PhD in English

Admission Contact Information
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Admission Criteria
Fall deadline: January 1
Minimum TOEFL scores:

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<th>Internet-based test (IBT)</th>
<th>Paper-based test (PBT)</th>
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<td>80</td>
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- To be considered for the PhD program, a candidate should hold an MA degree in English or its equivalent.
- International applicants must send a copy of their TOEFL score, per university requirements.

Application Process and Materials
Apply online through the Office of Graduate Studies (http://gradstudies.missouri.edu/admissions/apply)

- The University requires a $65 fee and one set of transcripts from all colleges or universities you have attended.
- If you are already enrolled as a PBS student or as an undergraduate student at MU, you must file a transfer of division form with the admissions office.

The following items are needed to complete your application for the MA, MA/PhD, and PhD programs:

- GRE scores. The general test is required.
- Three letters of recommendation (at least two of which must be academic).
- One transcript from all colleges or universities you have attended.
- CV
- List of any previous graduate classes taken (for PhD candidates)
- Statement of purpose (approximately 500 words): The admissions committee is interested in your past academic interests, including specific papers and projects you have worked on, and what you wish to accomplish as a graduate student. Please explain why you wish to pursue a particular emphasis (poetry, Romanticism, etc.), in this department. The Statement of Purpose serves as your request to be considered for a Graduate School fellowship.
- Writing Sample: One 15-20 page scholarly paper for students applying for Literature Studies or for English Language and Linguistics. Creative Writing applicants should submit one critical/scholarly paper and one of the following: a sample of your fiction (15-30 pages), creative non-fiction (15-20 pages), or poetry (15-20 pages).

Your application cannot be read until all of these materials have been received. All materials must be received by the departmental deadline of January 1.

Requirements
The PhD in English is designed to be a five-year program requiring 30 hours of coursework. Students select and work closely with a faculty advisory committee to plan a course of professional study and training in their chosen primary and secondary fields. Coursework is meant to provide deep knowledge as well as methodological sophistication.

After students complete coursework in the first two years, they take written and oral comprehensive exams in the third year and write a dissertation in the fourth and fifth years.

Course Requirements
The PhD candidate will take 30 hours of coursework beyond the MA (http://gradstudies.missouri.edu/academics/graduation-requirements/doctoral-grad-requirements.php). Coursework must include:

- At least 18 hours in English at the 8000-level (English 8095 and 9090 hours do not count toward the 18-hour requirement).

Candidates’ coursework and program of study will be designed to prepare them as competent scholars in the designated fields. All PhD candidates will be required to take:

- English 8005, Introduction to Graduate Studies (a one hour course in fall semester of the first year in the program)
- English 8010, Theory and Practice of Composition is required in the first semester for students teaching English 1000
- A course in English linguistics focused on the structure of the language (English 7600 or an equivalent graduate course at another institution), on its history (English 7610, English 7200, or an equivalent graduate course at another institution), or on sociolinguistic aspects of English (English 7620 or an equivalent graduate course at another institution)
- A course in literary criticism (English 8050, 8060, 8070, or an equivalent graduate course at another institution)
- English 8020, The Theory and Practice of Teaching in English (for students who want to teach literature classes)

PhD students in the creative writing program are required to take:

- 9 workshop hours at the 8000 level (6 in their primary genre, and 3 in a second genre of choice)
- 9 hours of 8000-level seminars in literature or seminars whose content includes in-depth analysis of literary texts. 7000-level courses, or courses outside of the English department may be substituted with the approval of the DCW and DGS

A student may elect one English 8095 problems course (a maximum of 3 course hours), with the prior consent of the Director of Graduate Studies, but the credits will not count towards the 18-hour 8000-level course requirement. Students may also take up to 9 hours of coursework outside English in fields related to their programs of study upon the advice and consent of the advisory committee. In general, students with limited backgrounds in related areas (such as history, philosophy, art history) are encouraged to take coursework in such areas, while students with extensive background in other areas (e.g., one whose undergraduate major or MA is in a field other than English) should choose to concentrate coursework within the department.

Plan of Study
The typical timeline for the PhD is five years.
PhD students should determine how they will fulfill the departmental language requirement in consultation with their faculty advisor and other committee members, since different projects and areas of study will require different levels of language proficiency. A student's committee can always recommend that the student pursue language study above and beyond the level required by the departmental language requirement for the purpose of their chosen dissertation project. Advanced proficiency does not require fluency; it requires advanced reading knowledge of another culture’s language and literature.

To obtain advanced proficiency, the student has several options. One is to pass with a grade of B or better two upper-class undergraduate courses (3000- or 4000-level, or the equivalent elsewhere, taken within the seven years prior to the candidate’s enrollment in the Ph.D program at the University of Missouri) in the literature of the language chosen. A second is to pass with a grade of B or better one graduate class (7000- or 8000-level, or the equivalent elsewhere, taken within the same time period as above) in the literature of the language chosen. These courses may not be in translation, and any graduate course in a modern language must be taught in that language. A third option is to demonstrate advanced proficiency in a manner approved by the student’s advisor and the director of graduate studies; the mechanism for doing so will be proposed by the student and advisor, and is subject to the approval of the director of graduate studies. Advanced proficiency does not require fluency; it requires advanced reading knowledge of and extended engagement with another culture’s language and literature.

To demonstrate basic proficiency the student must pass with a grade of B or better a) the intensive introduction to a language or b) the three-semester introductory sequence or c) one course at or beyond the third semester level in the language chosen or the equivalent of these courses elsewhere. The courses must have been completed or the examinations taken not more than seven years prior to the candidate's enrollment in the PhD program. Because not all languages are taught using this format at the University of Missouri, students have the option to demonstrate basic proficiency in one of their two chosen languages by taking an introductory course in any language that is relevant to their research. The Director of Graduate Studies will work with students to try to arrange for testing for students with proficiency but without coursework in any language (for instance, those who have lived in another country for an extended period of time). In these cases, one option is to take the Twelve-Point Exam from the NYU School of Professional Studies, and achieve a score of at least ten.

Overall, the department recommends students pursue advanced proficiency in one language, a language that will enrich their work. All of our students, regardless of specialty, will gain by making meaningful and extended connections between their own work and a non-English speaking culture.

**Proficiency in English**

International students should consult the International Teaching Assistant Program [http://gradstudies.missouri.edu/professional-development/build-your-skills/teach-mentor-preparing-faculty/international-teaching-assistant](http://gradstudies.missouri.edu/professional-development/build-your-skills/teach-mentor-preparing-faculty/international-teaching-assistant) (ITAP) of the Graduate School for university and state requirements regarding teaching at the university.

**Exams**

**Qualifying Exam**

By the end of the first year, students must meet with their advisers to organize their doctoral committees. The committee is made up of at least
three English department members and at least one member from an
MU department outside English. Students then meet with this committee
to plan coursework and define their primary and secondary fields of
study. This meeting satisfies the graduate school requirement for a PhD
qualifying examination.

The Qualifying Exam must be a formal meeting, scheduled by the
committee chair, with at least three of the four members present. The
outside faculty member need not be involved in this meeting, but all
four members of the committee must sign the D-1 form. The student
and committee chair should decide on a proposed Plan of Study to be
discussed and approved at the meeting. The student is responsible for
preparing the forms and bringing them to the meeting.

### Comprehensive Examination

After the coursework and foreign language requirement have been
completed, the student takes the PhD comprehensive examination.
This exam consists of a written section (the Preparatory Essay) and a
two-and-a-half hour oral exam. Guidelines for the PhD comprehensive
examination are as follows:

#### 1. Committee and Reading List

Students will choose a faculty committee consisting of a chair, two
additional department members, and an external member from another
department.

In consultation with her or his committee, the student will specify reading
lists made up of one major field, one minor field, and one field in criticism
and theory.

The major field list should reflect the student’s area of professional
specialization (poetry, 16th-century British literature, 20th-century
American fiction, folklore) and should take account of both the student’s
interests and job market categories. If a candidate chooses a major field
that is a single genre (or has an otherwise delimited focus), then the
candidate’s committee may mandate that the area should extend over at
least three centuries.

The minor field list should reflect the student’s area of professional
specialization (poetry, 16th-century British literature, 20th-century
American fiction, rhetoric and composition, folklore) and should take
account of both the student’s interests and job market categories. If a candidate chooses a major field that is a single genre (or has an
otherwise delimited focus), then the candidate’s committee may mandate
that the area should extend over at least three centuries.

The criticism and theory list will vary depending on the topics of the
major and minor lists. In cases where the major and minor lists consist
primarily of literary works, the criticism and theory list must include
sections covering the major works of criticism and/or theory in those
fields. The remainder of the criticism and theory list, up to its entirety in
cases where both the major and minor list include substantial secondary
reading, can be organized around a major subfield of criticism or theory
(poetics, psychoanalysis, the history of the novel) or a particular theme
(Theories of the Middle Class; The Role of Religion in Contemporary
Fiction; Medieval Conceptions of Gender).

All three lists together should comprise approximately 100-120 book
length works or the equivalent in scholarly articles or works in other
media (as decided in consultation with the committee), with the major list
roughly equivalent in size to the combined minor and criticism/theory lists.
Where linguistics constitutes one of the fields, the relevant committee
member or members will assign, in addition to reading materials, other
materials intended to ensure competence in carrying out analyses
in phonology, phonetics, syntax, and other areas appropriate to the
student’s background and interests.

During the semester in which the student begins drafting her or his
reading lists (ideally the second semester of PhD study), the faculty
chair will convene a meeting with the entire committee, during which
the student will present and defend her or his program of study and
draft reading lists. This meeting is known as the Qualifying Examination.
During this meeting the committee members will sign the D-1 form; after
the meeting the student will prepare the D-2 form for program of study
and have it signed by the committee members.

#### 2. Preparatory Essay/Written Comprehensive Exam

During the time a student is preparing for her or his exam, he or she will
write a Preparatory Essay of at least twenty-five pages. These essays
must not be more than fifty pages. This Preparatory Essay constitutes
the written portion of the comprehensive exam, and is designed to give
the student the opportunity to demonstrate broad knowledge of her or his
fields, deep interest in specific topics relevant to those fields, and initial
plans for the dissertation (or, in the case of creative writers, the critical
introduction).

This is a highly individualized process, designed to encourage students to
shape this process to serve their research needs.

Students will write and submit two different drafts. They will submit a
preliminary draft of the essay to committee members for feedback; this
must be done the semester before submitting the final draft and taking
the exam. When the student submits the final version to the committee,
committee members will evaluate it for range and depth of coverage,
specificity of references to the works discussed, theoretical grasp of the
material and clarity of organization and style. A student should consider
the Preparatory Essay an opportunity to address what he or she has
learned in the preparation process, and to indicate what questions most
interest him or her about the works on her or his lists. The Preparatory
Essay is designed to be flexible, but each essay should include the
following, in a form agreed upon by the student and the committee:

- Brief overviews of each of the fields represented by the lists,
discussing major issues raised by the three lists, and, where relevant,
connections among them; these overviews may preface the body of
the essay or be folded into it
- Answers to three or four substantive questions about the fields (or,
where relevant, problems in linguistic analysis) that were developed
in consultation with the committee, and that are meant to serve as
talking points for the oral exams
- A preliminary description of the dissertation or, for creative writers,
the critical introduction that demonstrates how it will be informed by
the student’s reading

In order to pass the written portion of the exam the student must receive
no more than one dissenting or abstaining vote on the Preparatory
Essay. To submit the final version of the preparatory essay, a student
should send the essay to the Graduate Secretary who will distribute the
exam to the student's committee. Within a week of receiving a copy of
the exam, committee members will submit evaluations discussing
strengths and weaknesses of the Preparatory Essay to the Graduate
Studies Secretary, who will forward them to the student and also place
copies in the student's file.
If the student does not pass, the committee will offer advice on rewriting and resubmitting the Preparatory Essay. If the student does pass, the chair of the exam committee, in conjunction with other members of the committee, will schedule the student’s oral examination for no earlier than one week, and no later than one month, following committee members’ reports on the Preparatory Essay. The Graduate Secretary should be informed of the time and place of the oral examination. Students must be enrolled during the term in which they take their oral exam (to be administered only when MU is officially in session). The oral exam must be completed at least seven months before the final defense of the dissertation.

3. Oral Exam

While discussion will be guided by the writing students have done in the Preparatory Essay, the examinee should be prepared for questions on any item on their list, in order to demonstrate a breadth of training beyond that displayed in the essays. Exams are commonly structured in two parts, with discussion of the essay in the first hour and discussion of the lists more broadly in the second.

The oral exam will be scheduled for two and a half hours and will consist of:

- Two hours of questions, with format and time allotted to committee members arranged beforehand by the chair of the student’s committee
- Fifteen minutes during which the committee deliberates about the exam
- Fifteen minutes during which the committee informs the student whether he or she has passed or failed, and discusses the exam with the student

During the fifteen-minute faculty deliberation period the chair of the committee is responsible for taking notes, which will form the basis of a 1-2 page document discussing the exam—things the student did well on, and things he or she might improve. The chair should give a copy of this document to the Graduate Secretary, who will forward it to the student and also place a copy in the student’s file.

In order to pass the student must receive no more than one dissenting or abstaining vote on the oral exam. Students who fail the oral examination will be allowed to retake it, but cannot do so sooner than 12 weeks after, or later than the end of the semester following, the initial examination. If the student passes the oral examination, all members of the committee must sign the D-3 form. The chair of the committee is responsible for submitting the D-3 form to the graduate studies office, and the form must be filed with the graduate school within two weeks after the final completion of the exams. Per graduate school rules, failure to pass two comprehensive examinations automatically prevents candidacy.

4. Comprehensive Exam Timeline

Semester Two in the PhD program: Choose a committee, begin to draft reading lists, and take the Qualifying Exam.

Semester Three: Begin reading for exams; meet at least once with each committee member; finalize reading lists.

Semester Four: Continue reading for exams and begin drafting Preparatory Essay; meet with each committee member and during meeting discuss a rough draft of the Preparatory Essay (to be given to committee members at least one week prior to the meeting). Students must give the draft of the Preparatory Essay to committee members the semester before they expect to turn in the final version and take the oral exam, and should then meet with committee members for oral feedback.

Semester Five: Give final draft of Preparatory Essay to committee members; complete oral examination; turn in D-3 form upon passing the oral examination.

Continuous Enrollment

After students complete their comprehensive exams, candidacy for the doctoral degree is maintained by enrolling in two credit hours in the fall and spring semesters and one credit in the summer semester up to and including the term in which the dissertation is defended. Failure to enroll continuously in 9090 Research hours (or alternatively, in the 8006 Professional Writing Workshop or Job Market Workshop) until the doctoral degree is awarded terminates candidacy. Guidelines for continuous enrollment can be found on the Graduate School website (http://gradstudies.missouri.edu/admissions/types-of-enrollment/continuous-enrollment.php).

Dissertation and Defense

Prospectus

As soon as possible after passing the comprehensive examination, a candidate should explore a dissertation topic under the guidance of the student’s adviser. Candidates must formally present and describe the topic in a prospectus of no more than fifteen pages (excluding bibliography); for the student to remain in good standing, the prospectus with committee members’ signatures must be submitted to the Graduate Studies Office within three months of a successful oral defense of the Comprehensive Examination or first two weeks of the semester following.

The prospectus should contain five elements:

- The state of current scholarship in the relevant fields
- The nature of the dissertation’s intervention in current scholarship
- A description of method
- A description of the materials—that is, the objects/archives studied and consulted
- A short bibliography

In the case of students writing creative dissertations, the prospectus should primarily describe the critical introduction (see “Creative Dissertation” below); ten pages is a good goal here.

The prospectus should be drafted in consultation with the adviser. Once drafted, it will be the subject of the Prospectus Conference, a meeting of the dissertation committee (outside member optional) covering the student’s ideas and research plans, including schedule. If a majority of the student’s committee doesn’t approve the prospectus, suggestions for revision will be made and the student will submit the revised prospectus only to the adviser; for this reason, students should schedule their meeting with enough time to revise and meet the deadline.

The prospectus must be completed for the student to begin writing, but it is also important because it usually forms the basis of grant applications and dissertation descriptions when the student goes on the job market. It is of long-term use to have a prospectus on file early, even though it is understood that the dissertation may change during research and writing.

Dissertation

Two types of dissertations are written for our program: the scholarly dissertation and the creative dissertation.

The scholarly PhD Dissertation is a work of original scholarship in a recognizable field covered by departmental expertise. Most dissertations in English are between 200 and 350 pages and combine an original
argument with research into the field you explore. By the end of the process of researching and writing the dissertation, the successful student will be one of a few world experts in the field addressed. Therefore topics should be specific enough to allow students to stake a claim to expertise, while broad enough to speak to the general field in which the dissertation is placed. The dissertation becomes the central document upon which you build your academic reputation. At best, it will be ready to go as a book project. Chapters of your dissertation will likely serve as writing samples on the academic job market and might be revised into publications either before or after you have defended it and received your PhD. The dissertation itself will be read by the student’s adviser and a minimum of three other readers (for students entering in the fall of 2005 or later; earlier students must have committees of at least five faculty members). One member of the committee must be a member of a department other than English. In the process of research and writing, some students work closely with an entire committee; others focus on the responses of their primary adviser to preliminary work.

PhD candidates in Creative Writing generally write a creative PhD dissertation, which may take the form of a collection of poetry, a novel, a novella, a book-length collection of short stories, or a book-length work of creative non-fiction. To exercise this option, the candidate must have taken 9-12 hours of creative writing seminars as part of the PhD coursework. In addition to the creative part of the dissertation, the candidate will compose a Critical Introduction, which is an article-length and rigorous critical essay that substantively engages the candidate’s areas of critical interest.

By Graduate School rules, seven months must elapse between a student’s successfully passing the PhD Comprehensive Examination and submitting the PhD dissertation.

Defense

Defense usually occurs within a month of submission to the committee of an acceptable dissertation. Committee members prepare questions in advance and the defense consists of a conversation regarding the scholarship and writing of the dissertation. The defense is customarily a celebratory occasion. But committee members can - and sometimes do - ask challenging questions that undercut specific and general issues in the project. Students have a chance to incorporate suggestions from the defense into the final document submitted to the Graduate School. Therefore it is useful to schedule the defense some weeks before the final deadline for submission to the Graduate School in the term in which the student wishes to graduate. A majority of the committee must vote positively for the dissertation to pass. If the dissertation is not passed, the student can revise in accordance with suggestions and resubmit.