

PhD in English

Degree Requirements

The PhD in English is designed to be a five-year program requiring 30 hours of coursework for students entering with an MA. For students admitted with a BA instead of an MA the program is six years with 72 hours of coursework.

Students with an MA will complete two years of coursework, and students with a BA will complete three years. After coursework is complete, students take their written and oral comprehensive examinations and write a dissertation in their final two years.

Course Requirements

The PhD candidate will take 30 hours of coursework beyond the MA or 72 hours of coursework beyond the BA. Coursework must include:

- At least 18 hours in English at the 8000-level (ENGLISH 8095 and ENGLISH 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, ENGLISH 8060, ENGLISH 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 hours of 8000-level 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 to take one ENGLISH 8095 problems course (a maximum of 3 hours credit), 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.

Foreign Language Requirement

PhD students must fulfill a language requirement to ensure that all students have a familiarity with a language other than English. Students, regardless of specialty, gain substantially by making meaningful connections between their own work and a non-English-speaking culture.

A student may satisfy the language requirement for the PhD in English by one of the following:

1. By taking coursework at MU. The student must pass with a grade of B or better an intensive introduction to a language, the two-semester introductory sequence of courses, or one course at or beyond the second semester level in the language chosen.
2. By demonstrating to the Director of Graduate Studies that the student has taken courses equivalent to those specified in item #1 at another college or university.
3. By demonstrating proficiency through a language test. Language tests will be administered by the department in November and April. Those wishing to take a test must notify the DGS in the semester prior. Those students who submitted a TOEFL score as part of their application to graduate school will be considered to have passed the language requirement.

Upon entering the program, students should work with the DGS or a faculty advisor to plan how they will fulfill the language requirement. Students' committees may recommend that they pursue language study beyond the level required by the department.

Proficiency in English

International students should consult the International Teaching Assistant Program (<https://gradschool.missouri.edu/itap-program/>) (ITAP) of the Graduate School for university and state requirements regarding teaching at the university.

Plan of Study

Below is a sample timeline for completing the PhD within five years of funding. Variations to the timeline can be developed in consultation with a student's advisor and the Director of Graduate Studies.

The PhD Committee consists of at least four faculty members (including the chair). Three of the members will be faculty in the English Department; the fourth may either be an additional member of the English Department or a faculty member from a different department. As a group, members of the PhD Committee should be equipped to support the student in both prospective primary and secondary fields for the comprehensive examination. Members from outside the department are extremely helpful for some dissertation projects, and students should consult with their faculty advisors about the potential benefits of including one, as well about the composition of their committees in general.

Year One:

- Take 8005: Introduction to Graduate Study
- Take three 3-credit courses each semester
- Choose an advisor and consult with that person in forming a doctoral committee
- Draft a plan for fulfilling degree requirements, including the language requirement
- Take the Qualifying Exam (see tab on this page for more information about timing)

Year Two:

- Complete course requirements
- Read for Comprehensive Exam

Please note that coursework required for the degree must be completed before taking the Comprehensive Exam.

Year Three:

- Take Comprehensive Exam by the end of the fall semester
- Have dissertation prospectus conference spring semester
- Begin writing the dissertation
- Consult with advisor about professionalization plans

Year Four:

- Work on dissertation

Year Five:

- Apply for jobs
- Defend dissertation by the end of spring semester

Although the Department of English offers only 5 years of guaranteed funding for students entering with an MA and 6 years of guaranteed funding for students entering with a BA, the Graduate School allows 5 years after entering the program for students to pass their Comprehensive Exams and 5 additional years for students to defend their dissertations after passing their Comprehensive Exams.

Exams

Qualifying Exam

The Qualifying Exam satisfies a Graduate School requirement. The student and advisor should decide on a proposed Plan of Study (D-2 form) to be discussed and approved at the meeting by the doctoral committee. The doctoral committee is composed of at least three faculty members from the English department and at least one faculty member from a department other than English. Students may use this meeting to shape their fields of study or their lists for the Comprehensive Exam, but this is not required to pass the exam. Students are encouraged to take the Qualifying Exam by the end of their first year, but may take the exam at the beginning of the second year. Regardless of the timing of the exam, all students should discuss a plan for fulfilling degree requirements with their advisors and/or with the Director of Graduate Studies by the end of their first year.

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 all required coursework has been completed, PhD students must take the comprehensive examination. This exam consists of a written section and a two-and-a-half-hour oral exam.

1. Committee

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

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

Reading Lists

The major field list should reflect the student's area of scholarly specialization and take into account the student's interests and intellectual, pedagogical, and/or professional fields.

The minor field list should be a more narrowly focused secondary specialization (for instance, a student with a major list in African-American literature might have a minor list in twentieth-century American fiction, or one studying Romanticism might have a minor list in transatlantic colonial literature), a genre or sub-genre (creative nonfiction, the sonnet, etc.), or an area of thematic focus (Transcendentalism, nature poetry, etc.).

The criticism and theory list

The criticism and theory list should enhance students' understanding of critical conversations surrounding the works on their major and minor lists and can also be used to develop a separate area of specialization in theory that is anticipated to be useful for the dissertation.

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.

2. Written Exam

The written section of the comprehensive exam is comprised of *one* essay, intended to prepare students for the dissertation. The essay would prepare creative writing students for the critical introduction and/or the creative dissertation. Although the written exam is submitted to the committee prior to the oral exam, it is expected that students will complete their reading of works on all three lists *before* turning in the final draft of the written exam. The order of this process is crucial, as this reading may well shape a student's plans for the dissertation and hence inform the topic and substance of the written exam.

The essay will identify and summarize the critical conversation(s) in which a student's individual dissertation work will participate. This essay may have, but does not require, an original argument. In consultation with their committee members, students are encouraged to shape their written exam to best serve their research needs. The essay must be *15-20 pages*, not counting additional materials such as bibliography, illustrations, or charts (which should be placed in an appendix). While the essay should refer to both *primary and secondary sources from students' lists*, students may also use other sources relevant to their projected dissertation.

Students will submit two drafts to their committee members: a first draft and a final written exam. The first draft must be submitted for written or oral feedback on how to proceed with revisions at least *four weeks and no more than sixteen weeks before* turning in the final written exam. The committee will evaluate each version of the essay for range and depth of coverage, specificity of references to the works discussed, theoretical grasp of the material, effective synthesis of important approaches or debates, and clarity of organization and style. Once the final written exam has been submitted, committee members will use these criteria to vote on whether the student has passed the written portion of the exam. To proceed to the oral exam, students must receive no more than one vote of "fail" or "abstain."

At least one month prior to the submission of the final written exam, students should communicate with committee members, alerting committee members to the date the final written exam will be submitted. The advisor should consult with committee members to schedule a tentative date and time for the oral portion of the exam. The oral portion

of the exam should take place *at least two weeks and no more than one month* after the final written exam has been submitted. The advisor should inform the Graduate Secretary of the time and place scheduled for the oral examination.

On the agreed upon date, the student should submit the final version of the written exam to the Graduate Secretary, who will distribute the exam to the student's committee. *Exams submitted to the Graduate Secretary that are either under or over the required page length will not be sent to committee members, but will be referred to the Director of Graduate Study.* Within two weeks of receiving a copy of the exam, committee members will submit evaluations discussing strengths and weaknesses of the 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 written exam, the oral examination date will be cancelled and the committee will offer advice on rewriting and resubmitting the essay.

3. Oral Exam

The oral section of the comprehensive exam is designed to test a student's knowledge of the teaching and research fields represented by their reading lists. Students should be prepared both to answer focused questions about individual works and to speak broadly about the connections among them. Students should send final copies of their lists to their committee members at least two weeks before the oral exams.

The oral exam will be scheduled for two and 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

Within one week of the oral exam, the chair of the committee is responsible for writing a brief document (up to one page) discussing the exam. 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 oral exam, the student must receive no more than one dissenting or abstaining vote. 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 School, 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.

Dissertation and Defense

Prospectus

As soon as possible after passing the comprehensive examination, the candidate should explore a dissertation topic under the guidance of their 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 School 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.

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 explored. 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.

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, rigorous critical essay that substantively engages the candidate's areas of critical interest.

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. For the dissertation to be successfully

defended, the committee must vote to pass it with no more than one abstaining or dissenting vote. If the dissertation is not passed, the student can revise in accordance with suggestions and resubmit.

Admission Criteria

Fall deadline: January 1

- International applicants must send a copy of their TOEFL score, per university requirements.

Application Process and Materials

Apply online through the Graduate School (<https://gradschool.missouri.edu/admissions/apply/>)

- The University requires an application fee and one set of transcripts from all colleges or universities you have attended.
- If 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 PhD program.

- Three current letters of recommendation that speak to your potential for success in a PhD program. (At least two should be from people familiar with academic and/or creative work).
- One transcript from all colleges or universities you have attended.
- CV
- List of any previous graduate classes taken (for PhD candidates)
- The Statement of Purpose should present information not emphasized in other portions of your application. It should give a sense of your intellectual interests and of your academic and professional qualifications and goals. Specifically, it should include:
 - Your plans for graduate work
 - Research interests
 - Creative specialties (for Creative Writing applicants)
 - Your preparation for graduate study in the field(s) you intend to pursue.
 - Reasons you feel the graduate program in English at the University of Missouri, specifically, will help you to meet your goals
 - In addition, candidates may wish to include some of the following:
 - Past research, teaching or creative accomplishments, such as theses, conference presentations, publications or relevant professional experience.
 - An indication of how you would contribute to diversity and inclusion in the department, such as any experience in building diverse and inclusive learning communities.
 - Resources at the University of Missouri, including specific faculty members, that could support your academic and professional goals.
- 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 these materials have been received. All materials, *including letters of recommendation*, must be received by the departmental deadline of January 1.

Admission Contact Information

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