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## Welcome/How to Use this Handbook

This Graduate Student Handbook contains university regulations, department policies and practices, and informal advice to graduate students at all levels of degree work in the English Department. We suggest that you keep it for reference throughout your years at the University of Massachusetts; an up-to-date version is always available on the department website. The guide provides answers to the most common questions, issues, and problems faced by graduate students in our program. However, it cannot address individual and unique problems that may arise. In such cases, please feel free to contact the Graduate Office, arrange to meet with the Graduate Program Director (GPD), and/or discuss the issue with your faculty mentor or advisor. We also strongly encourage you to see your peers and colleagues in the graduate program as another source of mentoring, and to form connections within that community; the English Graduate Organization (EGO) is an excellent place to begin. (On matters of policy, however, it's always best to consult with the Graduate Office staff, to ensure that you are working with the most current information that reflects department and university guidelines.)

On the advice of the 2016 Graduate Handbook Committee, this handbook has been somewhat re-organized around the major concentrations and programs that make up the English graduate program. After some brief introductory materials, the major sections are:

- the requirements for the MA-only degrees in all concentrations;
- the requirements and calendars for the MA/PhD and PhD degrees with concentrations in Literature or in Composition and Rhetoric;
- the requirements and calendars for the MA/PhD and PhD degrees with a concentration in American Studies.

Following these are sections on topics of broader pertinence to most or all graduate students in the program, and a page of resources and links that we hope will be helpful in navigating the university and your many roles as part of this community.

Every student should meet with the GPD during their first semester on campus, and again in subsequent semesters to discuss and plan for upcoming program milestones. As you move toward the job-search stage of your graduate career, you should also be in contact with the Associate Director, who serves as job officer for the program. The Graduate Office staff are committed to supporting your success; we hope that you'll see us as a resource, and also take advantage of the many mentoring, peer-mentoring and professionalization opportunities available to you.

Daniel Sack, Graduate Program Director  
Mazen Naous, Associate Director  
Wanda Bak, Graduate Administrator

Note: The Spring 2016 revisions to this handbook were done by outgoing GPD, Rachel Mordecai, with recommendations from the 2016 EGO Graduate Handbook Committee: Lauren Silber, Jenny Krichevsky, and Thomas John Pickering, with the help of Faune Albert, Emily Campbell, Anshula Kumar, Anna Piecuch, Neelofer Qadir, and Anna-Claire Simpson. Asha Nadkarni made minor revisions in summer 2017 and 2018. Daniel Sack made minor revisions in 2019 and 2020.

## **Title IX**

Title IX is a U.S. law that prohibits discrimination in education on the basis of gender. A particular focus of Title IX is the prevention of sexual misconduct on college campuses. "Sexual misconduct" includes sexual assault, sexual harassment, domestic or dating violence, and stalking.

To create a caring and compassionate University culture, it is important for all of us to understand the resources that are available and our Title IX reporting responsibilities. Sexual misconduct harms its victims and the entire campus community; it is in the interest of all of us to prevent such offenses.

As a student, you or a peer may be a potential target of Title IX-related violations. If you are also a graduate student employee, you have Title IX reporting obligations as well. Under federal law, graduate student employees who are made aware of a possible incident of sexual harassment, sexual assault, or any other kind of sexual misconduct are required to report it.

If you or someone you know needs to report a possible Title IX offense, please follow these procedures:

- If the accused is a student, the report should be made to Patricia Cardoso, Deputy Title IX Coordinator, Dean of Students Office (DOSO): 227 Whitmore Administration Building, telephone (413)545-2684 or email at [pcardoso@stuaf.umass.edu](mailto:pcardoso@stuaf.umass.edu).
- If the accused is an employee, the report should be made to Kelly Burgess, Deputy Title IX Coordinator, Office of Equal Opportunity and Diversity (EOD): 243 Lederle GRC Lowrise, telephone (413) 545-3464 or email at [kellyb@admin.umass.edu](mailto:kellyb@admin.umass.edu).

Graduate student employees are not confidential reporters and cannot guarantee confidentiality to anyone reporting a Title IX issue. If a student or employee asks to discuss such a matter in confidence, graduate student employees must state that they may not be able to maintain confidentiality. If you are approached regarding a possible Title IX violation, you might respond in this manner: “While I’m not a confidential source, I respect your privacy rights and will work with the campus Title IX coordinator and other resource areas to provide support.”

If the individual reporting the incident to you chooses not to continue the conversation, you should encourage them to contact the Dean of Students Office, the Office of Equal Opportunity and Diversity, the UMass Police Department (UMPD), the Center for Women and Community (CWC), or the Center for Counseling and Psychological Health (CCPH). UMPD, CWC, and CCPH are permitted to maintain confidentiality.

Failing to report a possible Title IX offense deprives the campus community of valuable information and will not help victims/survivors to get the resources they need.

You can find extensive additional information about Title IX and the University’s resources and policies by navigating to the UMass Title IX webpage, <http://www.umass.edu/titleix>.

## MA-only Degree Requirements

Ten graduate courses (30 credits); *or* 8 courses (24 credits) plus an MA thesis (6 credits).<sup>1</sup> A minimum of one-half of the total required credits must be on a letter-graded basis. Like other graduate students in the program, MA-only students generally take two (and sometimes three) courses per semester, although there may be some flexibility about this (for students not subject to visa restrictions). Typically, the MA degree takes between four and five semesters; the university's statute of limitations for MA degrees is four years from the date of admission (see "Statute of Limitations" for more details), but the English department has a three-year statute of limitation that takes precedence.

Students may transfer credit for two graduate-level English courses taken at other institutions (if not counted toward a completed degree) *or* they may receive credit for two graduate English courses taken at UMass before their formal admission to our graduate English program. Credits transferred from another institution cannot be used to satisfy the University's requirement for graded credits nor the 600-800 course level requirement. Once enrolled in the program, students may take two graduate courses in departments other than English, and count these toward the MA.

Students intending to write an MA thesis should identify a faculty member willing to advise that thesis, and should meet with the GPD ahead of time. The thesis is commonly a two-semester project, although it may be possible to complete in one semester if one has no other significant academic obligations.

**MA-only in Literature:** no specified distribution requirements. However, students taking this degree with an eye toward later doctoral studies in English literature would be well advised to choose courses (in consultation with the GPD or a faculty advisor) that are likely to fulfill theory and period requirements.

**MA-only with a concentration in Composition and Rhetoric:** There is no specific concentration in Composition and Rhetoric at the MA-only level. However, students taking this degree with an eye to later doctoral studies in Composition and Rhetoric would be well advised to discuss their course selections with a faculty advisor in that field.

For more details on Composition and Rhetoric offerings, see the department website:  
<http://www.umass.edu/english/comprhetrequirements>

**MA-only with a concentration in American Studies:**

2 American Studies seminars: "Major Texts for the Study of American Culture" (791A), and "Methods for the Study of American Culture" (791B).

2 courses in American literature

1 course in American history

1 course in comparative cultures or cultural theory (from any UMass department)

4 courses selected in consultation with an American Studies advisor

Note: To ensure coherence in individualized programs, each student must work with an American Studies advisor in selecting courses. For more details, see the department website:  
<http://www.umass.edu/english/asrequirements#mastersdegree>

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<sup>1</sup> See Appendix B, "Master's Thesis checklist," for more detail on writing an MA thesis.

## Literature / Composition and Rhetoric – Pre-Doctoral MA Requirements

### 1. Ten courses in five semesters:

*For students studying Literature:*

- 1 theory course (usually Theorizing the Discipline), taken during the first year
- 2 courses in English or American literature pre-1800
- 2 courses in English or American literature pre-1900
- 5 elective courses

*For students studying Composition and Rhetoric:*

- 1 theory course (usually, but not necessarily, Theorizing the Discipline), taken during the first year
- 3 courses in literature, exclusive of the theory course above.
- 6 elective courses (may include core courses in the Composition and Rhetoric PhD program)

Note: Students may transfer credit for two graduate-level English courses taken at other schools (if not counted toward a completed degree) *or* they may receive credit for two graduate English courses taken at UMass before their formal admission to the Graduate English program. Once enrolled in the program, they may take two graduate courses in departments other than English.

- 2. Demonstrating intermediate proficiency in one language other than English. (See “The Second-Language Requirement” for details.)
- 3. The Advisory Session (See the next section for details.)

## **The Advisory Session**

*(applies to pre-doctoral MA students in Literature / Composition and Rhetoric)*

The Advisory Session is a two-hour, academic conversation with three faculty members held by the end of a MA/PhD student's fifth semester. The session provides the student with focused guidance from the faculty before advancing to doctoral course work. Students scheduling their Advisory Session must have at least a 3.5 GPA in the program and have no incompletes.

Please bear in mind that the Advisory Session is *not* an examination. The department has designed it to be a springboard that helps you advance more quickly and effectively through the program. We encourage you to bring any and all questions you might have to the session and to regard it as an opportunity, not an ordeal.

### **Scheduling the Advisory Session**

MA/PhD students should schedule a meeting with the GPD in their fourth semester to discuss the session. In that meeting, the GPD will consult the student about a possible chair for the committee; the GPD generally selects the other two committee members, in order to distribute this service work equitably among the faculty. As the fifth semester approaches, Wanda Bak will help organize a time when all the faculty participants can attend, checking first with you for possible dates. As soon as the date for the session has been fixed, and *no later than three weeks* before it is held, you should give copies of your materials (see below) to the three faculty members on the committee. The Graduate Office needs only a copy of your five-page reflective essay.

### **Advisory-Session Materials**

The conversation that constitutes your session will be structured by three documents: two papers that you have written for courses taken in the program, and a reflective essay (five pages in length) that you write specifically for this occasion (see the next paragraph for more detail). You may choose *any* two course papers, and different students make different choices. For example, you may choose an early paper and a recent one; or you may choose two papers on one topic, or in one field, or in one genre; or you may choose two papers that represent seemingly unconnected research interests in hopes that the session will help you decide which to commit to. If you would like help in choosing these papers, the GPD will be happy to provide advice, as will your Advisory Session chair. The two course papers are *not* intended to serve as a "stand-in" for an MA thesis, and do not need to be extensively revised or expanded prior to the exam.

The five-page reflective essay discusses your graduate career to date, and outlines some possible directions for future study. Consult with your Advisory Session chair as you complete this essay, and before submitting it. It should probably include those issues, texts, theories, ideas and experiences that have been most formative for you here at UMass, and it should evaluate your own sense of where you are in your graduate study and what you feel you have left to do and learn. More than anything else, this document should be specific about what intrigues you as a scholar. It should reflect careful self-analysis of your strengths and those areas where strength can be built. It should project some hopes and aspirations for your course of doctoral study. It is an occasion for you to undertake some self-reflection about what you have accomplished, and what you hope to accomplish, in your graduate career. Be sure to turn in a copy of your reflective essay for your file in the Graduate Office.

### **What to Expect at the Advisory Session, and Afterwards**

At the beginning of the Advisory Session, the student is invited to speak briefly (5-10 minutes maximum), perhaps highlighting what they feel is most important in the five-page reflective essay, or narrating an intellectual trajectory thus far, or adding any further thoughts since the paper was first turned in. Hereafter, discussion develops organically, yet it will include two main elements: discussion of the student's skills (especially as indicated by the seminar papers), and exploration of the student's intellectual interests, with an eye to the Two-Area exam and dissertation. Often the session begins with a review of the student's strengths, weaknesses, and progress as exemplified in the seminar papers. Committee members may point to specific passages or elements in the papers in order to commend or to raise questions about such matters as close reading of textual evidence, use of historical evidence, skills in argumentation, and handling of criticism and theory.

The other main focus of the session is an exploratory dialogue about the student's intellectual interests and possible areas of concentration. This discussion typically builds on the submitted materials, yet it may also develop from ideas that have emerged in the session. By the end of the session, the student and committee will together consider some preliminary possibilities for areas and the dissertation. Within that framework, the committee will offer advice about remaining coursework and suggestions for independent reading that the student should pursue.

Toward the end of the two-hour period, the student is asked to leave the room briefly while faculty members discuss the session and prepare to summarize their advice; the student then returns for a final conversation. At that time the committee may make recommendations regarding possible additional coursework, potential faculty advisors, helpful professional organizations and outlets for completed work, suggestions for area-exam studies, and even potential dissertation topics. In most cases, recommendations will be guided by the specific questions the student has raised during the session.

The chair of the committee will write up a brief evaluation of the session with input from faculty members, within seven days of the session, and submit it to the Graduate Office. The student will receive (from the Graduate Office) a copy of the submitted report.

Note: To date, American Studies students do not participate in an Advisory Session, but must take a Qualifying Exam, which serves much the same purpose.

## Literature / Composition & Rhetoric – PhD Requirements

### 1. Six courses (18 credits)

- a) 1 course with a theory component. To fulfill this requirement, most students take 791 “Theorizing the Discipline.” Consult with GPD to determine which other course(s) might count as fulfilling this requirement.
- b) 5 elective courses.

#### Notes:

- A student entering our program with the MA from another program may be required to take one or two courses pre-1800 or pre-1900 if their MA is seen to be deficient in breadth of preparation.
- Students entering with an MFA are expected to complete an MA in English before advancing to the PhD.
- For literature students, graduate courses (up to two) from other departments at UMass fulfill elective credit with approval of the Graduate Program Director.
- Creative Writing workshops cannot be applied towards the degree.

### 2. Two-Area (Doctoral) Exam (6 credits). Note: This exam is called the “Preliminary Comprehensive Exam” in Graduate School Regulations.

### 3. Dissertation Prospectus. (Must be submitted to qualify for dissertation fellowships.)

### 4. Dissertation (18 credits).

### 5. Dissertation Defense.

### 6. If the MA has been received elsewhere: demonstrating intermediate proficiency in one language other than English. (See “Second-Language Requirement” for details.)

### 7. Residency requirement: As per the Graduate School, “A doctoral candidate must spend the equivalent of at least one continuous academic year of full-time graduate work (nine credits per semester) in residence at the University. The residency year must be either in a Fall/ Spring or Spring/Fall sequence. During this year, the student must spend some part of each week physically on campus.” Summer sessions do not count as part of the two-semester sequence. Typically, dissertation credits make up the additional six hours in Year One to fulfill this requirement. (See Wanda Bak with questions.)

### 8. Upon completion of MA and PhD degrees, students must complete the Degree Application/Eligibility Form and have it signed by the GPD and Department Chair and submitted to the Graduate School's Office of Degree Requirements. The Graduate Secretary has these forms. (Note: the instructions for the form come at the end of the form and are quite specific. Read them before filling out the form.)

## Literature / Composition & Rhetoric – MA/PhD calendar<sup>2</sup>

Note: The deadlines described here apply to students who will complete their coursework at or after the end of the **spring 2017** semester.

### **First year:**

Meet with GPD and faculty mentor

File plan with Graduate Office for fulfilling language requirement (see “Second-Language Requirement” for details)

Coursework (2 courses per semester)

### **Second year:**

Spring: Discuss Advisory Session with GPD

Coursework (2 courses per semester)

### **Third year:**

End of Fall semester: DEADLINE for completing Advisory Session

Spring: Meet with GPD and faculty advisors about Two-Area exam

Begin compiling Area lists in consultation with advisors

Complete language requirement

Coursework (2 courses per semester)

### **Fourth year:**

Fall: Attend Graduate Office information session on Two-Area exam

Spring: Begin writing Area rationales

Coursework (2 courses per semester)

*Optional:* Writing workshop (counts as a required course)

### **Fifth year:**

Schedule and complete Two-Area exam

End of Fall semester: DEADLINE for submitting final drafts of Area rationales

End of Spring Break: DEADLINE for submitting Dissertation Prospectus

Work on dissertation

### **Sixth year:**

Meet with advisor and Associate GPD about job search

Work on dissertation

Begin job search process

### **Seventh year (final year of funding):**

Finish dissertation

Job search

File degree paperwork with Graduate Office

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<sup>2</sup> Revised spring 2016. The deadlines described here apply to students who will complete their coursework at or after the end of the **spring 2017** semester. Students completing coursework before this semester should refer to the previous version of the calendar, available on request from the Graduate Office. Please see the “Two-Area Exam” section of the Handbook for more details.

**Note:** All MA/PhD students are required to take a minimum of 16 classes (ten for the MA plus six for the PhD), six area credits, and 18 dissertation credits. Dissertation credits and area credits must be signed up for with Graduate Administrator, Wanda Bak, in the Graduate Office. Students are not, of course, prevented from taking more than the required number of classes, and may want to use a class to help them work on an area-exam rationale.

## Literature / Composition & Rhetoric – PhD calendar

Note: The deadlines described here apply to students who will complete their coursework at or after the end of the **spring 2017** semester.

### First year:

Meet with GPD and faculty mentor

Complete language requirement (see “Second-Language Requirement” for details)

Coursework (2 courses per semester)

### Second year:

Fall: Attend Graduate Office information session on Two-Area exam

Fall: Meet with GPD and faculty advisors about Two-Area exam

Fall: Coursework (2 courses)

Begin compiling Area lists in consultation with advisors

*Optional:* Writing workshop (*cannot* count as a required course)

### Third year:

Schedule and complete Two-Area exam

Fall: DEADLINE for submitting final drafts of Area rationales: November 1st

Spring: DEADLINE for submitting Dissertation Prospectus: February 15th

Work on dissertation

### Fourth year:

Meet with advisor and Associate GPD about job search

Work on dissertation

Begin job search process

### Fifth year (final year of funding):

Finish dissertation

Job search

File degree paperwork with Graduate Office

**Note:** All PhD students are required to take a minimum of six classes, six area credits, and 18 dissertation credits. Dissertation credits make up the additional six hours in year one to fulfill the Graduate School residency requirement. Dissertation credits and area credits must be signed up for with Graduate Administrator, Wanda Bak, in the Grad Office. Students are not, of course, prevented from taking more than the required number of classes, and may want to use a class to help them work on an area-exam rationale.

## American Studies Concentration – Pre-doctoral MA Requirements

**Coursework:** The following list has been devised to give the student some background in American literature and history at the same time to allow maximum flexibility in designing an individual program of interdisciplinary study. To insure coherence in individualized programs, each student must work with an American Studies advisor in selecting courses.

*American Studies seminars:*

- “Major Texts for the Study of American Culture” (791A) – This course surveys major current texts in the field as well as some classic texts.
- “Methods for the Study of American Culture” (791B) – This course is designed to survey the major methods, topics, and debates in the field.

Note: Students admitted with an MA in a field other than American Studies must take these introductory American Studies seminars, but may count them toward their PhD coursework requirements.

*2 courses in American literature*

*1 course in American history*

*1 course in comparative cultures or cultural theory (from any university department)*

*4 courses selected in consultation with an American Studies advisor*

### The Qualifying Exam

All students going on for the PhD—including students admitted into the graduate PhD program with an MA in a field other than American Studies— must take a two-hour oral qualifying exam. In consultation with an American Studies advisor, each student develops a list of 12-15 key works for the study of American culture; the student will be examined upon that list. In developing this list, the student will need to answer the following: 1) Explain the theme, concept, or idea that informs your choice of materials for this exam. 2) Which disciplinary perspectives (at least two) and/or theoretical positions are involved in this choice of materials? 3) What 12-15 authors, works, studies, or artifacts are involved in this exam? After the advisor approves the list, and at least two weeks prior to the exam, the list must be submitted to the Director of American Studies. The student will also prepare a written opening statement of no more than three pages to be presented to the examining committee two weeks prior to the exam. The examining committee will consist of three members, one the student’s advisor, and two others—who may be from other departments where relevant to the student’s interests— chosen in consultation with the student’s advisor and the director of American Studies. It is expected that the qualifying exam will be taken no later than the fourth semester in residence (or the second semester in residence for students admitted with an MA in a field other than American Studies). Passing this exam qualifies a student for work as a PhD candidate in American Studies.

## American Studies Concentration – PhD Requirements

**Coursework** should provide the student with some depth in two fields of study and prepare the student for the dissertation.

*3 courses in each of 2 fields of study*, one of which will be American literature, and the other chosen in consultation with an American Studies advisor.

Note: Students entering with an MA degree in a field other than American Studies must take “Major Texts for the Study of American Culture” (791A) and “Methods for the Study of American Culture” (791B), but may count them among these six required courses.

### The Comprehensive (Two-Area) Exam

PhD candidates in American Studies will take their comprehensive/two-area examinations upon completion of at least six courses beyond the qualifying examination. Students will be examined in two areas: 1) an area primarily within American literature (e.g., American women writers, African-American novels, American literary realism); 2) an area of special interest designed to lead to a dissertation topic (i.e., documentary writing and photography in the 1930s, or representations of space in literature, architecture, and environmental psychology, 1890-1930). One or both of the areas should deal, at least in part, with an aspect of American literary studies. In both areas, students are expected to demonstrate breadth of familiarity with texts and ideas, authority and imagination in interdisciplinary thinking, and progress toward completion of the PhD degree.

For each area, students, working with an advisor, will generate a list of approximately 30 texts—primary and secondary—and will write an essay, approximately 15-20 pages long, that defines the field of interest, considers the pertinent methodologies, identifies the important issues, and takes stands on those issues. At least three weeks prior to the exam, the essays and bibliographies will be distributed to all members of the examining committee and will be subject to approval by the committee members. The essays and the bibliographies will constitute the basis of the examination. The essay and the bibliography for the areas should demonstrate interdisciplinarity by including in its approach methodologies and texts from one or more disciplines other than literary studies (e. g., history, media studies, political theory, sociology, anthropology, etc.).

The examining committee will consist of the two advisors plus two other faculty members chosen by agreement of the area advisors and the Director of American Studies.

Note: Please also see the “Two-Area (Doctoral) Exam” section of this handbook, for information about registering for exam credits, scheduling the exam, and procedures during and following the exam; this is the same as for students in other concentrations.

## American Studies Concentration – MA/PhD Calendar

### First Year:

Meet with GPD, the Director of American Studies, and faculty mentor  
File plan with Graduate Office for fulfilling language requirement (see “Second-Language Requirement” for details)  
Coursework (2 courses per semester)

### Second year:

Fall: Discuss Qualifying Exam with Director of American Studies  
Fall: Coursework (2 courses)  
Spring: DEADLINE for completion of Qualifying Exam  
Spring: Coursework (2 per semester)

### Third year:

Meet with Director of American Studies and faculty advisors about Two-Area Exam  
Complete language requirement  
Coursework (2 per semester)

### Fourth year:

Fall: Attend Graduate Office information session on Two-Area Exam  
Fall: Meet with Director of American Studies and faculty advisors about Two-Area Exam  
Begin compiling Area lists in consultation with advisors  
Coursework (2 per semester)  
*Optional*: Writing workshop (counts as a required course)

### Fifth year:

Schedule and complete Comprehensive/Two-Area Exam  
End of Fall semester: DEADLINE for submitting final drafts of Area rationales  
End of Spring Break: DEADLINE for submitting Dissertation Prospectus  
Work on dissertation

### Sixth year:

Meet with advisor and Associate GPD about job search  
Work on dissertation  
Begin job search process

### Seventh year:

Finish dissertation  
Job search  
File degree paperwork with Graduate Program Office

## American Studies Concentration – PhD Calendar

### First year:

Meet with GPD, the Director of American Studies, and faculty mentor  
Complete language requirement (see “Second-Language Requirement” for details)  
Coursework (2 courses per semester)  
DEADLINE for scheduling and completing Qualifying Exam

### Second year:

Fall: Attend Graduate Office information session on Two-Area/Comprehensive Exam  
Fall: Meet with Director of American Studies and faculty advisors about Two-Area Exam  
Fall: Coursework (2 courses)  
*Optional*: Writing workshop (*cannot* count as a required course)

### Third year:

Schedule and complete Comprehensive/Two-Area Exam  
Fall: DEADLINE for submitting final drafts of Comprehensive/Area rationales: November 1st  
Spring: DEADLINE for submitting Dissertation Prospectus: February 15th  
Work on dissertation

### Fourth year:

Meet with advisor and Associate GPD about job search  
Work on dissertation  
Begin job search process

### Fifth year:

Finish dissertation  
File degree paperwork with Graduate Program Office  
Job search

## Second-Language Requirement

*(applies to MA/PhD and PhD students in all concentrations, but not to MA-only students)*

MA/PhD and PhD students in Literature, Composition & Rhetoric, and American Studies must demonstrate intermediate proficiency in one language other than English. This requirement should be completed by the **end of the third year** for **MA/PhD** students, and **during the first year** for **PhD** students; delaying this requirement until one's final year(s) in the program results in unnecessary stress and can cause delays in filing important paperwork.

Intermediate proficiency should enable a student to read a language with the aid of a dictionary. Plans to complete the language requirement should be approved in advance by the Graduate Program Director. Students who provide appropriate documentation may fulfill the program's language requirement in the following ways:

- 1) Being a native speaker of a language other than English.
- 2) Having a double major or minor in a second language from one's undergraduate institution, or having recently (within the prior eight years) completed three full semesters of second language courses.
- 3) Successfully participating in a pre-approved study-abroad year or semester, if the courses were taught in the second language.
- 4) Successfully completing a pre-approved, accelerated, intensive summer-language program (either on site or online).
- 5) Passing a graduate-level second-language course, with the course professor attesting in writing that the student has demonstrated intermediate proficiency, within the eight years prior to filing the paperwork with the Graduate Office.
- 6) Satisfying a graduate-level second-language requirement at another institution, within the eight years prior to filing the paperwork with the Graduate Office.
- 7) Completing a longer independent study or course project to produce a polished translation of a previously un-translated text. Such projects must be approved by the GPD.
- 8) Passing a standardized language placement examination, administered on or off campus under the auspices of a foreign-language department.
- 9) Taking the department language exam.

### The Department Language Exam

The language exam lasts between sixty and ninety minutes. Students will be given a selection of three literary or critical texts selected by the English Graduate Office, from which the student chooses **two** to translate with the aid of a dictionary. The exam will be graded by a faculty member with the relevant language competency. Anyone who fails the exam may retake it a later date.

Note: the department does not have funding for students who wish to participate in summer courses or programs to fulfill their language requirement.

### **A Note on Graduate-Course Evaluations**

Please note that in order for graduate-course evaluations to be considered, included in the set, and added to the instructor's permanent file, they must be submitted via the established process: that is, they must be completed anonymously in class, on the standard form provided, collected and submitted together to the Graduate Office. Evaluations may not be submitted by other means, or added subsequently. This stipulation brings the grad-course evaluation process in line with that used for undergraduate courses (where evaluations are submitted via a standardized process), and protects the integrity of the information, for everyone's benefit.

### **Independent Studies**

*(applies to students in all concentrations, at all levels)*

Independent studies should primarily be used to facilitate exploration of a specific field, or intersection of fields, not covered in the department's graduate course offerings. Independent studies that largely replicate existing courses will not be approved, unless a compelling argument can be made for the necessity of the independent-study format. Any students wishing to take an independent study must fill out and return an independent-study form to the Graduate Office for approval **before they will be allowed to register for the course**. In the normal course of things, no more than **two** independent studies can be counted towards coursework; any number above two must receive special permission from the Graduate Program Director.

(See Appendix A for a copy of the Independent Study form.)

## The Two-Area (Doctoral) Exam

*(general info applies to all MA/PhD and PhD students, in all concentrations; American Studies students should also consult “The Comprehensive (Area) Exam” section, above, for information specific to that concentration)*

### Deadlines for submitting final drafts of area rationales:

MA/PhD students: fifth year, end of fall semester

PhD students: third year, fall semester, November 1<sup>st</sup>

Note: These deadlines apply to students who will complete coursework at or after the end of the Spring 2017 semester. For more details of the Spring 2016 changes to the Two-Area exam structure, guidelines and expectations, see Appendix C.

Note: It is expected that the oral examination will follow shortly after submission of final drafts.

### **Summary**

The two-hour oral examination for the PhD – called the Two-Area exam – is required of students in all concentrations. The exam is based on two reading lists (a minimum of 30 works each) developed by the student in collaboration with the examining committee. The committee consists of four faculty members: the student’s chosen advisor for a First Area (this faculty member will also serve as chair of the exam), the student’s chosen advisor for a Second Area, and two others chosen by the student in consultation with the advisors and the Graduate Program Director. Each reading list will culminate in a written rationale (of 5000-6000 words, or 15-20 pages) which the student will present in hard copies to members of the committee no later than **two weeks** before the scheduled examination.

### **Timeline and related issues**

Please see the relevant calendar, included in this handbook, for the preparatory steps leading up to the Two-Area exam. In general, **at least** one year prior to the deadline for completing the exam, students should meet with the GPD, select faculty advisors, begin compiling area lists, and attend the Graduate Office information session.

Schedule: We strongly recommend that, in order to successfully comply with the new, standardized deadlines, students have an **early** and explicit conversation with their two area advisors about dates for submission of drafts (by students) and return of feedback (by faculty). Ideally, this conversation will result in a mutually agreed-upon schedule, to which both students and faculty will be accountable.

Failure to meet deadlines: For students to whom the deadlines described above apply, failure to meet them will adversely affect eligibility for funding in the following academic year. Exemptions to the penalty will be made at the discretion of the Graduate Program Director.

Faculty expectations: Central to the faculty’s conversation about these changed timelines for completion of the Two-Area exam was the explicit acknowledgement that faculty must adjust their expectations for the rationales, to account for the more constrained time frame.

Graduate Writing Workshop: The department annually offers a graduate writing workshop for credit (preferably distinct from the dissertation workshop), in which students might (among other projects) work on their area-exam rationales. This course will be open to all MA/PhD and PhD students. In order to assist MA/PhD students to complete their required

coursework and comply with the deadline for the Two-Area exam, MA/PhD students (only) are allowed to count the graduate writing workshop against their total number of required courses.

Note: Students should not wait until they have completed coursework to begin thinking about their area topics and lists. In their last semesters of coursework, students should consult with faculty for advice on what texts might belong on a reading list in their given areas of research interest (while being aware that the lists may change through the process of reading and preparing for the exam). More generally, throughout their graduate careers, students should read as widely as possible in their likely areas of specialization; it should become a habit to read authors and pursue research interests beyond assigned coursework reading.

### **Registering for exam credits**

The student receives three credits for each of the two areas (796W, 796X: Independent Area), making a total of six credits toward the necessary twenty-four (eight courses) for doctoral course work. The best time to register for these credits is the semester of the exam. However, scheduling of two-area credits is flexible: should you need or want a particular course during the semester you would otherwise be preparing your exam areas, consider signing up and beginning your areas a semester earlier. Registration forms for the areas are available from Wanda Bak, and must be turned in to Wanda during registration (upon which she will enroll the student).

### **Purpose and scope**

The main aim of the Two-Area exam is to assess the student's readiness for dissertation work. To this end, the area rationales will be based on wide reading in fields that will support future work. They are meant to demonstrate knowledge and they therefore typically include reviews of key critical and primary texts; they are also meant to demonstrate critical and synthetic thinking, so the reviews typically take the form of a mapping of the field within coordinates defined by the student. Even as an area rationale presents and frames a field, it can be written so as to raise questions or possibilities for intervening in a field (more than strictly developing an argument, as a seminar paper or prospectus might).

The scope and substance of the two areas will vary, but in general, preparing for the exam should also be regarded as a stepping-stone towards the dissertation. The description of the areas, and the relationship between them, should be developed in consultation with faculty advisors, including the two area advisors and the GPD. Students are encouraged to pursue their strongest interests where feasible, yet also to be guided by advisors about what is likely to be practical and successful. Students are also encouraged to ask Wanda Bak for access to sample area rationales and bibliographies from past exams, to help in formulating their own areas. (Sample area-exam materials may be viewed in, but not removed from, the Graduate Office.)

The two areas should cover substantially different materials, and should avoid being either too narrow or too broad. The "novel in English" is too broad. The "short stories of William Faulkner" is too narrow. (Excluding very prolific writers, a single-author area would include most or all of the author's main works, even though the student may also include and discuss a set of that author's less canonical works. In general, however, single-author areas are to be avoided). For those studying literature, one typical—but not prescriptive—pairing is to combine a literary area (including some major criticism in that field) with a critical/

theoretical/ methodological area. Thus a literary area on the “19<sup>th</sup>-century American novel” might include 15-20 key literary texts as well as a selection of the major criticism in the field; it might be combined with an area in “Trauma Theory” or “Antebellum and Civil War History.” For those studying Composition and Rhetoric, the two areas (independently or together) may combine theory with pedagogy, research methodology, histories of writing and writing education, and/or current trends in literacy practices. Here, a pedagogically focused area such as “The Circulation of Writing in Composition Classes” might include key texts presenting diverse critical perspectives on how circulation is conceptualized. A second area might be “Feminist Research Methodology” or “Applications of Marxist Theory in Composition Studies.” These are just a few samples of many other kinds of combination. Again, students are encouraged to ask Wanda Bak for access to sample materials, in addition to consulting with the GPD and the faculty in their field.

### **Scheduling the exam**

As the deadline for submission of final drafts approaches, the student should discuss, first with their advisors and then with all committee members, a prospective date and time for the oral exam. Once a date is established, the student should inform Wanda Bak of the date and time so that she can reserve a room; she will also send out a reminder to all committee members two weeks before the exam.

At least three weeks prior to the exam, the student submits both rationales and bibliographies to the two chief faculty advisors and to the GPD for approval and signatures. The signature sheet is available from Wanda Bak in the Graduate Office.

Please schedule your exam within the semester. Faculty are on nine month contracts; the months of June, July, and August constitute faculty’s official period of non-responsibility. Faculty may choose to continue to work with their graduate students over the summer, but do so on a case-by-case basis.

Important Note: The GPD will enforce the upper limit of the page range described above.

**Rationales longer than 6000 words/20 pages each will not be approved.**

Once the materials have been approved, and no less than two weeks before the exam, the student should distribute copies of all materials to the full committee. (Hard copies are the default, but students may wish to confirm with their committee members whether they prefer paper or electronic copies.)

### **Preparing for the exam: What to expect**

Well before the exam, students should meet with the exam chair to discuss the exam process. Typically, the student speaks briefly at the start of the session (suggested maximum 10 minutes), perhaps narrating the intellectual trajectory that led to these areas, or highlighting key points and questions raised in the papers, especially as these might lead to a dissertation. These are just two of several possible directions for an opening statement, and students can consult with the chair about others. As with the Advisory Session, discussion in the Area Exam develops organically, yet it will typically focus at length on the materials and ideas in the area papers. While students should, of course, be familiar with the texts in their bibliography, questions tend to be less concerned with testing knowledge of specific texts than with soliciting evidence of the student’s ability to think and converse flexibly and thoughtfully about those texts.

### **During and following the exam**

Unlike the Dissertation Defense, which is open to the public, the Two-Area exam is private. Attendance is limited to the student and the faculty members on the Area Committee. As the exam begins, the student will be asked to leave the room for a couple of minutes while faculty members consult. When the student re-enters, he/she is invited to make an opening statement; then the exam commences and generally lasts for about two hours. The tenor of the exam is usually collegial and conversational. After the exam, the student will be asked to leave the room once more; the student will receive the results of the exam immediately after this. The Examination chair completes a report on the exam, circulates it to the participating members for their approval and any necessary revisions, and then sends the finalized report to Wanda Bak for inclusion in the student's file (the student also receives a copy of the finalized report). The student now moves on to the dissertation prospectus.

### ADVICE ABOUT THE AREA EXAMS

*with thanks to Prof. Haivan Hoang*

#### **IDENTIFY YOUR "AREAS," AND CONSTRUCT THE READING LISTS FOR TWO AREA EXAMS.**

- When in coursework, begin to develop **lists of sources** that you've read and that you'd like to read. How will you manage and organize these sources (e.g., print files, RefWorks, Zotero, etc.)?
- How will you take **notes**? Again, how will you manage and organize these notes?
- The areas should immerse you in conversations that interested you during (maybe before) coursework. Put another way, the area lists should not just replicate what you've already read during coursework, but the lists shouldn't be a complete departure from prior readings either.
- As the handbook states, the areas "should avoid being either too narrow or too broad." How do you determine an appropriate **scope**?
- Spend some time **searching on your own** for relevant scholarship in the field; also, read foundational oft-cited sources relevant to the area. Also, **seek advice** from your advisor and others about the lists.

#### **WORK WITH TWO FACULTY ADVISORS.**

- Identify two faculty who can advise your areas, and **request a meeting** to ask them to advise you on your areas. When should you meet, and what should you prepare for that meeting? Be mindful of the tricky issue, described above, of requesting meetings and feedback during the summer.
- Talk about **how you'll work together**: What are your advisors' expectations? How often will you meet? What should you share (e.g., lists, drafts) and when? When can you expect feedback on drafts?
- Keep the **dialogue open**. Tell us about your interests and commitments at the same time that you stay open to questions and suggestions.

- Note: There's no single formula for how faculty work with graduate students on the area exams, so it's important to figure out what works best for each pair. That is, faculty bring their own philosophies and approaches to this mentoring role—as do graduate students.

#### **WRITE ESSAYS ON THE TWO AREAS.**

- The purpose of the area essays is “to demonstrate knowledge” and “typically takes the form of a **mapping of the field** within coordinates defined by the student.” The area essays are not, for example, an argument that you'd make in a published article or the dissertation. Think of this essay as a literature review or taxonomy.
- You do not need to give equal attention to all sources on the list. For example, you may have one sentence that includes a parenthetical reference to 3-4 sources, and you may devote a couple of paragraphs to a single key source. Depending on how and why you're mapping this field, you'll need to figure out **how to pace your use of sources**.
- On the other hand, you should not focus exclusively on a few sources and gloss over most of the scholarship cited in this area. Remember that the point is to map the conversation.
- There are common challenges that happen during the **writing process**.
  - Early on, you might find yourself including too many quotations or spend too much time explaining sources. Don't worry about it. As you get a handle on the readings, you'll figure out how to distill your discussion of sources and do so more purposefully.
  - This is not a linear process: i.e., decide on area → find readings → write essay. As you search for readings, you'll likely continue to redefine the scope of the readings. Writing the essay, you'll likely revisit your reading list—cut some sources, add others—and continue to refine the area.
  - Throughout the writing, you'll need to balance representing the big picture (i.e., mapping major claims and questions in the field) with treating particular sources/lines of thinking precisely and critically.

#### **PREPARE FOR THE TWO-HOUR EXAM.**

- Prepare a **brief statement** for the beginning of the exam; see above for more advice.
- Re-read your exam, and take notes on what you've written (key words and definitions, major claims, questions to pose to yourself and those in this conversation).
- Meet with your advisor, and talk with your colleagues.

#### **FIGURE OUT YOUR OWN TIME MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES FOR INDEPENDENT READING AND WRITING.**

- Make a timeline with your advisor.
- How will you schedule your own reading and writing time?
- What deadlines can you set during this process, and how can you use your scholarly community (including faculty advisor and peers) to help you move forward on the area exams.

## **The Dissertation**

*(applies to all doctoral students, in all concentrations)*

Students should strive to have, at minimum, two funded years to devote to writing the dissertation (and the job-search process); two-and-a-half years is even better. The program calendars that appear earlier in this handbook are designed to create/preserve that time for writing. Dissertation preparation officially begins with the completion of the Two-Area exams, but you will probably be thinking, reading and perhaps even writing toward your dissertation before that moment.

The dissertation preparation process includes: choosing a dissertation director (chair), putting together a dissertation committee, writing a dissertation prospectus, having it approved by your entire committee, and submitting that approved prospectus to the Graduate Program Director (who submits to the Graduate School after approval).

### **The Dissertation Director (Chair)**

Choosing the director of your dissertation is an important decision, and you're encouraged to consult with the Graduate Program Director about it. In general, you would like your director to be someone you trust and feel comfortable with, who is knowledgeable about your topic, and who has a professional reputation in your field. In your preliminary meetings, be sure to ask about this person's future plans: will they be away, when does their sabbatical fall, when do they plan to retire? This is information you need to have, so it's perfectly appropriate to ask these questions. (Again, the GPD stands ready to assist if you'd like.) Bear in mind, too, that it is possible to change your director if circumstances and/or your direction changes. Such a step should not be undertaken lightly, and it is best to consult with the GPD if you are considering it.

Once you have obtained a commitment from a faculty member to work with you as the director of your dissertation, the two of you should discuss and decide:

- How often you'll meet
- How much advice you need and welcome
- The timeline for the project: when you will submit drafts of chapters and approximately how long the director will spend on them before returning them to you. If you will not be living in the area, be sure to let your director know so that you can make the necessary arrangements. Some directors will work with you via email, phone, and Skype; others will want to meet with you face-to-face. Find out early so you can be prepared.

### **The Dissertation Committee**

As soon after the Two-Area exam as possible, you will want to put together a dissertation committee; the committee comprises three faculty members (including the chair/director), one of whom must be a professor from outside the English Department. In some cases, it may be desirable to have four faculty members on your committee; this decision should be discussed with your dissertation director and perhaps also with the GPD.

In choosing dissertation-committee members, you should consult both with your dissertation director *and* with the GPD. The chair of your Two-Area committee can also be of help here, as

can the other members of the committee. (Some students ask at least one, if not all, of the professors from the Two-Area committee to continue on with them into the dissertation stage. But some do not, and there is no assumption that the Two-Area committee will become your dissertation committee.)

When you meet with faculty members to discuss their serving on your committee, explain to them the general project behind your research and give them your estimated time-table; as with the dissertation director, you should discuss expectations of working together. Some committee members will want to read early drafts of every chapter; others will read a chapter only after it's been worked through and revised; still others will prefer to wait until the end to read the entire dissertation in one go. In general, you should bear in mind that your director is your main advisor, responsible for the overall quality of your work, while your committee members will tend to see themselves primarily as resources for your research.

And remember: one of the members must be a professor from *outside* the English department. Your dissertation director should be able to help you find this committee member, but it's also wise to seek out opportunities (including taking courses) to cultivate relationships with faculty beyond the department. It is possible to have faculty from outside of UMass, and outside of the Five Colleges, serve on dissertation committees (consult early on with the GPD if you are considering this option) provided that the proper paperwork is filed with the Graduate School.

## **The Prospectus**

### Deadlines for submission:

MA/PhD students: fifth year, spring semester, end of spring break

PhD students: third year, spring semester, February 15th

The dissertation prospectus explains what your research project is and how it will contribute to a particular field or fields. Each dissertation director has their own conception of what the prospectus should be, but in general you should plan to write 15-20 pages plus a bibliography. It is worth remembering that as you write your dissertation, emphases and even the overall shape may undergo change. It is best to regard the prospectus as a road map providing you with a good sense of direction, structure and focus for the journey.

The Graduate Office has several examples of the prospectus on file, which you may look at. You will immediately notice how different in format, style and length each of these is. The most important thing to bear in mind is that the prospectus is a document that should work *for you*. It should be a springboard, not an impediment, and you should never spend more than one semester writing it. Remember that you will need to have your prospectus filed with the Graduate School (see below) in order to apply for most grants and fellowships.

Note: The prospectus is an official document that needs to be signed by all of your committee members and the Graduate Program Director, who sends the prospectus to the Graduate School. University regulations require that the prospectus be submitted *at least seven months* prior to the dissertation defense.

## **The Dissertation Defense**

The defense typically lasts one to two hours and often consists of the student's own statement, a discussion of the dissertation arising from that statement, and finally, a discussion of what can be done with the dissertation in the future. On the whole, the defense is not so much the student "defending" what they have written as discussing the project and its future with the committee. All questions posed to the student are about the dissertation. Do not expect to be quizzed about an entire literary period, poet, etc., or to be interrogated about topics not covered in your chapters. Many students find the defense very affirming since they are treated as a colleague and an expert in their field.

Typically, only the student and their committee are present at the defense, but the defense is in fact open to all graduate faculty; also, with the agreement of the dissertation committee, students may invite anyone they wish to attend (parents, friends, etc.).

The student's statement can be almost anything, and is usually discussed in advance with the dissertation director. Not all students or committees have found it necessary to begin this way. When they do, some students begin by explaining what they've learned from the process of writing a dissertation. Others explain how the project evolved from start to finish (e.g., "The chief difficulty I had while writing the dissertation was . . .").

The discussion, too, can take almost any shape. Students and their committees in the past have talked about what kind of courses, graduate or undergraduate, the student might be capable of teaching. Others have had detailed discussions about how the dissertation might be turned into a book and/or how separate chapters might be reworked into articles and where those might be published.

## **Scheduling and Formatting**

Consult the Graduate School website for detailed instructions and guidelines regarding manuscript preparation and submission. There are many small details that have to be observed, so take time to familiarize yourself with them. Some are very particular, such as having the dissertation signed off by all your committee members with, and only with, a black ink pen (and preferably the same black ink pen!). You must pay the various graduation fees and submit all paperwork by an established deadline; Wanda Bak can help you to identify that deadline.

Give copies of the final version of your dissertation to committee members at least two weeks before the defense.

Complete the necessary paperwork for the Graduate School at least three to four weeks before the defense.

Make sure you have the dissertation's signature page (on white, acid-free paper) with you at the defense, because your committee will sign it right there.

## **Common Difficulties (and How to Handle Them)**

Some students zoom through the program with nary a stumble or scratch. Most of us, however, encounter minor (and occasionally major) setbacks, quagmires, and other assorted monsters. And generally speaking, the dissertation is the most challenging part of the doctoral program.

It's not unusual to experience some discouragement about the dissertation and the progress you're not making. Many students experience bouts of self-doubt, frustration, and thinker's/writer's block. Take time to talk with people you trust, or seek out professional help if you think that's what you need. Everyone usually benefits from joining or creating an ongoing dissertation group for support, useful critique, and deadline-setting.

- Many students fear that their dissertation will have already “been done.” You should of course be familiar with what (if anything) is being said in your field about your topic. But rest assured: you may find books that share your interests, but almost never will you find that someone has taken an identical approach to your subject matter.
- Allow yourself time to assimilate the information you're consuming. Trying to rush your best ideas can be a pointless expenditure of sweat and anxiety.
- In some cases, students find that they have to stop reading and just start writing, allowing themselves to write what they already know. In general, writing (beyond note-taking) as you go – jotting down ideas, creating outlines and starting rough drafts – is a productive approach.
- It's worth checking in periodically on your relationship to your primary texts: you might need, from time to time, to step away from the secondary materials and renew your acquaintance with your primary sources.
- It might be more efficient to work on more than one chapter of the dissertation at once. In any case, it pays to give some thought to the order in which you will write (e.g., do you write the introduction first, or last?), and perhaps discuss this with others (faculty and peer mentors).
- If you're having problems working with a committee member, talk with friends and decide if it's a matter for the Graduate Program Director to mediate. The GPD is usually able to offer suggestions about resolving the issue.

### **Dissertation Fellowships**

The Graduate School offers a variety of grants to support dissertation research. Please see details here: <https://www.umass.edu/gradschool/node/681>

The department, as it is able (that is, when it receives funding from the Graduate School, CHFA, and/or other sources), offers fellowships to doctoral students who have completed all other program requirements and filed a dissertation prospectus, in order to support their dissertation-writing. The amounts of these fellowships will vary according to the funds available. The aim of the Graduate Office is to make the selection and distribution process for these fellowships as fair and transparent as possible. When it becomes apparent that funds are available to support such fellowships, the GPD will circulate an email message to the relevant graduate-student lists outlining details of the process and relevant deadlines.

Graduate students are also encouraged to seek out other grant and fellowship opportunities, both on campus and beyond. The Graduate School's funding support page is a good place to begin: <https://www.umass.edu/gradschool/funding-support>

## **Advising and Professional Development**

### **Thinking about Your Future**

The Graduate Program is fully aware that most graduate students pursue an advanced degree because they intend to get a job. We believe that students should be given every opportunity to prepare themselves for their careers, and we have devoted considerable resources to this end. Both the Director and the Associate Director of the Graduate program are available for informal conversation about your future and for more focused help with such matters as fellowship and job applications, internships, interviews, and alternative career paths. We strongly urge you to see them in your first year here and to make a point of meeting with them occasionally as you move through the program.

Experience has shown us that success on the job market follows not so much from shaping yourself into an abstractly “ideal” job candidate as from knowing your interests and strengths and demonstrating to others the particular qualities you could bring to a job. Therefore, the more consistently reflective you are about yourself—your aims, abilities, interests—the better prepared you will be for the moment you go on the job market and present yourself as a candidate for a specific position. It is our hope that conversations with the GPD and the Associate GPD, and participation in our workshops (see below), will help you develop the self-awareness that is so helpful when you actually go on the job market.

### **Workshops and Advising**

The Associate GPD and EGO usually work together to organize a series of professionalization workshops for all graduate students in the program; the Graduate School’s Office of Professional Development also runs regular workshops and seminars. Collectively, their aim is to make clear that there are exciting new opportunities for graduate students who understand the ways higher education is changing and who develop the skills and interests being demanded of the new professoriate. Consequently, while some workshops focus on traditional aspects of professionalization (e.g., writing a job letter, putting together a CV), many deal with topics that promote a broader understanding of what professionalization means today. Again, we strongly urge you to enroll in some of these workshops early in your studies here. As well as supplementing what you learn through your coursework, they might open doors to new ways of imagining yourself as a teacher, scholar, and intellectual. Regular offerings include:

- pedagogy workshops and effective mentoring for teachers
- dissertation workshop and support groups
- professionalization workshops that deal with topics such as the job letter, the job talk, the campus interview, publishing conference papers, teaching portfolios and syllabi
- individualized job-search counseling
- grant-writing workshops held by the Graduate School
- mock interviews before the annual MLA convention

## **Professional Organizations**

On entering the graduate program, students are strongly encouraged to join one or more of the scholarly and professional organizations that guide and assist us in our academic work; special member rates are usually offered to graduate students. Faculty advisors and more advanced peers in your field can help you identify which organizations will be particularly important for you; examples include the Modern Language Association (MLA), National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE), and American Studies Association (ASA).

We also urge you to familiarize yourself with several journals in your areas of interest. A few times each year you should browse through them, read the book reviews, read an occasional article, look at the book titles being advertised, and so on. After three or four years, you will find that this process has oriented you toward your field(s) *much* more effectively than any course, curriculum, or program advising can do.

## **Conferences**

Entering the profession means taking in and presenting up-to-date scholarship. In addition to the annual conferences held around the country by various professional organizations like the MLA and ASA, any number of smaller, more regional conferences on particular themes issue calls for papers by graduate students and faculty alike. For a complete list, see each new issue of the PMLA; announcements are sometimes posted on the bulletin board outside the Graduate Office. We strongly urge you to join listservs that regularly disseminate information about conferences, papers, etc. – both generally, and for your field in particular. (One of the best “clearing-house” listservs is <http://www.english.upenn.edu/CFP>, which now functions through their web interface and RSS feeds.)

In recent years, the English Graduate Organization has also organized very successful graduate-student conferences, which draw participants from many institutions beyond our own campus. Presenting here is a great way to gain experience and to find out what colleagues are doing; getting involved in organizing the conference is also valuable service experience, and yields an impressive line on your CV.

We strongly advise you to have presented at least two or three conference papers by the time you begin your job search.

## **Conference-Presentation Support**

The Graduate Office is usually able to provide modest support for graduate-student travel to conferences at which they are presenting papers connected to their scholarship; this is dependent on receiving funds from the Graduate School and CHFA, so cannot be guaranteed until such funds have been committed. Students should not count on this funding to cover the entire cost of conference travel; in recent years, the amount available has been around \$300 per student per year. If that amount is spent on one conference, students should not expect additional departmental funding for travel until the following year.

Funds are awarded in two cycles, with funds split equally between fall and spring. They are awarded through an application process, with deadlines in fall and spring (in 2020/2021 those deadlines are September 15, 2020 and February 15, 2021). Apply to the September date for fall conferences and the February date for spring ones. These are priority deadlines; people can continue to apply as long as funds are available. All other things being equal, students who have not previously received funding and who are in their final years in graduate school will be favored over those who have received conference funding many times before and are early on in their program. Our hope is that we will still be able to fund the majority of requests, but we do want to make sure that people who are nearing the end of the program (and who are, say, needing to travel to a conference for a job interview) can get funding.

Note: Students are eligible for travel funds for their program length plus one year (that is, for six years from year of enrollment for those entering PhD, eight years for those entering MA/PhD).

The Writing Program occasionally has funding available to support travel by its current tutors, lecturers, and graduate Teaching Associates when they are presenting papers directly related to Writing Program courses or programs—that is, Basic Writing, College Writing, Junior Year Writing, the Writing Center, or the Writing Program as a whole. Note that graduate students may not receive travel funding from both the English Department and the Writing Program for the same conference. They may, however, request an exception to this policy if their travel costs are unusually high (e.g., for a conference outside the U.S.) and both the English GPD and Writing Program director agree to this exception. If students are presenting at more than one conference during the year, they may receive funding from English for one conference and the Writing Program for another, if the funding is appropriate to each conference, and agreed to by the relevant director.

## **The Job Search**

The academic job market can be a daunting prospect: the number and kinds of available positions shift unpredictably from year to year, and a good year generally might still mean a more challenging one for positions in a given field (and vice versa). But remember: people do get jobs. Almost 80% of UMass PhD's from 1999-2018 found teaching jobs at the university level (55% tenure stream; 25% non-tenure stream). Others have found employment in industry, other types of professional work, and higher ed administration.

Furthermore, the Graduate Office is deeply committed to helping you in this stage of the program. When you and your dissertation director feel that you are ready to begin thinking about the job market, you should arrange to meet with the Associate GPD, who co-ordinates our placement program. The Associate Director can tell you about the many resources we offer to help our students as they prepare for the job market, including workshops, individualized review of application materials, and practice interviews.

As noted above, students should begin preparing their job search well before they actually finish their PhD. Your job application letter, teaching portfolio, writing sample, and CV all play a crucial role in your job search. You will want to discuss them with your dissertation director and the Associate GPD, allowing enough time for several drafts and substantial revisions.

The final stages of your job search are a full-time occupation for many weeks. It is a long and often demanding process, which is why candidates are encouraged to begin preparing well in advance and to draw on the resources of the department.

## **Teaching**

### **Term of Funding**

Students accepted into the MA/PhD and PhD programs can expect to receive seven or five years (respectively) of teaching support *once they have applied to, interviewed successfully with, and been hired by the Writing Program*. Continued support is also contingent upon satisfactory performance of all duties required by the position and upon maintaining good academic standing within the program (including completing the Two-Area exam on time).

Note: Semesters of guaranteed support are continuous from the semester of enrollment, excluding formal leaves of absence from the program. In addition, semesters spent working outside the department (e.g., in teaching, research, or editorial assistantships that are equivalent in hours to a departmental assistantship) are included in the semesters of guaranteed support; the only exception to this is semesters spent in paid employment with the Graduate Employee Organization (GEO).

Once their term of guaranteed funding has expired, students cannot rely on further teaching opportunities in the department. Teaching on extension in the Writing Program is possible, but only if available in a given year. Under some, exceptional circumstances, it might be possible to extend the clock on departmental support through teaching: but these cases are very rare, and permission must be granted well ahead of time by the GPD.

### **Literature Teaching Assignments**

Each spring, students have a chance to express their teaching preferences for the following year by filling out a form (known as the “dream sheet”) and returning it to the Graduate Office. (Note that the GPD has no control over the courses or the number of sections that are offered each year, nor the time slots offered.)

Note: Students with two incompletes (‘I’ or ‘IF’) cannot be assigned teaching. The dream sheet will indicate a deadline for resolving outstanding incompletes in order to be eligible for teaching the following year.

The Graduate Program aims to enable students to do three kinds of teaching during the course of their studies: in the Writing Program, as a teaching assistant for a lecture course, and as the teacher of a 35-student General Education (Gen Ed) course. Unfortunately, the complexities of scheduling, along with the uncertain size of each entering class of freshmen, wreak havoc with the ideal of orderly progression from one kind of teaching to another. Furthermore, the department has cut the number of large lecture courses, meaning that teaching assistant opportunities are especially limited. For these reasons, students who have been hired by the Writing Program can count on the number of years of support that apply to their program (MA/PhD or PhD), but we cannot guarantee that they’ll be able to do all three kinds of teaching, much less that they will teach in any predictable sequence. That said, the GPD and the Director of the Writing Program do all they can to meet students’ teaching preferences.

Note: All graduate students who would like to teach literature **should also apply to the Writing Program**, in case a literature section cannot be assigned to them. If you've taught in the WP in the past two years, you should receive a reminder from Heidi Terault, by mid-February, asking you to let them know what your plans are. It's important that you respond to this memo in a timely manner, so that the WP reserves your spot for a TOship.

The GPD takes the following elements into consideration when making literature teaching assignments, in approximately this order:

- 1) Number of years taught in the Writing Program
- 2) Number of years of teaching eligibility remaining (for those who have yet to teach literature)
- 3) Lecture and literature sections taught previously
- 4) Progress toward the degree (i.e., has the student completed coursework, advisory sessions, two-area exams, and prospectus in a timely manner)
- 5) Match of student preferences for department needs

Any student who feels that there is something unfair about their teaching assignment should feel free to meet with the GPD to express those concerns; the GPD can then explain the assignment, and alter it if a change is merited.

Note: Graduate students should not, under any circumstances, take on a one credit HIS (Honor's Independent Study) with an undergraduate. This is uncompensated labor and as such is in violation of your GEO contract.

### **Other Teaching Opportunities**

Students have a chance to apply for a limited number of Winter, Spring, and Summer Session courses offered through the Division of Continuing and Professional Education. These positions will be announced by the Graduate Office, which also distributes the appropriate application forms.

There are also teaching positions in other departments that are available to English Department students. These are listed in "Assistantship Opportunities" under "Students" on the Graduate School web site.

## Statute of Limitations

Each graduate degree at the university is subject to a statute of limitations (SOL): a specified number of years (from the date of admission) during which students are expected to complete the degree. This policy is set and enforced by the Graduate School. The English Department has its own SOL for the terminal MA, which takes precedence over the Graduate School.

The SOLs for graduate degrees in English are as follows:

MA: three years

MA/PhD: seven years\*

PhD: five years\*

\* When a student completes the Two-Area exam (technically, when they “achieve candidacy”), the Graduate School automatically re-sets their SOL to five years from that date.

SOL extensions are not within the power of the GPD to grant, but requests for such extensions must be approved by the GPD before advancing to the Graduate School. Students who are approaching the expiration of their SOL will receive a message from the Graduate School (and a reminder from Wanda Bak) to that effect. The student needing an SOL extension should then email the GPD (and cc Wanda) requesting the same, and adding any relevant information: factors impeding progress to date, plans to resolve those issues, expected timeline to completion, etc. The GPD will review and (in the majority of cases) approve reasonable first requests, as these are unlikely to raise much resistance at the Graduate-School level. However, the Graduate School applies an increasing level of scrutiny to each subsequent request; in these cases, the GPD will generally ask for more information (along the lines described above) and come to their own determination about the likelihood of Graduate-School approval, before deciding whether to approve.

Note: SOL extensions are not related to, **and do not impact**, the number of years of funding one receives from the program.

See the Graduate School’s FAQ page for more detail on SOLs and extensions:  
<https://www.umass.edu/gradschool/faculty-staff/faq>

## Resources and Links

The Center for Counseling and Psychological Health: <https://www.umass.edu/counseling/>

The Center for Women and Community: <http://www.umass.edu/cwc/>

The English Graduate Organization (EGO): <https://umassego.com/>

The Graduate Employee Organization (GEO): <http://www.geouaw.org/>

The Graduate School: <https://www.umass.edu/gradschool/>

Useful Graduate School links: <https://www.umass.edu/gradschool/contact-us>

The Graduate Students of Color Association:

<https://umassamherst.collegiatelink.net/organization/GSCA>

The International Programs Office: <http://www.umass.edu/ipo/iss>

The Stonewall Center: <https://www.umass.edu/stonewall/>

Student Legal Services: <http://www.umass.edu/rso/slso/index.htm>

University Health Services: <https://www.umass.edu/uhs/>

The Writing Program: <http://www.umass.edu/writingprogram/index.html>

**APPENDIX A**

**GRADUATE STUDIES IN ENGLISH  
English 796  
Independent Study**

**Student's Name:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Semester:** \_\_\_\_\_  
**Spire ID:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Instructor's Name:** \_\_\_\_\_  Independent Study  
**Spire ID:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Topic:** \_\_\_\_\_  Two-Area preparation  
(check one)

**Description:** Indicate the precise subject of study, representative authors and works to be read, and any required written work.

**Student's Signature:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Instructor's signature:** \_\_\_\_\_

Any student wishing to take an Independent Study course must fill out and return this form to the Graduate English Office for approval before being allowed to register for the course.

## APPENDIX B

### Master's Thesis Checklist

1. **Thesis Credits.** A Master's thesis carries six credits. Students must register for the credits (English 699) during the year they write the thesis, registering for three each semester or all six in one semester, (graduate secretary must register these credits).

2. **Thesis Committee.** Candidate selects a committee consisting of a chairperson from the English Department and two other members of the graduate faculty for approval to be nominated by the Graduate Program Director for appointment by the Graduate Dean. The responsibility of the thesis committee shall be to supervise the thesis project and to conduct the final oral examination; thesis defense.

3. **Thesis Outline.** Students must prepare a thesis outline. Outlines must be approved and signed by the Thesis committee and the **Graduate Program Director**. Approved outline and thesis committee form must be submitted to the graduate secretary who will then submit it to the Graduate School. This must be done at least four months prior to the date of the thesis defense. Samples available in the Graduate Office.

4. **Final Oral Examination: Thesis Defense:** must be taken upon completion of thesis. Upon approval of the chair of the committee, student schedules the defense with their committee at least three weeks in advance and notifies the Graduate Secretary who will reserve a room and send out official notification. **It is strongly encouraged to bring the signature page for the committee to sign.** After the examination, the Chairperson of the Committee will submit a memorandum to the secretary giving the results of the defense. The secretary will then prepare a memorandum to the Graduate School stating the results of the defense and submit it along with the degree eligibility form.

5. **Master's Degree Eligibility Form.** After successfully passing the defense the candidate must download the form: [http://www.umass.edu/gradschool/sites/default/files/masters\\_degree\\_eligibility\\_form\\_for\\_the\\_sis\\_students.pdf](http://www.umass.edu/gradschool/sites/default/files/masters_degree_eligibility_form_for_the_sis_students.pdf), fill out and sign as indicated, and turn in to the Graduate Secretary for processing and submission to the Graduate School. [Current semester grades will be reported at the due date of final grades.]

6. **Guidelines for Master's Thesis:** [http://www.umass.edu/gradschool/sites/default/files/thesis\\_and\\_dissertation\\_guidelines.pdf](http://www.umass.edu/gradschool/sites/default/files/thesis_and_dissertation_guidelines.pdf)

**7. Submission of thesis:**

Electronic submission: <http://www.umass.edu/gradschool/current-students/masters-degree-requirements-and-thesis-information/electronic-thesis-submission-pro>

**The original signature page**, signed by your committee and the **Chair of the Department**, (in **black ball point pen**) must be turned in to the Graduate School by the appropriate deadline:

<b>February Degree:</b>	<b>December 15th</b>
<b>May Degree:</b>	<b>April 1st</b>
<b>September Degree:</b>	<b>August 31st</b>

## Notes