

SLU English Graduate Handbook

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Welcome

This handbook is intended to provide an overview of curriculum, policies, and procedures to help graduate students navigate our MA and PhD programs. Please consult it regularly as you move through your degree, as it offers important information on topics ranging from coursework expectations to thesis and dissertation defenses. This handbook is meant to supplement the information available on our [website](#) and graduate catalogue entries for the [BA/MA](#), [MA](#), and [PhD](#). Please also make use of these resources, which contain up to date roadmaps and curricular requirements for each degree.

When you arrive at SLU you will be assigned to a faculty mentor who can help advise you on courses, answer questions about your program of study, and assist you with registration. As you get to know our faculty and determine a focus for your work, you may change your mentor. Your new mentor may eventually advise your capstone project, whether it is an MA essay, an MA thesis, or a dissertation.

Your mentor will not be your only contact for advice and information, however. You might seek out mentoring relationships with other graduate students through the [English Graduate Organization](#). You will get to know a wide range of faculty members as you take courses in the department. And the Director of Graduate Studies can be a resource for any questions that might arise regarding the structure of the program, curriculum, and requirements.

In the following pages, you will find contact information for a range of faculty and administrators who you may be in touch with during your time at SLU. You will find year-by-year descriptions of what you need to do to graduate successfully and on time. And you will learn about funding, graduate assistantships, and more.

We are proud of our graduate student and faculty community and are delighted to have you join us. We look forward to working together as fellow teachers and scholars.

For questions about:**Contact:**

Finances, graduate assistant contracts, the mechanics of registration, supplies, room reservations	Leslie Neal, Administrative Assistant, Department of English, leslie.neal@slu.edu
Admissions, the structure of the MA or PhD program, curriculum, requirements, graduate assistantship assignments and positions, mentoring	Maryse Jayasuriya, Director of Graduate Studies, Department of English, maryse.jayasuriya@slu.edu
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Conference and research funding	Jen Rust, Associate Chair, Department of English, jennifer.rust@slu.edu
Career placement and professionalization	Placement Director, Department of English, TBA
Specific faculty member concerns, departmental issues	Brian Yothers, Chair, Department of English, brian.yothers@slu.edu
Graduation and degree audit forms	MA: Janie Henderson, Masters Candidacy Specialist, janie.d.henderson@slu.edu or PhD: Christine Harper, Doctoral Candidacy Specialist, christine.harper@slu.edu
Course-level overrides, College of Arts and Sciences policies, registration adjustments and petitions to change programs	Jennifer Popiel, Associate Dean of Graduate Affairs, College of Arts and Sciences, jennifer.popiel@slu.edu

Contact Information

Academic Policies

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Unless on university-approved leave, students must register each fall and spring semester. Students in coursework should meet with their mentor to discuss course selection and registration plans.

Reading and Research Courses

In addition to course work, students may register for the following reading and research courses. These courses have specific section numbers keyed to each faculty member. The faculty member must issue an override for students to register for their reading / research courses.

- MA students who elect to write a master's essay should enroll in three credit hours of ENGL 5980 for the semester during which they undertake the project.
- MA students who elect to write a master's thesis should enroll in six credit hours of ENGL 5990 and typically do so in the second year of master's study. The six hours can be taken in a single semester or can be split into two three credit courses to be taken over the full academic year.
- All PhD students must enroll in 12 credit hours of ENGL 6990 during their programs of study. Students are encouraged to enroll in three credits each term until the 12 credits are completed. Once a student has accrued 12 credits they must register for zero hours of 6990 in order to remain actively enrolled.

Internships

Students may take an internship for a maximum of three credits toward the MA or PhD degree during the academic year or over the summer. Please contact the Director of Graduate Studies for more information on expectations and registration.

Students on 11 or 12-month Assistantships

Students on 11- or 12-month contracts must enroll for coursework in the summer session during which they are receiving a stipend. Those at dissertation stage who have already enrolled in 12 hours of ENGL 6990 may meet this requirement by enrolling in 6990 for zero hours.

Coursework Outside the Department

Students may take up to six hours of non-SLU and/or non-English coursework as part of an English degree program. This can take the form of:

- Courses taken at area universities, including Washington University in St. Louis and the University of Missouri at Saint Louis. Before a student may take extramural coursework they must fill out and submit an [Inter-University Registration Form](#)
- Courses taken at SLU in a discipline other than English. Students interested in taking a course outside of the English department should consult first with their advisor and then email the Director of Graduate Studies for approval.

Students may also take additional courses strictly for enrichment purposes, either at SLU or another area university, that will not fulfill a degree requirement. Before taking such courses, however, students must make certain that they are making timely progress toward degree completion and that they have the permission of their mentors.

4000-Level Coursework

Students may also take up to six hours of 4000-level coursework. Faculty may add additional work to the 4000-level curriculum for graduate students. Students who take a 4000-level course for graduate credit must receive a level override from the Associate Dean for Graduate Education. Students requesting an override should email the Dean, cc: the Director of Graduate Studies, and provide their Banner ID, the course number, and the CRN number.

Applying to Graduate

All students who will be completing their degree requirements at the end of a particular term must apply to graduate in their final semester (often before the second week of classes).

Graduate Student Mentoring

Faculty members mentoring students have primary responsibility for providing guidance, as needed, during coursework. Faculty mentors should closely monitor candidates' academic progress toward degree completion. Faculty mentors also serve as primary teaching resources for graduate students and should visit students' classrooms and provide feedback at least once per academic year. Graduate students who would like to change their mentors should contact the Director of Graduate Studies.

Essay, Thesis, and Doctoral Dissertation Direction

Master's essay, thesis, and dissertation directors have primary responsibility for guiding the student's culminating project; thesis and dissertation directors are also obliged to keep other members of the student's thesis/dissertation committees informed of all major aspects of the project, including sharing drafts of the project at appropriate times and securing approval of reading lists prior to exams. During those times when a project director may be unable to respond to a student's draft for an extended period of time, they are expected to find another member (or other members) of the project committee to take the lead on the project rather than allowing it to go unread. In addition, directors have the obligation to closely monitor candidates' academic progress on their culminating projects. Graduate students whose mentors who are either not responding in a timely fashion, or who would like to change their mentors, should contact the Director of Graduate Studies.

Non-SLU English Faculty on Dissertation Committees

A non-Saint Louis University faculty member or someone outside of the major field may serve on a student's dissertation committee. Such committee members must have a terminal degree in the field and/ or have significant expertise or experience of relevance to the dissertation. Non-SLU committee members (or SLU faculty without Graduate Faculty status) must be approved to serve on an ad hoc basis by the Associate Dean of Graduate Education. Approvals may be made upon written request by the dissertation committee chair. The request should include a brief rationale for the member's service and the proposed member's CV.

To maintain good standing in the MA and PhD programs, students must:

- Maintain at least a 3.0 (MA) or 3.3 (PhD) GPA, with no more than one grade of “C” or below
- Carry no more than one “I” (incomplete) grade or missing grade into a new semester.
- (Full time students only) Complete at least 12 graded credit hours per year until one’s coursework requirements have been met,
- (Full time students only) Be on track to complete all requirements for the degree within two (MA) or five (PhD) years
- (Part time students only) Be on track to complete all requirements for the degree within five (MA) or seven (PhD) years.

Student progress is monitored on an annual basis, and those failing to maintain good standing are subject to being placed on academic probation, a condition which, if not remedied within the terms specified by the department’s Director of Graduate Studies, subjects the student to dismissal from the program. Per university policy, a doctoral student may not be advanced to candidacy while on academic probation.

Incompletes

A grade of an Incomplete (“I”) may be granted student only if:

- a Petition for Course Extension is submitted after the final date for withdrawal from the course with a “W” but before the date final grades are due.
- the student is passing at the time of the request.
- the student has satisfactorily completed a substantial part of the coursework (i.e., approximately 2/3).

Even when the above criteria have been met, the instructor has the discretion to decide whether to grant the Incomplete or not. All petitions must be initiated by the student, in consultation with the instructor. The maximum period of time to accomplish incomplete coursework is one year. Instructors may set a deadline of less than one year. An “I” grade converts to a grade of “F” if coursework is not completed by the deadline indicated on the Petition for Course Extension. Graduating Students should request an Incomplete only under extreme circumstances. Degree conferral will not occur until the “I” is resolved.

Time-to-Degree Extensions

We expect students to make good progress toward degree completion. Our programs are structured to allow students to complete the MA in two years and the PhD in five years. The University offers more lenience toward time to degree, allowing five years for the MA and seven years for the PhD. Students who have not completed their degrees within the time periods stipulated in the Graduate Catalog must request an extension using [this form](#). This petition should be submitted one full month in advance of the expiration of one's current time to degree.

Leaves of Absence

A student requesting a leave of absence should make that request prior to the beginning of a semester using [this form](#), although under some extenuating circumstances (e.g., serious illness), retroactive leaves may be granted. These leaves are designed to address exceptional circumstances.

Program Withdrawal

Students wishing to withdraw from a graduate program may do so by contacting the Director of Graduate Studies. When possible, students are encouraged to finish out a semester and/or academic year before withdrawing in order to avoid disrupting their Graduate Assistantship and funding.

Academic Dismissal

If the department believes that a student warrants dismissal from their academic program, the student's advisor and the Director of Graduate Studies make a dismissal recommendation, notifying the student in writing of the grounds. When the reason for making such a recommendation has to do with academic failings (typically substandard progress toward degree completion), the student is offered the opportunity to withdraw from the program rather than face dismissal charges. Students may appeal dismissal using the College of Arts & Sciences Graduate Program Appeals Procedures (available [here](#))

Funding & Professional Development

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Full-time students in the MA and PhD programs are ordinarily admitted with full funding packages consisting of tuition remission, health insurance, and a living stipend. Most contracts are for 9 months running roughly from mid-August to mid-May. Students are expected to perform the equivalent of 20 hours per week of work in exchange for their funding. Teaching one class counts as 10 hours per week. Graduate Assistant positions are assigned at the discretion of the Director of Graduate Studies.

All graduate students should read the [Saint Louis University Graduate Assistant Handbook](#) for University-wide policies regarding Graduate Assistantships.

Writing Program Teaching

Funded students are generally expected to teach one class per semester unless they have a full 20-hour non-teaching assignment. Students may request to teach two courses per semester, but this is recommended primarily for later-stage PhD students.

MA students and PhD students without prior teaching experience will begin teaching in their second semester, after completing English 5010: Teaching Writing. PhD students with prior teaching experience at the MA level will begin teaching in the fall of their first year.

Students ordinarily begin by teaching English 1900, or Eloquentia Perfecta 1, the University's required writing course. Students then may move on to teach English 1500, the precursor to English 1900, and/or English 4000, Business and Professional Writing. These assignments are made at the discretion of the Director of the Writing Program.

Literature Teaching

The department strives to give every PhD student an opportunity to teach at least one literature course during their time at SLU. First priority for available literature courses goes to students in their second year of PhD coursework who have not yet taught a literature course. Remaining courses will be assigned according to student preferences, seniority, previous literature teaching experience, and progress through the program.

Research Assistantships

The department offers two types of research assistantship (RAs). Some RAs assist faculty in researching books, articles, conference papers, and other publications. Others assist faculty in administrative work. RAs are ordinarily 10 hour positions, but some are 20 hour positions.

University Writing Services Consultants

Most first year students are assigned to 10 hours / week as UWS consultants and many continue in this position beyond the first year, developing expertise toward administrative positions (see below). Consultants provide tutoring for undergraduate and graduate students and engage in professional development activities as assigned by the supervisor of UWS.

University Writing Services Administrative Positions

UWS has two 20-hour positions assisting with the administration of UWS. These positions give students 11 or 12 months of funding, rather than the usual 9. PhD students interested in Writing Center Administration are given first priority for these positions, but all PhD students are eligible.

Compass Lab

The department has three 10-hour research assistantships with the Compass Lab. The Compass Lab provides support for multimodal work in the Writing Program.

Other Positions

There are several other Graduate Assistant positions in the Department, some of which are 10 and some of which are 20-hour positions. The Director of Graduate Studies will solicit student preferences for all available positions in the Spring for the following academic year, providing information as needed about the positions available.

Graduate Career Preparation and Placement

English faculty are committed to assisting graduate students to prepare for successful job searches. Graduate advisors, members of dissertation committees, and other faculty work closely with students to aid them in developing a strong record of professional achievement throughout their years at SLU, and to presenting that record effectively in applications for particular positions.

The department also appoints at least one faculty member each year to the position of Placement Director, who is responsible for giving students feedback on job materials, organizing presentations on various career tracks, and setting up mock interviews and/or job talks for students seeking academic employment.

Those considering non-academic employment are also strongly encouraged to take advantage of the many support opportunities, including actual and practice interviews, arranged through the university's Office of Career Services

Support for Professional Travel

Departmental funding is available to help support graduate students' travel to do necessary thesis/dissertation-related research, present conference papers, or attend workshops. Because departmental funding is limited, priority is given to those who are presenting papers at national or regional conferences. All funding requests should be made in early fall, preferably before September 15, and should be sent to the Associate Chair. The following information should be included in the request: the name of the traveler, the reason for the trip, the name of the conference/workshop, the travel destination, the departure and return dates, an estimate budget, a justification for the trip, and trip's priority for the traveler. The budget should include a breakup of costs by transportation, lodging, and conference registration. Not all budget needs are guaranteed to be met, as departmental budgets fluctuate year to year. The GSA also has travel awards, which can be used to supplement departmental funding.

In addition to the awards and opportunities below, there are several fellowships, grants, and awards offered through the University. More information is available [here](#).

The Rev. Walter J. Ong, S.J. Award for Excellence in Research

The Rev. Walter J. Ong, S.J., Award, named in honor of a long-time SLU faculty member and one of the great scholars of the twentieth century, is presented annually to a doctoral student in the Department in recognition of genuinely exceptional research as well as scholarly achievement and promise. The amount of the award is \$500.

Submissions are evaluated on the basis of the portfolio which each candidate submits to the Research Convenor and the information supplied in the supporting letters of faculty referees (see below). The award is made by the Research Committee, acting on behalf of the English Department. All current English Ph.D. students who are in good standing and are making appropriate progress toward the Ph.D. degree are eligible for consideration. Although a student may be considered for the award during more than one review cycle, they may only hold the award once in their graduate career at Saint Louis University.

Application & Review Procedure:

Applicants who wish to be considered for the award should submit a portfolio to the Research Convenor who chairs the Department's Research Committee. The portfolio should be submitted by the established deadline, which is normally January 1. Applicants should also arrange for a confidential reference letter (no more than two pages) to be forwarded to the Research Convenor by the application deadline. In the letter, the referee should assess the applicant's scholarly achievements and promise to date, and should specify the nominee's current progress toward completing the dissertation. The expectation is that letters will normally be supplied by the student's advisor, but applicants may request letters from any FT member of the faculty of the English Department.

The portfolio (submitted electronically) should include:

- A statement, up to one page in length, of the candidate's research achievements and plans,
- A full vita.
- A research dossier which emphasizes original and creative scholarship that is published or in the publication stream. Normally, this dossier will include copies of any published work, work that is due to be published, and/or work that has been submitted for publication in a peer-reviewed journal or by a reputable press. Any pre-publication work submitted should be in its "final" form. Web-based work (research tools, blogs, videos, databases, contributions to online journals, etc.) may also be submitted, but works that do not appear in peer-reviewed venues should be accompanied by a brief written account (composed by the applicant) of the scholarly and/or intellectual impact and significance of these items within the nominee's field.

These materials are reviewed by the Research Committee, which either chooses the winning submission or determines, at its discretion, that no award should be made during a given year. The determination to make an award requires a simple majority of the committee membership. The committee will not consider incomplete or late submissions.

No later than February 15, the Research Convenor will announce the Ong Award winner to the department chairperson, who in turn will inform the Library Associates, which group also recognizes the recipient.

The Fournier Award for Excellence in Graduate Student Teaching

The Fournier Award is named after a long-time faculty member in the department, Lucien "Lou" Fournier, and is given annually for teaching excellence through a faculty nominating process initiated in the spring semester. Self-nominations are not permitted. The amount of the award is \$100. The award is made by the graduate director and the graduate committee, acting on behalf of the English department. All current English graduate students who are in at least their fourth semester of teaching at SLU and are making appropriate progress toward their MA or PhD degree are eligible for consideration. Although a student may be considered for the award during more than one review cycle, they may only hold the award once in their graduate career at SLU.

Application & Review Procedure:

Near the beginning of the spring semester the director of graduate studies sends out a call for nominations to the English faculty. Nominating letters, which are submitted to the graduate director, should be no more than one page in length and require the faculty nominator to have observed the nominee's teaching and be prepared to assess their overall instructional competencies, including those observed at first hand.

Nominees who wish to be considered for the award must submit a portfolio to the graduate director by the established deadline. This portfolio must include:

- A statement, up to one page in length, of the candidate's teaching philosophy,
- A full vita that includes a list of courses and course sections taught, and
- One or two syllabi that the nominee regards as representative of their instructional practice.

These materials, along with the nominee's student evaluations, are reviewed by the graduate committee, which either chooses the winning submission or determines, at its discretion, that no award should be made during a given year. The determination to make an award requires a simple majority of the committee membership. The committee does not consider incomplete or late submissions.

Georgia K. Johnston Summer Research Awards

The Georgia K. Johnston Summer Research Award is funded by the generosity of our late colleague Prof. Georgia K. Johnston. Prof. Johnston was known for her clear and comprehensive scholarly vision, and this award supports the research efforts of doctoral students who are actively writing their dissertations. Up to three awards of \$2500 each will be given for each summer.

Application & Review Procedure:

Applications for these awards will be accepted once per academic year, during each spring term.

In January of each year, the research director will seek faculty nominations for this award from among doctoral students whose dissertation proposals have been approved and who have been admitted to candidacy. Nominating letters, submitted to the departmental Director of Research, should be no more than one page in length and should include a statement regarding the student's progress toward completing the doctoral dissertation.

In early spring, and no later than February 15, nominees who wish to be considered for the award must submit a portfolio to the Director of Research. This portfolio must include:

- A clear research plan
- A specific proposal of what will be accomplished over the summer.

These materials will be reviewed by the department's Research Committee, which will choose the winning submissions. The determination to make an award requires a simple majority of the committee membership. The committee will not consider incomplete or late submissions. The awardee's names will be announced in March.

By the end of September, awardees will submit, to the Director of Research, a brief report about the specific outcomes that resulted from the award.

The Joe Weixlmann Award for Excellence in Graduate Student Service

The Joe Weixlmann Award for Excellence in Graduate Student Service recognizes the graduate student who exemplifies the dedication to departmental service and collegiality that Professor Emeritus Joe Weixlmann embodied. The award is given in the spring semester, in light of the record of the student's service, as recognized by the Chair of the Department and by the Director of Graduate Studies. This award carries a cash prize of \$500.

The Sara van den Berg Award for Graduate Student Publication

The Sara van den Berg Award for Graduate Student Publication rewards scholarly publication (e.g., essays, articles, book chapters, books) at SLU. To be eligible for an award, a graduate student must:

Fellowships & Awards

- Either be, or have been, in good standing within the MA / PhD English programs at SLU at the time that they submitted their work for publication.
- Have received written confirmation that their work has been accepted for publication in a peer-reviewed venue.

Awards will be for \$500 each, and up to two awards may be made in any year. A graduate student may receive only one award during their time at SLU.

There is no deadline for submissions. A student may submit an entry whenever the publisher has issued a formal contract or letter of acceptance. Application requirements: A student must submit the following: (1) a current c.v.; (2) a copy of the manuscript or publication; and (3) a copy of the contract or letter of acceptance.

Recipients of the award will be determined by the Department's Research Committee.

The MA

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The MA in English requires 30 hours of coursework and is ordinarily a two-year program.

The following courses are required for the MA:

- English 5000: Methods of Literary Research
- English 5010: Teaching Writing (required only for students funded by Graduate Teaching Assistantships)
- English 5110: Literary Theory

In addition, students must take at least one course in four of the five following fields:

1. Medieval Literature
2. Early Modern Literature
3. Literature of the Long 19th Century
4. Modern and/or Contemporary Literature
5. Rhetoric and/or Composition

Research options:

Students may opt to take all 30 credits in coursework (the coursework option); 27 credits in coursework plus a three-credit directed essay (the essay option); or 24 credits in coursework plus a six-credit thesis (the thesis option). These options are discussed in greater detail below.

Capstone:

At the end of the second year, students submit a portfolio of work including a reflection, a professional document, a polished writing sample, and a cv to their advisor. Students also complete an oral examination on a list of 15 works developed in consultation with a committee of three faculty members.

Year 1

Choosing an Advisor

By, or shortly after, the time of matriculation, incoming MA students are assigned first-year advisors based on their research interests and sense of their future direction in the discipline. The advisor will field basic programmatic questions and assist the student with course selection.

Students often change first year advisors, and may request a change of advisor at any time by contacting the Director of Graduate Studies.

By the end of the first year at the latest, students should officially confirm their chosen advisor. This faculty member will chair their exam committee and direct their MA Essay or Thesis (if applicable).

Coursework

Students normally take three courses in the fall of the first year, including ENGL5000 Methods of Literary Research and ENGL5010 Teaching Writing. Students normally take two courses in the spring of the first year, including ENGL5110 Literary Theory.

Choosing a Path: Coursework, Essay, or Thesis

By the end of the first year, MA students should choose their path through the MA. The options are:

- Coursework Option. Students take ten courses (30 credits).
- Essay Option. Students enroll in English 5980 (three credits) and complete a master's essay in one semester. Written under the direction of a faculty member chosen by the student, the master's essay is shorter than a thesis (approximately 25-30 pages) but also demonstrates a candidate's ability to independently frame and complete an article-length project of their own design.

- Thesis Option. Students electing to write a thesis enroll in English 5990 (6 hours) and produce a study of at least 60 pages. The six thesis credits may be taken in a single semester (usually spring of the second year) or they can be spread out over the entire second year (three in the fall; three in the spring). The student writes a thesis under the direction of an advisor of their choosing and defends the completed thesis orally before the thesis advisor and two other faculty members selected by the candidate. The examiners on this committee may be, but do not have to be, the same three faculty who serve as examiners on the student's MA exam.

Summer Coursework or Internship

Students are not required to do any work toward the degree over the summer, and nearly all funding packages are on a 9-month contract. However, students are encouraged to consider a summer course, if available, or an internship for credit. This reduces the coursework burden in the second year of the MA program.

Year 2

Coursework

If students have taken 5 courses during the first year and have not taken any credits over the summer, second year students should take three courses, or nine credits, during the fall of the second year. Students who have completed summer coursework or internships should take two courses, or six credits, during the fall of the second year. Three of these credits may be used for the MA essay or for half of the MA thesis. Students should take two courses, or six credits, in the spring. Three of these credits may be used for the MA essay or for the second half of thesis writing. Some students may choose to take all six credits as thesis hours, devoting the entire second semester to writing an MA thesis.

Choosing a Committee

By the middle of the first semester of the second year, MA students should assemble an MA exam committee of three faculty members (including the advisor) from three distinct areas within the discipline. If a student is writing a thesis, this committee may be different from the thesis committee due to the need to distribute across historical / subfield areas.

- Thesis Option. Students electing to write a thesis enroll in English 5990 (6 hours) and produce a study of at least 60 pages. The six thesis credits may be taken in a single semester (usually spring of the second year) or they can be spread out over the entire second year (three in the fall; three in the spring). The student writes a thesis under the direction of an advisor of their choosing and defends the completed thesis orally before the thesis advisor and two other faculty members selected by the candidate. The examiners on this committee may be, but do not have to be, the same three faculty who serve as examiners on the student's MA exam.

Summer Coursework or Internship

Students are not required to do any work toward the degree over the summer, and nearly all funding packages are on a 9-month contract. However, students are encouraged to consider a summer course, if available, or an internship for credit. This reduces the coursework burden in the second year of the MA program.

Transitioning to the PhD Program

MA students interested in transitioning to the PhD program after the end of their second year should contact the Director of Graduate Studies for information about deadlines. Ordinarily, petitions to the PhD program are due in December.

The following documents are required:

- a petition to apply to the PhD program
- a one-page statement of intention that includes the doctoral track the student wishes to pursue and the faculty member(s) under whom the person wishes to write their dissertation
- a writing sample from the student's master's program, preferably in the intended area of doctoral study
- a current curriculum vita

Recommendation letters and transcripts are not required. The Director of Graduate Studies will obtain the student's MA transcript and will also conduct an informal poll of both the student's MA instructors and any other departmental faculty members who have interacted with the student in a substantial way and wish to comment on their admissibility. All application materials are submitted directly to the Director of Graduate Studies, not through the application portal. The graduate committee will review these materials, along with the four documents mentioned above.

Developing an MA Exam List

By the end of the first semester, students should assemble a list of 15 texts addressing a single theme, problem, question, or area of interest. Each member of the committee should help the student generate a list of five texts in their subject area. For instance, a student focusing on representations of nature might work with an Early Modernist on a list of 17th century nature writing, an 20th century African Americanist on a list of works on race and nature in the 20th century, and a Rhetorician on a list of texts addressing nature and rhetoric.

Applying to graduate

The deadline to apply for graduation is in January. Thesis students follow all procedures [here](#). Non-thesis students follow all procedures [here](#). **All students must complete the Master's Oral Exam Request Form at least two weeks prior to the MA exam.**

Portfolio

By April 15, students should submit a final portfolio of work to their advisor. See Appendix: MA Portfolio. The advisor will read the portfolio, confirm that it is satisfactory, and circulate it to the other exam committee members before allowing the student to take the MA exam.

Thesis Defense

Students pursuing the Thesis option must defend the thesis in a one-hour session with the thesis committee prior to the end of the second semester.

MA Exam

By the end of the semester, students must take and pass the MA exam. The exam will be scheduled for approximately 1.5 hours.

Current SLU English majors are eligible to apply for the accelerated BA to MA program, which allows students to complete both their BA and MA in English in five years. Application information will be provided by the Undergraduate Committee, and students are encouraged to contact the Director of Graduate Studies for more information about the program.

Admitted students must submit an [Application for Provisional Admission to An ABM Program](#) to the Associate Dean for Graduate Education at the time of admission. Students then submit a [Petition for Classified Admission](#) when they apply to graduate with their BA (the semester before the beginning of graduate status). Please consult the College of Arts and Sciences ABM requirements [here](#).

The curricular requirements for the MA portion of the BA/MA are the same as the stand alone MA degree, and students should follow the requirements outlined in the MA degree portion of this handbook. There are, however, a few differences between the BA/MA and the stand alone MA degree.

First, students in the accelerated program earn both degrees in a shortend period of time by counting four graduate courses toward their undergraduate major requirements. These are: ENGL 5000, ENGL 5110, and two 5000 or 6000-level electives.

Once a student completes these courses and all other undergraduate degree requirements, they attain graduate status. This ordinarily happens at the beginning of their fifth year.

Students in the accelerated program may hold graduate assistantships, but funding is not guaranteed for BA/MA students. Students should consult their financial aid counselor for more information as to how their aid might change once they move to graduate status. The department aims to assist students with funding for the fifth year and may have assistantship funding and/or partial tuition scholarships available, but the availability of this funding may change year to year.

A full road map and more information, including application information, is available [here](#).

MA students are required to produce a final portfolio in order to graduate from the MA program. The portfolio must be turned into the oral exam committee chair three weeks prior to the exam for approval. It will not be graded, but it must be deemed satisfactory, according to the criteria below, by the MA exam committee chair in order for the student to move on to the oral exam.

The portfolio should consist of the following documents:

A one-page statement that reflects on the relationship between the student's program of study and their future goals. The statement should be approximately 500 words long. It should make direct references to specific courses, works, readings, essays, and other educational experiences that have shaped the student's experience in the MA program. It should make some effort to speculate as to how the student's MA experience might shape the work they do in the future.

A resume / c.v.

The document should be organized, graphically appealing, and professional.

A professional document

This document could be a proposal for a PhD program, a cover letter for a non-academic job, a teaching philosophy statement, or another relevant professional document. It should be polished, ready to send or use, and well-adapted to its intended purpose.

A polished piece of writing

This can be a revised seminar paper, the MA essay, or the MA thesis. It should be a paper of at least 12 p., ready to be used as a writing sample for future professional or academic goals.

MA Exam

By the end of the third semester of the MA, the student must generate a list of 15 texts under the direction of three faculty members (five texts per faculty member). These texts may be drawn from coursework and should span at least three of the department's five distribution areas. The list should be based on a unifying concern, argument, theme, or question.

The oral exam will be scheduled for approximately an hour and a half. In the first 15 minutes, the student will make a formal presentation which should consist of an argument about the significance of the list of texts and how the works connect with one another. It can consist of a talk from notes or a conference-paper style presentation. Visual materials, such as slides, may be used.

The remainder of the exam will consist of questions from the committee, which may be questions about the formal presentation but may also be about any aspects of the individual works on the list.

	Distinction	Pass	No Pass
Knowledge of Works	Shows evidence of detailed knowledge of works, forms, and genres.	Shows evidence of having read works and an awareness of forms and genres.	Shows gaps in basic knowledge of works. Lacks awareness of form and genres.
Context	Demonstrates a complex knowledge of historical and cultural contexts.	Demonstrates a basic knowledge of historical and cultural contexts.	Shows significant gaps in knowledge of historical and cultural contexts.
Interpretation & Synthesis	Demonstrates a sophisticated understanding of the relationship among works and the ability to connect the works to one or more theoretical perspective.	Demonstrates an ability to think connectively among texts and to engage texts in relation to one or more theoretical perspectives.	Lacks awareness of theory. Inability to make connections among texts.
Quality of Spoken Argument	Responds to questions in a consistently thorough, clear, and focused manner.	Responds in a generally thorough, clear, and focused manner.	Responses are vague, incomplete, or unfocused.

The PhD

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The PhD in English requires 24 hours of coursework beyond the MA and is ordinarily a five-year program.

The following courses are required for the PhD only for students who have not completed comparable courses during their MA:

- English 5000: Methods of Literary Research
- English 5010: Teaching Writing (required only for students funded by Graduate Teaching Assistantships)
- English 5110: Literary Theory

In addition, students must take at least one course in three of the five following fields:

1. Medieval Literature
2. Early Modern Literature
3. Literature of the Long 19th Century
4. Modern and/or Contemporary Literature
5. Rhetoric and/or Composition

Language Requirement:

Students must prove reading proficiency in one language other than English.

Exams:

Students complete a written and an oral exam on a list of 70 texts in their chosen field of study. 50 of these works come from a set list; 20 are developed in consultation with the dissertation committee.

Dissertation:

Students complete a dissertation proposal, ordinarily by the end of the third year. Years four and five of the program are devoted to writing, revising, and defending the dissertation.

Year 1

Choosing an Advisor

By, or shortly after, the time of matriculation, incoming PhD students are assigned first-year advisors based on their research interests and sense of their future direction in the discipline. The advisor will field basic programmatic questions and assist the student with course selection.

Students often change first year advisors, and may request a change of advisor at any time by contacting the Director of Graduate Studies.

Coursework

Full time students take at least four courses (12 credits) during their first year.

Year 2

Choosing a Dissertation Director and Committee

By the end of the second year, each PhD student should have selected the faculty member who will direct their dissertation. In addition, the student and director should assemble a committee of at least three graduate faculty members who will oversee the development, writing, and completion of the dissertation. These three faculty members will also form the core of the student's doctoral exam committee.

Exam List

By the end of the second year, students should select, in consultation with one's dissertation director, their chosen departmental exam list.

Coursework

By the end of the second year, students should have taken all 24 credits of required doctoral coursework.

Year 3

First Meeting with Director of Graduate Studies and Chair of the Department

By the end of the first semester of the third year at the latest, and sooner if the student completes coursework on an accelerated schedule, the student and their dissertation director should schedule a meeting with the Director of Graduate Studies and the Chair of the Department. This meeting will provide the student and the dissertation director an opportunity to ask any questions about the exam and dissertation proposal mentoring process and ensure that the student is making timely progress toward candidacy.

Language Requirement

The student will complete the language requirement by the end of the third year at the latest.

Supplementary Exam List

In consultation with their dissertation committee, the student will develop and obtain approval for a list of 20 texts to supplement their chosen departmental exam list.

Preparing for Doctoral Qualifying Examinations.

Students should speak with their dissertation director and all other committee members prior to taking exams. Faculty should strive to be clear about their expectations for the exam and assist students in strategies for reading and study.

Students should be prepared both to demonstrate close-reading skills with respect to items on their reading lists and to discuss their texts within the context of current disciplinary trends, the works' critical reception, and the works' theoretical underpinnings, especially insofar as these contexts are provided in works on their reading lists. Students should be prepared to discuss works both individually and in relation to one another. Developing and being prepared to demonstrate a sound grasp of literary history, including movements and trends, is also important. At the time of the oral examination, the student may bring, for reference purposes, a copy of their list with the dates removed.

Year 3

The Written Exam

The written exam is a competency essay, written over the course of seven days, in response to a question based on the texts on the exam reading lists. This question will be selected by the student from a set of three questions, one provided by each dissertation committee member.

The successful competency essay will be approximately 20-25 pages in length and will present an argument that:

- offers and analyzes specific supporting textual examples chosen from the student's preparatory reading lists;
- situates the analysis within aesthetic, cultural, and historical frames in the particular field;
- identifies major scholarly approaches that have been applied to this problem/ question; and
- demonstrates familiarity with appropriate research resources.

Within one week of the exam completion date, the three members of the written exam committee will determine if the student has passed the written exam. If they designate the competency essay a "pass," the student will move on to the oral exam. If the three members of the written exam committee are not unanimous about designating the competency essay a pass, they must meet to determine, by majority vote following discussion, whether the student passed. Should a student fail the written portion of the examination, the exam may be repeated a second time. The second attempt may not be scheduled within the same academic term as the first. A student who fails the second attempt will not be permitted to continue in the doctoral program.

The Oral Exam

To schedule the exam, the student and the oral exam committee must agree upon a provisional date for the oral exam and complete the Doctoral Oral Examination Form. This form must be received by the Doctoral Candidacy Specialist at least two weeks prior to the date of the exam.

Year 3

The oral examination committee is comprised of the three faculty members on the student's dissertation committee and two other faculty agreed on by the student and the student's advisor in consultation with the graduate director and the department chair. The oral exam lasts for two hours. The examination committee will ask the student about the competency essay, as well as texts on the preparatory reading lists.

At the conclusion of the exam, the five examiners meet to discuss whether the student has passed the oral examination; passing requires a positive vote of the majority. Should a student fail the oral exam, the exam may be repeated a second time. The second attempt may not be scheduled within the same academic term as the first. An outside committee member (a Saint Louis University faculty member from another program) must be present at the second exam. A student who fails the second attempt will not be permitted to continue in the doctoral program.

The Dissertation Proposal

In consultation with their dissertation committee, the student will develop a proposal for their dissertation. The proposal will be drafted with feedback from the dissertation director first, followed by feedback from the dissertation committee. See The Dissertation Proposal for guidelines on the proposal format.

Once the committee approves the proposal, the dissertation director will schedule a one-hour dissertation proposal workshop, in which students will have the opportunity to ask specific questions about dissertation writing, and faculty will have the opportunity to give feedback and suggestions for the dissertation writing process.

Full time students should complete the dissertation proposal and workshop within three months of the completion of their oral exams and by the end of their third year. Once the proposal is approved and workshopped, the student is officially advanced to candidacy.

Year 4

Writing the Dissertation

The dissertation director is the primary supervisor of the student's research and writing and should meet with the student regularly during this time to go over work and to help provide structure to the writing process. It is also crucial, however, that committee members have considerable input throughout the drafting of the dissertation. As individual chapters are approved by the director, the candidate should submit those chapters to the rest of the committee for further comment and guidance. Committee members will forward their comments and revision suggestions both to the dissertation director and to the candidate.

Second Meeting with Director of Graduate Studies and Chair of the Department

By the end of the first semester of the fourth year at the latest, and sooner if the student advances to candidacy on an accelerated schedule, the student and their dissertation director should schedule a meeting with the Director of Graduate Studies and the Chair of the Department. This meeting will provide the student and the dissertation director an opportunity to ask any questions about the dissertation mentoring process and ensure that the student is making timely progress toward graduation.

Year 5

Submitting a Draft of the Dissertation

When the candidate and the dissertation director agree that the dissertation as a whole is ready for examination, the candidate will submit a copy of the dissertation to their entire committee. This copy will conform to guidelines in the most recent edition of the university's Policies and Procedures for Thesis, Project, and Dissertation Formatting and utilize the most recent edition of The MLA Style Manual or The Chicago Manual of Style; in the details of its presentation (e.g., notes, citations), the document will be formatted thoroughly and professionally as if it were the final version.

The Pre-Defense Meeting

Three to six weeks after the submission of the dissertation draft, the dissertation director will call a meeting of the entire committee and the candidate to discuss the submitted draft.

At this stage, any final concerns about the dissertation should be aired. Committee members discuss any remaining reservations about the dissertation's scope, coherence, methodology, or presentation with the candidate. The candidate should receive clear and explicit guidelines from the dissertation committee about what remains to be done regarding the criteria listed above before scheduling the public defense. The committee and the candidate will agree on a timetable for alterations or revisions, which might range from as little as a week (minor corrections) to as long as a semester or more (when there are extensive reservations about the scope and content of the dissertation).

Scheduling the Defense

The dissertation director will ensure that corrections, revisions, and emendations have been completed in the agreed-upon time. A paper copy of the corrected, final version will then be made available to all the dissertation committee members so that they may provisionally approve the dissertation. Any member of the committee may ask for a second meeting if they perceive continuing deficiencies in the dissertation. When all three members of the committee agree that the candidate is ready to advance, the candidate may schedule the public defense. Please note that the dissertation director must submit the Notification of Public Readiness for the Public Oral Defense of the Dissertation form to the Doctoral Candidacy Advisor, **at least two weeks in advance of the defense.**

The Dissertation Defense

The defense is scheduled for two hours. It is structured as follows:

- The director briefly introduces the candidate and their dissertation topic.
- The candidate presents the central argument of the dissertation, explains how the argument is developed, and provides a basic outline of the dissertation's structure, including the reasoning, evidence, and conclusions of the piece. The candidate also explains how the project might be developed for publication and/or post-doctoral work. This presentation, which runs for approximately 20 minutes, can range from somewhat informal to quite formal.
- Following this presentation, the director and committee members ask questions and engage in dialogue with the candidate, with discussion being moderated by the director.
- Following the exchange with the committee, audience members (if present) may add their questions.
- The director closes the defense, asks all but the committee members to leave the room, and the committee completes the balloting.

All PhD students must demonstrate reading proficiency in at least one language other than English prior to taking their qualifying examinations. Students working in the Medieval or Early Modern periods should consult with their dissertation directors and committee members as to whether additional language study is necessary for their research or future professional endeavors. Examples of students requiring additional language knowledge may include those whose research benefits from knowledge of multiple languages, those interested in comparative literature or translation, or those planning to pursue careers that require additional language training.

Courses taken to demonstrate language proficiency do not count toward the 24 hours of required coursework for the doctorate.

Students may demonstrate reading competence in a language by:

Documenting achieved reading competence as an MA student.

Documentation of this proficiency is subject to the review and approval of the Director of Graduate Studies.

Performing satisfactorily in an accelerated reading course (5010) offered for SLU graduate students by the Department of Languages, Literatures, & Cultures. LLC can provide information regarding when these courses are offered.

Successfully completing a 4000-level course in the Department of Languages, Literatures, & Cultures with a heavy concentration of reading in the original language. Those wishing to claim credit for such a course must petition the Director of Graduate Studies in writing and provide a course syllabus and course grade.

Demonstrating language proficiency through a two-hour examination administered by the English department. The student's advisor, in consultation with a faculty member in LLC, will choose either a scholarly monograph, or a chapter from a scholarly book, or a substantial scholarly article of at least 25 printed pages in the relevant language. The student will have access to the text several weeks in advance of the proposed examination time.

Language Requirement

The exam will consist of translating a passage of approximately one to one and half pages from the designated text. The translation should be grammatically accurate and idiomatically sensible. The student will have two hours to complete the translation and will have access to a dictionary. Any student choosing the examination option must arrange an examination date at least one full month in advance of the date on which they would prefer to take their doctoral exams. The English department relies upon the Department of Languages, Literatures, & Cultures to grade the examination, and ample time must be allowed for the receipt, grading, and return of the translation.

Students write an 7-10 page proposal (not including bibliography) for dissertation research. The proposal is a provisional document. It must make a persuasive case for a viable path of research, but committee members should expect that aspects of the dissertation may change once the student begins the project.

The proposal should consist of the following sections:

- **Significance and contribution:** describe the argument of the project and explain how it intervenes in current scholarship.
- **Organization:** propose an organizational logic for the dissertation, how key texts and examples will be chosen, and briefly describe each chapter.
- **Work plan:** outline your plan for completing the research and writing of the dissertation. Normally, the work plan should indicate a plan for completing the dissertation in two academic years.
- **Bibliography:** provide a bibliography of foundational texts for your dissertation research. The bibliography, which should be representative rather than comprehensive, should be no more than two pages.

The proposal should be written in consultation with the dissertation committee; each member of the committee should have an opportunity to give feedback and suggest revisions. But the proposal need not be a polished piece of writing.

The proposal will be officially approved after a one-hour workshop focusing on plans and suggestions for dissertation writing.

Timing

Full time students should aim to take the written and oral exams no later than the winter of the third year (December – March). Students should plan to hold the proposal workshop within two months of taking the exams. All students should have an approved proposal in place – and begin dissertation writing – by the end of the third year.

