in the Graduate School for the GFR to pick up.

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.)

Special Guidelines for an M.A. Thesis in Creative Writing

Most students will do a critical thesis. In rare cases, students who have completed considerable coursework, or who have unusual talent and interest, may to undertake a creative thesis. Students who wish to undertake this kind of thesis should only do so after careful deliberation with a graduate faculty member who specializes in creative writing, taking special care to discuss: 1) their qualifications for undertaking the thesis; 2) the nature of the thesis as a "capstone" project that is the culmination of the M.A. experience and an expression of the student’s academic credentials; and 3) how the thesis will help them to meet their professional goals.

These theses will be a substantial body of original work which forms a coherent whole and will be approximately 50-100 pages long. Along with the creative work, the student will include an introduction or an afterword placing the creative material in a critical context. This critical comment usually includes:

1. A discussion of the ways the writer has used formal and stylistic elements to fulfill his/her purposes;
2. A discussion of the ways in which the writing of the thesis has contributed to the writer’s own development as a writer, teacher, and/or critic;

3. A brief discussion of the relationships of this work to other established literary works (e.g., influences, adaptations, ideas of generic form, etc.).

4. To fulfill the requirements for the creative M.A. thesis, the student must present a public reading from the finished thesis. Students who write creative M.A. theses must pass an oral examination.

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, students would do well to remember that a proposal is, fundamentally, a piece of persuasive writing—i.e., the proposer is trying to persuade an audience (consisting at least 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.

It is probably often the case that the proposer has indeed covered all these angles in his or her own mind, yet the written proposal submitted can still be vague and largely descriptive, leaving the committee to infer suppositions and lines of thinking that ought to be presented explicitly and justified persuasively.

There are ways to make the process easier and, as with other parts of the program, students should begin by discussing thesis ideas with the proposed thesis advisor 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 then need to approved by the advisor submitted, along with the M.A. Paper/Thesis Proposal Cover Sheet (available from the Secretary to the Graduate Director and in the Appendix), to the Graduate Committee for review and approval.

The M.A. Paper or Thesis proposals should include 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.

Note: 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 the 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, under which instructor? What was its research question? How does it reference ongoing conversations in the 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 would plan also to present your research at a conference, describe which one, and why that one?

7. Qualifications. Describe your academic background and your specific academic qualifications for writing this paper, including for instance relevant coursework, teaching, and language study.

8. Timeline. This section outlines the timeline for completing this paper. The timeline should be realistic.


10. Appendix: 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 signature of proposed thesis adviser). A copy of this form is available in the back of this Handbook or the 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 proposal? What particular research/pedagogical/creative experiment do you wish to pursue?

   Define a specific problem, issue, or goal to be addressed. Remember that most proposals are persuasive writing, in which it is necessary to advance a specific thesis—i.e., an arguable assertion 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. Special sensitivity is required when discussion calls for bibliographical survey, the purpose of which should never be simply to “name drop” (usually meaningless to your audience) but to explain how this 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 is too often left guessing about what the informing principles of such lists are. Some narrative justification is essential.)

5. Methods & Procedures. What understandings of method inform your planning and execution of 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, but it is a serious mistake to assume—as sometimes happens, especially in non-pedagogy papers and creative projects—that the 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. Again, be mindful that mere bibliography is no substitute for a thoughtful reflection on scholarly or creative method.

6. Chapter Outline. This section provides a brief rationale for the parameters and organization of the project and provides a brief summary of each chapter. The “parameters” of the project are the chronological, biographical, national, or historical limitations you put on the project, for
instance the decision to focus on an author’s early works (but not later ones), the decision to discuss tragedy (but not comedy), the decision to discuss a particular writer (but not a similar writer of the same period). The chapter outline should include a tentative title and summary of the subject and thesis of each chapter.

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), proceed to convince your audience that the project would be worth doing even if it were not a degree requirement. Do not assume that the audience has an intimate familiarity with all the issues and stakes of your project: if a great deal of background is needed, this part of the proposal might well be incorporated into, or even follow, #4, above.

8. Qualifications. This section outlines the student’s academic background and his/her specific academic qualifications for writing this thesis, for instance relevant coursework, teaching, and language study.

9. Timeline. This section outlines the timeline for completing the thesis. The timeline should be realistic.

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

11. 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 Graduate Secretary in English.

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 Graduate Secretary in English. 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 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 Director of Graduate Studies and Administrative Assistant can suggest vendors.

In order to graduate, students must provide the graduate director with proof that they have ordered and paid for at least two copies of their 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 Secretary to the Graduate Director 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.


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, and giving students time to publish their work. The Graduate Secretary in English will have the forms.

If you are unsure whether you should embargo your thesis/dissertation, please speak with your advisor and/or the Graduate Director. 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. Students apply each year for a teaching assistantship for the subsequent academic
year. 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 members 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.

2. The TA is assigned a Mentor, a Graduate Faculty member who is teaching English 1101. In conjunction with this assignment, the TA also enrolls in English 6631L, a one-credit lab section, with their composition mentor.

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 (one copy is sufficient) on the TA’s performance during the semester. The report is due no later than the last day of finals week. 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.

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: Practicum 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 (one copy is sufficient) 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. 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 such proposal will be approved after the fact.

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

2. The Mentor for the TA is a member of the Graduate Faculty.

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 (one copy is sufficient) using a standardized evaluation form. 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.
**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.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year 1</th>
<th>Fall Semester</th>
<th>Spring Semester</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>9 graduate credits:</td>
<td>9 graduate credits:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- ENGL 6612 (3 credits)</td>
<td>- ENGL 7731 (3 credits)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- ENGL 6631 (3 credits)</td>
<td>- Pre / Post 1800 Seminar (3 credits)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Pre / Post 1800 Seminar (3 credits)</td>
<td>- Language studies course (3 credits)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Optional</td>
<td>Optional</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Beginning foreign language course (e.g. SPAN 1101) (4 credits)</td>
<td>- Beginning foreign language course (e.g. SPAN 1102) (4 credits)</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year 2</th>
<th>Fall Semester</th>
<th>Spring Semester</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>9 graduate credits:</td>
<td>9 graduate credits:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- ENGL Seminar or Elective (3 credits)</td>
<td>- ENGL Seminar or Elective (3 credits)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- ENGL Seminar or Elective (3 credits)</td>
<td>- One of the following: MA Thesis (up to 6 credits) or MA paper (3 credits) or Set Text Exam (3 credits)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- ENGL Seminar or Elective (3 credits)</td>
<td>Optional</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Optional</td>
<td>- ENGL Seminar or Elective (3 credits)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Intermediate foreign language course (e.g. SPAN 2201) (4 credits)</td>
<td>- Intermediate foreign language course (e.g. SPAN 2202) (4 credits)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Other</td>
<td>Other</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Submit thesis / paper proposal to graduate committee for approval</td>
<td>- Defend thesis / paper or take set text exam</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix 1

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 2

GRADUATE TEACHING ASSISTANTSHIP/FELLOWSHIP APPLICATION FORM
For renewal and first-time applications by currently enrolled graduate students

Directions: Please submit the following application form along with a letter of support from a faculty member, a statement about your progress toward the degree and contribution to/participation in the department, and a copy of your unofficial transcripts to the Director of Graduate Studies.

Due: February 15.

I am requesting consideration for:

☐ M.A. Teaching Assistantship  ☐ PhD Fellowship/TAship*

I am in my:  ☐ 1st Semester  ☐ 2nd Semester
☐ 3rd Semester  ☐ Other __________

Name: ________________________________________________________________

Last                                                First                                         Middle

Date: ____________________________________ Social Security Number: __________________________

Present Address: _______________________________________________________________________

Present Phone Number: _________________________________________________________________

Permanent Address: ___________________________________________________________________

Permanent Phone Number: _____________________________________________________________

List all previous T.A./Fellowship Funding from ISU (indicate the type of funding and the semesters).

_____________________________________________________________________________________

_____________________________________________________________________________________

List honors, fellowships, scholarships, and/or outstanding achievements that you want the committee to be aware of (for renewal applicants, list only those since your last application for funding).

_____________________________________________________________________________________

_____________________________________________________________________________________

_____________________________________________________________________________________
Name of the ISU faculty member who will be providing a reference letter on your behalf.

List the university, department and community committees or activities that you have participated in during the past academic year.

I certify that the information contained herein is accurate to the best of my belief and understanding.

Signature    Date

PLEASE NOTE: Any application submitted on-line or via facsimile must be followed up with a mailed hard copy reflecting the original signature of the applicant.

Please also note **Ph.D. Fellowships are considered scholarship and will therefore affect your total eligibility for financial aid.

Equal Opportunity/Affirmative Action Employer
Appendix 3

Some Graduate School and Academic Career Guides

Below is a brief bibliography of guides to graduate school, thesis/dissertation writing, and academic careers. These are by no means the only books available or even the most recent ones, but these may provide some helpful perspective and advice on getting through graduate school and searching for a job. The books marked with * are held by ISU Library.

1. Graduate School Survival Guides


2. Dissertation and Thesis Writing Guides and Resources

Ogden, Evelyn Ogden. Complete Your Dissertation or Thesis in Two Semesters or Less, 3rd Ed. 2007.

3. Academic Career Search Guides

Jackson, Acy L. How to Prepare Your Curriculum Vitae. 2nd Ed.,1997.*
Thompson, Mary Anne. The Global Resume and CV Guide, 2000.*
Vesilind, P. Aarne. So You Want to Be a Professor?: A Handbook for Graduate Students, 2000.*

4. Academic Career Guides