

**English Department  
Graduate Program Handbook**

**South Dakota State University**

**Updated: January 25, 2019**

## Table of Contents

Introduction.....	1
English M.A. Program Mission Statement.....	1
English M.A. Program Student Learning Outcomes.....	1
Contact Information.....	2
Application Process.....	2
Additional Information for International Applicants.....	3
Graduate Teaching Assistantships.....	3
Tracks and Options.....	4
Thesis Option.....	4
Portfolio Option.....	4
Written Exam Option.....	4
Course Requirements.....	5
Core Requirements.....	5
Additional Requirements for Studies in Literature Track.....	5
Additional Requirements for Studies in Writing and Rhetoric Track.....	5
Plan of Study.....	6
Thesis Option.....	6
Acceptable Formats for the Thesis.....	6
Choosing a Thesis Advisor.....	6
Forming the Thesis Committee.....	6
Completing the Thesis Project.....	7
Guidelines for Critical and Creative Thesis Projects.....	7
The Critical Thesis.....	8
The Creative Thesis.....	8
Guidelines for Review and Approval of the Thesis Proposal.....	8
Assessment of English 798: Thesis.....	9
Portfolio Option.....	10
Acceptable Formats for the Portfolio.....	10
Choosing a Portfolio Advisor and Committee.....	10
Completing the Portfolio.....	10
Portfolio Guidelines.....	11
Revision of Portfolio Materials.....	11
Portfolio Contents.....	12
Written Exam Option.....	13
The Format of the Written Exam.....	13
Choosing an Exam Advisor and Forming the Exam Committee.....	13
Preparing for and Taking the Written Exam.....	13
Reading List.....	14
Oral Exam.....	14
Timeline.....	16
Thesis Option.....	16
Portfolio Option.....	17
Written Exam Option.....	17
Annual Review.....	18

Advising.....	18
Registration.....	18
Credit Hour Requirements for Graduate Students.....	18
Registering for Thesis and Research Credits.....	19
Continuing Enrollment.....	19
Obsolete Coursework.....	19
Summer Enrollment.....	19
Awards.....	19
The Maud Adams Award for Outstanding Graduate Student in English.....	19
Outstanding Graduate Teaching Assistant Award.....	20
Award for Excellence in Graduate Student Scholarship.....	20
Best Practices for Graduate Students.....	20
Professional Etiquette.....	20
General Quality of Graduate-Level Work.....	20

## **Introduction**

The English department at South Dakota State University has offered the M.A. degree since 1994. Our program is small enough for students to receive individual support from faculty within a close-knit graduate student community, but flexible enough to accommodate students' individual educational goals.

We offer several options for the completion of the degree. Students may choose either the Literature track or the Writing and Rhetoric track, and within each of these tracks they may complete their degree by submitting a critical or creative thesis, a critical and/or creative portfolio, or a written exam. Students in our program work closely with faculty who have expertise in a wide range of specialty areas, including British and American literature, women's writing, ethnic literatures, critical theory, rhetoric, composition, creative writing, professional and technical writing, peace and conflict studies, and film studies. Students interested in applying to our program should contact both the Graduate School and the English department Graduate Coordinator for information regarding the application process.

## **English M.A. Program Mission Statement**

The English department's M.A. program prepares students for professional careers or further graduate study by developing their capacity to analyze texts, conduct research, apply theory, and write creatively and critically.

## **English M.A. Program Student Learning Outcomes**

Upon the completion of the English M.A. program, students will be able to:

- Demonstrate an advanced ability to analyze and interpret literary and cultural texts.
- Examine significant texts, authors, periods, movements, genres, theories, and modes from literary history, interpreting the relationship between texts and their historical, aesthetic, cultural, and ideological contexts.
- Compose sophisticated argumentative, creative, and reflective texts that demonstrate focus, content, structure, evidence, style, and grammar appropriate to their rhetorical contexts.
- Demonstrate an advanced ability to apply theoretical concepts to the writing and analysis of texts.
- Produce original research that advances knowledge within the discipline; generates questions for scholarly inquiry; identifies its methodological and theoretical foundations; employs library resources and discipline-specific databases; evaluates and integrates secondary criticism; and documents sources using MLA style.
- Explain how literature both reflects and enriches the diversity of human experience through its exploration of the ways in which race, ethnicity, religion, gender, sexuality, ability, and class shape identity and influence perception.

- Deliver instruction that demonstrates a growing mastery of course content (cultural analysis, rhetoric, grammar, and research) and increasing skill in helping students of varying abilities improve their cultural awareness, critical acumen, reading comprehension, and writing competence. (Graduate teaching assistants only.)

### **Contact Information**

For more information about the M.A. in English at South Dakota State University, visit our web site at [www.sdstate.edu/english/graduate-program](http://www.sdstate.edu/english/graduate-program) or contact the English department Graduate Coordinator. Our department's contact information is as follows:

English Department  
South Dakota State University  
Pugsley Center (SPC) 301, Box 2218  
Brookings, SD 57007  
Phone: 605-688-5191  
Email: Sharon Smith, Graduate Coordinator, [sharon.smith@sdstate.edu](mailto:sharon.smith@sdstate.edu)

### **Application Process**

Individuals who wish to be considered for acceptance into the M.A. program in English must complete the Graduate School's online application at [www.sdstate.edu/graduate/](http://www.sdstate.edu/graduate/). The English department reviews applications on a rolling basis.

For admission into the M.A. Program in English, applicants must have a minimum of twenty-four semester hours of undergraduate credit in English or receive the consent of the Department Head. To be considered for unconditional acceptance and to be eligible for a graduate teaching assistantship, applicants must have at least a 3.0 undergraduate GPA and a 3.25 GPA in their undergraduate English courses.

In addition to the materials required by the Graduate School, the English department requires the following application materials:

- **A one-page statement of purpose explaining the applicant's interest in and goals for graduate study.** The statement of purpose should indicate whether or not the applicant would like to be considered for a graduate teaching assistantship. The applicant may upload this statement while completing the Graduate School's online application.
- **An eight- to ten-page critical writing sample.** This sample must engage in critical research and include a works cited page. The applicant may upload this writing sample while completing the Graduate School's online application.
- **Two letters of recommendation from faculty at the applicant's undergraduate institution.** Letters should come from faculty who are directly familiar with the applicant's academic work. They must address the applicant's scholarly potential and may also speak to the applicant's potential as a graduate teaching assistant. Letters

should come directly from the recommenders, who may submit their letters electronically along with the personal recommendation form provided by the Graduate School. The Graduate School will email recommenders detailed instructions for submitting their recommendations using the contact information provided by the applicant.

The English department does not require GRE scores.

### **Additional Information for International Applicants**

In addition to the admission requirements noted above, international applicants must score at least a 7.0 on the IELTS to be considered for admission into the M.A. program in English.

Both the Office of International Affairs and the Graduate School have information on their web sites specifically for international students. This includes the cost of tuition and housing information.

Office of International Affairs:

[www.sdstate.edu/international-affairs/admissions/graduate/index.cfm](http://www.sdstate.edu/international-affairs/admissions/graduate/index.cfm)

Graduate School:

[www.sdstate.edu/graduate/prospective/international.cfm](http://www.sdstate.edu/graduate/prospective/international.cfm)

### **Graduate Teaching Assistantships**

Applicants should indicate in the statement of purpose required by the department whether they wish to be considered for a graduate teaching assistantship. Graduate teaching assistantships allow for a full tuition waiver and a stipend of approximately \$10,000 per academic year. Teaching assistants take two graduate classes each semester and either teach two sections of Composition or teach one section of Composition while tutoring in the Writing Center. The assistantship is renewable, providing the student is making good academic progress and receives satisfactory teaching evaluations. The department requires all new teaching assistants to attend a one-week teaching workshop just prior to the start of their first fall semester. This workshop is held in late August and is led by the English department's Coordinator of Composition. Students who apply for but do not receive a teaching assistantship may reapply for one the following academic year.

## **Tracks and Options**

M.A. students in English choose one of the following tracks:

- Studies in Literature
- Studies in Writing and Rhetoric

Within each track, students may choose one of three options for the completion of the degree. These options include Graduate School Option A: Thesis (the English department's "Thesis Option"), Graduate School Option B: Research/Design Project (the English department's "Portfolio Option") and Graduate School Option C: Coursework (the English department's "Written Exam" option).

### *Thesis Option*

The thesis option requires students to successfully complete:

- Twenty-four credits of graduate coursework in English (eight courses)
- Six hours of thesis credit
- A thesis
- An oral exam

Students who choose the thesis option may choose to complete a critical or a creative thesis.

### *Portfolio Option*

The research/design project, or portfolio, option requires students to successfully complete:

- Thirty credits of graduate coursework in English (ten courses)
- Two hours of research credit
- A portfolio
- An oral exam

Students who choose the portfolio option may complete a portfolio that contains critical work, creative work, or a combination of both.

### *Written Exam Option*

The coursework, or written exam, option requires students to successfully complete:

- Thirty-six credits of graduate coursework in English (twelve courses)
- A written exam
- An oral exam

## **Course Requirements**

Students who choose the thesis option must complete twenty-four credits of coursework (eight courses) and six credits of thesis for a total of thirty credits; students who choose the portfolio option must complete thirty credits of coursework (ten courses) and two credits of research for a total of thirty-two credits; students who choose the written exam option must complete thirty-six credits of coursework (twelve courses).

### *Core Requirements*

6 credits

- ENGL 704: Intro to Graduate Studies (3 credits)
- ENGL 705: Seminar in Teaching Composition (3 credits; GTAs only; Non-GTAs must substitute a 700-level elective)

### *Additional Requirements for Studies in Literature Track*

24 credits for thesis option; 26 credits for portfolio option; 30 credits for written exam option

- 2 courses (6 credits) in American literature
- 2 courses (6 credits) in British literature
- 2 elective courses (6 credits; students who write a creative thesis must choose 2 creative writing courses)
- Students pursuing the thesis option must take 6 credits of thesis; students pursuing the portfolio option must take 2 additional elective courses and 2 credits of research; students pursuing the written exam option must take 4 additional elective courses (12 credits)

### *Additional Requirements for Studies in Writing and Rhetoric Track*

24 credits for thesis option; 26 credits for portfolio option; 30 credits for written exam option

- ENGL 710: Seminar in Rhetoric (3 credits)
- 1 course (3 credits) in American literature
- 1 course (3 credits) in British literature
- 3 additional courses (9 credits) in linguistics, rhetoric, or writing (students who write a creative thesis must choose at least 2 creative writing courses)
- Students pursuing the thesis option must take 6 credits of thesis; students pursuing the portfolio option must take 2 additional elective courses and 2 credits of research; students pursuing the written exam option must take 4 additional elective courses (12 credits)

Note: 50% of the student's coursework must be at the 700 level.

### **Plan of Study**

Each graduate student must submit a Plan of Study Form to the Graduate School as early in their coursework as possible. Students who have completed coursework must file a Change of Plan of Study Form if the coursework taken does not conform to the original Plan of Study. Students who change options after filing the original Plan of Study must file a Change of Plan of Study Form. Students will not be allowed to graduate until the Plan of Study on file with the Graduate School is accurate. The Plan of Study Form and the Change of Plan of Study Form can be found on the Graduate School's web site at [www.sdstate.edu/graduate-school/forms](http://www.sdstate.edu/graduate-school/forms).

### **Thesis Option**

#### *Acceptable Formats for the Thesis*

The student who chooses the thesis option may write either a critical or a creative thesis (see guidelines below). *A student may not write a thesis that does not conform to one of these two approved formats.*

#### *Choosing a Thesis Advisor*

A student who chooses the thesis option must, in consultation with the Graduate Coordinator, identify a thesis advisor before the end of the second semester in the program. The student should work with a faculty member whose area of specialization relates to the thesis project or who is familiar with the subject matter of the thesis. To ensure this, students should choose a thesis topic that relates to an available faculty member's area of interest and/or knowledge. A student who chooses a thesis topic outside of the area of interest and/or knowledge of any available faculty member may be required to change the thesis topic.

#### *Forming the Thesis Committee*

In consultation with the thesis advisor, the student should put together a thesis committee, which will consist of three English faculty members (including the thesis advisor), as well as a graduate faculty representative from outside the department (assigned by the Graduate School). Whenever possible, the two additional English department faculty committee members should have some knowledge of or familiarity with the subject matter of the student's thesis; however, because the student will be examined on coursework as well as questioned about the thesis during the oral exam, it is essential that the committee members not all be drawn from the same content area. Rather, the three committee members must represent at least two of the following three content areas: 1) British literature; 2) American literature; and, 3) rhetoric, writing, or theory.

As soon as the thesis committee is formed, the student must submit the Advisory Committee Request Form to the Graduate School so that they can assign a graduate faculty representative. This form can be found on the Graduate School web site at [www.sdstate.edu/graduate-school/forms](http://www.sdstate.edu/graduate-school/forms).

### *Completing the Thesis Project*

The student must submit a written thesis proposal to the thesis committee for approval prior to beginning work on the thesis. See “Guidelines for Review and Approval of the Thesis Proposal” below.

Once the proposal has been approved by the committee, the student should begin working on the thesis, submitting drafts to the thesis advisor and revising accordingly. Once the student and thesis advisor agree that the thesis will be completed within the current semester, the student should apply for graduation. When the thesis advisor believes the thesis has reached the final stage of completion and is of a quality acceptable for the awarding of the M.A., the student should take steps to schedule the oral exam. The student must submit the form to schedule the oral exam to the Graduate School at least ten working days prior to the oral exam. The forms the student will need to apply for graduation and schedule the oral exam can be found on the Graduate School’s web site at [www.sdstate.edu/graduate-school/forms](http://www.sdstate.edu/graduate-school/forms) .

The student should submit hard copies of the thesis to all committee members at least ten working days prior to the oral exam. Along with the thesis, the student must also provide committee members with hard copies of a detailed reading list based on coursework taken (see “Reading List” guidelines below). To assist with the completion of the reading list, the student should save copies of syllabi from all courses taken.

Around the time of the oral exam, the student should electronically submit a copy of the thesis to the Graduate School for a format check. Once the thesis is accepted and the oral exam is passed, the student should make any changes recommended by the committee and the Graduate School before submitting the final copy, which must also be submitted to the Graduate School electronically. Throughout this process, the student must be mindful of the deadlines set by the Graduate School, including deadlines for the graduation application, the oral exam, the format check, and the submission of the final copy of the thesis. These deadlines, along with guidelines for formatting and submitting the thesis, can be found on the Graduate School’s web site at [www.sdstate.edu/graduate-school/deadlines-graduation-candidates](http://www.sdstate.edu/graduate-school/deadlines-graduation-candidates).

### **Guidelines for Critical and Creative Thesis Projects**

All thesis projects must adhere to the formatting guidelines outlined on the Graduate School’s web site: [www.sdstate.edu/graduate-school/thesis-dissertation-submission-instructions](http://www.sdstate.edu/graduate-school/thesis-dissertation-submission-instructions).

### *The Critical Thesis*

The critical thesis is a research project focusing on a topic appropriate for English studies. Approximately sixty to eighty pages in length, the critical thesis should be divided into several chapters that work together to support a larger, coherent argument. It must use the MLA style of documentation and include a works cited list.

### *The Creative Thesis*

In the creative thesis, students present their own creative work and frame it within a critical discussion. Original literary work in genres of poetry, creative nonfiction, fiction, or screenwriting comprise the bulk of the thesis. Hybrid projects are acceptable. A creative thesis should consist of the creative work(s) and a critical introduction or afterword of approximately fifteen to twenty pages. The total length of the thesis should be fifty to eighty pages; length will depend in part on the genre(s) of the student's work. The project should reflect sophisticated attention to style and structure and demonstrate careful grounding in research. In their research, students may engage with the following:

- Resource books: writing practices, handbooks, and forms.
- Mentor texts: literary works (either contemporary or a mix of contemporary and historical).
- Theory: literary, rhetorical, and/or composition theory.
- General: any body of knowledge related to the subject matter of the creative work that emerges as a result of student inquiry.

In the introduction or afterword, students discuss their aesthetic focus and creative concerns in relation to literary history, theory, and/or craft. They may also describe creative practices that have informed their style and approach. This portion of the thesis will reflect ways in which the work participates in, builds upon, or departs from the literary tradition or topic area anchoring the project as a whole. Furthermore, students will illuminate their writing processes and the strategies they used to solve problems in writing the literary text. The critical introduction or afterword must use the MLA style of documentation and include a works cited list.

### **Guidelines for Review and Approval of the Thesis Proposal**

Before beginning a thesis project, students must submit a thesis proposal to their committee. Students should adhere to the following guidelines while completing the thesis proposal:

- A student must not begin work on the thesis project until a thesis proposal has been approved by the thesis committee. All thesis projects must be written in one of the two formats approved by the English department: 1) the critical thesis, or 2) the creative thesis.
- Before beginning the proposal, the student must secure an advisor for the thesis

- project. See “Choosing a Thesis Advisor” above. In consultation with the thesis advisor and well in advance of the proposal presentation, the student must organize the remainder of the thesis committee, which includes filing necessary paperwork with the Graduate School and securing a graduate faculty representative. See “Forming the Thesis Committee” above.
- The student must develop the thesis proposal using the appropriate Thesis Proposal Form. The student should work closely with the thesis advisor to develop the proposal and to revise it as needed. Once the thesis advisor believes the proposal is of a quality that will meet with approval, the student should schedule the thesis proposal presentation and provide hard copies of the proposal to the other committee members, including the graduate faculty representative. The proposal presentation is an hour-long meeting during which the student presents his or her proposal to the committee, answers the committee’s questions, and receives the committee’s feedback. The committee should receive hard copies of the proposal at least ten working days prior to the scheduled proposal presentation.
  - Though they may do so, the three additional committee members are not required to evaluate drafts of the proposal prior to its submission for the proposal presentation. All interactions between the student and the additional committee members must be conducted through and with the approval of the thesis advisor.
  - Committee members must indicate their approval of the thesis proposal by signing the thesis proposal form where indicated. The committee may not sign until the student has completed the proposal as required and formally presented it to the committee in person.
  - After the proposal has been approved by the committee members, the thesis advisor must submit a clean copy of the proposal with the signatures of the committee included to the English department Graduate Coordinator.
  - The student should have completed the thesis proposal presentation by the beginning of the third semester in the program.
  - A student may not present the thesis proposal and defend the thesis during the same semester.

### **Assessment of English 798: Thesis**

Students will register for English 798: Thesis each semester they are working on their thesis projects. Graduate School policy requires thesis advisors work with their students to develop a plan of work for each semester the student is registered for English 798: Thesis. This process includes the following steps:

- For each semester that a student is registered for English 798: Thesis, the thesis advisor must consult with the student to outline a plan of work for that semester. Ideally, this consultation will take place prior to the start of the semester.
- Following this consultation, the thesis advisor should complete the English 798: Thesis Plan of Work Form. After both the advisor and student sign the form, the advisor should submit it to the English Department Graduate Coordinator. The form should be submitted no later than the end of the drop/add period.

- At the end of the semester, the thesis advisor should assess the student's progress using the English 798: Thesis Assessment Form. The advisor should assign an "S" ("Satisfactory") grade to students who satisfactorily complete the work agreed upon. The advisor should assign a "U" ("Unsatisfactory") grade to students who do not satisfactorily complete the work agreed upon. A copy of the assessment form must be forwarded to the student and to the English department Graduate Coordinator by the semester's deadline for submitting grades.

Students receiving two consecutive "U" grades in English 798: Thesis are subject to dismissal from the program.

### **Portfolio Option**

#### *Acceptable Formats for the Portfolio*

Students who choose Graduate School Option B: Research/Design Project will submit a portfolio. The portfolio will contain revised work from previously completed graduate courses. Students should not include work from graduate courses that are in progress during the semester in which they are completing the portfolio. The student may choose to include critical work, creative work, or a combination of the two. Portfolio materials must be highly polished and error free.

#### *Choosing a Portfolio Advisor and Committee*

Students who complete a portfolio will submit revised work from previously completed graduate courses. They should ask a faculty member from one of these courses to serve as their portfolio advisor.

In consultation with their portfolio advisor, students should choose two additional English department faculty members to serve on their portfolio committee. When students submit work from a course other than one taught by their portfolio advisor, they should ask that faculty member to serve on their committee. This faculty member should be given the option to advise the student on the revision of the work originally completed for his or her course; however, the faculty member is not required to serve in this role or may choose to offer preliminary feedback only. Because the student will be examined on coursework as well as questioned about the project during the oral exam, it is essential that the committee members not all be drawn from the same content area. Rather, the three committee members must represent at least two of the following three content areas: 1) British literature; 2) American literature; and, 3) rhetoric, writing, or theory.

#### *Completing the Portfolio*

Upon securing a portfolio advisor, the student should begin working on the portfolio, submitting drafts and revising accordingly. Once the student and portfolio advisor agree that the portfolio will be completed within the current semester, the student should apply

for graduation by the Graduate School's graduate application deadline. When the portfolio advisor believes the portfolio has reached the final stage of completion and is of a quality acceptable for the awarding of the M.A., the student should take steps to schedule the oral exam. The student should schedule the oral exam well in advance to accommodate committee members' schedules. The oral exam must be completed by the Graduate School's capstone component deadline. Graduation and capstone component deadlines can be found on the Graduate School's web site at [www.sdstate.edu/graduate-school/deadlines-graduation-candidates](http://www.sdstate.edu/graduate-school/deadlines-graduation-candidates).

The student should submit hard copies of the portfolio to all committee members at least ten working days prior to the oral exam. Along with the project, the student must also provide committee members with hard copies of a detailed reading list based on coursework taken (see "Reading List" guidelines below). To assist with the completion of the reading list, the student should save copies of syllabi from all courses taken.

### **Portfolio Guidelines**

The contents of the portfolio must come from work submitted during graduate coursework. The student should choose one of the following formats for the portfolio:

- **Critical Portfolio.** Two substantially revised critical essays originally produced in graduate coursework. Each revised essay should be approximately twenty pages in length.
- **Creative Portfolio.** A substantially revised body of creative work consisting of content originally produced in at least two graduate courses. The creative work may consist of fiction, poetry, nonfiction, screenwriting, or digital media. The creative work should total approximately thirty-five to forty pages.
- **Combination Portfolio.** A substantially revised critical essay of approximately twenty pages, along with approximately fifteen to twenty pages of substantially revised creative work, which may include fiction, poetry, nonfiction, screenwriting, or digital media.

### *Revision of Portfolio Materials*

Revised critical work should incorporate the following elements as deemed appropriate by the advising faculty member:

- **Writing.** Student significantly improves upon structure and style.
- **Research.** Student expands engagement with secondary research.
- **History.** Student deepens the historical context.
- **Theory.** Student develops the theoretical context.
- **Contribution to the discipline.** Student provides an expanded sense of how the paper intervenes in its field.
- Other suggestions from the advising faculty member.

Revised creative work should incorporate the following as deemed appropriate by the advising faculty member:

- **Style.** Student revises syntax, diction, and grammar for rhetorical effect; sentences should do what they mean.
- **Structure.** Student revises the form to create a sense of tightness and alignment with the other layers of craft, including sentence style, imagery, tension, etc.
- **Elements of genre.** Student revises scenes, dialogue, characterization, figurative language, imagery, etc., with an eye toward precision and detail.
- **Tension.** Student strengthens conflict through the modification of pacing; this aspect, too, aligns with other layers of craft, including structure, style, imagery, etc.
- **Insight.** Student develops overall themes of the piece in order to illuminate the human condition.
- Other suggestions from the advising faculty member.

### *Portfolio Contents*

The Portfolio must contain the following:

- A table of contents.
- A five- to six-page reflective introduction. In this introduction, the student should provide an account of his or her growth as a reader, writer, and scholar since beginning the M.A. program. The student should describe his or her trajectory within the program, as well as the critical, creative, or methodological skills gained along the way. It should describe the contents of the portfolio, explaining the revisions made and how they broadened the student's knowledge of the subject matter or craft.
- The revised work.
- Original versions of the work submitted for class (not included in overall page count).
- A curriculum vitae or resume (in consultation with portfolio advisor, student should tailor document to a specific post-degree goal—for example, publication of creative work, professional writing, teaching, publishing, or further graduate study).

Purely creative portfolios must contain the following additional materials:

- A two-page statement including a one-sentence biographical statement, a one-paragraph biographical statement, and a statement of publication objectives for work included in the portfolio.
- A one-page sample cover letter suitable for active submission.

## **Written Exam Option**

### *The Format of the Written Exam*

The written exam as a whole consists of three separate exams which are based upon the student's coursework. The student takes one exam in American literature, one exam in British literature, and one exam in rhetoric, creative writing, and/or theory. Each exam consists of two questions. The student is allowed to spend four hours on each separate exam (or two hours per question). The student takes one exam per day during the course of a single week.

### *Choosing an Exam Advisor and Forming the Exam Committee*

Graduate students who choose the written exam option should identify an exam advisor with the assistance of the Graduate Coordinator. With the exam advisor's assistance, the student will then identify two more English department faculty members to sit on the exam committee. The committee must include one faculty member from each of the following three content areas: 1) British literature; 2) American literature; and, 3) rhetoric, writing, or theory. Each committee member is responsible for writing the exam questions for the part of the written exam relating to his or her content area.

### *Preparing for and Taking the Written Exam*

Well before the written exam, the student must submit a detailed reading list based on all of his or her coursework to the exam committee (see "Reading List" guidelines below). The English department committee members will use this reading list to prepare their exam questions. To assist with the development of these exam questions, the student should be prepared to submit syllabi from the courses listed to committee members upon request. For this reason, it is essential that students save the syllabi from all of the courses they take during their time in the program. The student should apply for graduation during the semester he or she intends to sit for the written exam.

The written exam should be scheduled two weeks prior to the oral exam. Meanwhile, the oral exam should be scheduled at least a week prior to the Graduate School's capstone component completion deadline in order to give the student time to retake or revise any portion of the written exam he or she does not pass. (Note: the capstone component deadline is different from the oral exam deadline for thesis students).

The exam advisor is responsible for administering the written exam to the student and should request exam questions from the other English department faculty committee members prior to the written exam. The student is not allowed to use textbooks, notes, or other course materials during the written exam. Exceptions may be made only if committee members agree there are unusual or extenuating circumstances that will make it difficult or impossible for a student to complete a specific part of the written exam without the use of certain course materials. After the student completes the written exam,

the exam advisor will submit copies of the full exam to the other committee members. Throughout this process, the student must be mindful of the deadlines set by the Graduate School, including deadlines for the graduation application and the capstone component. These deadlines can be found on the Graduate School's web site at [www.sdstate.edu/graduate-school/deadlines-graduation-candidates](http://www.sdstate.edu/graduate-school/deadlines-graduation-candidates).

### **Reading List**

All students completing the degree will be required to submit a reading list to their committee. The reading list will list all the graduate courses the student has taken and should be arranged into appropriate subject categories (for example, "American Literature," "British Literature," "Writing, Rhetoric, and Theory"). For each course taken, the student should provide the following information:

- The course prefix and number.
- The title of the course.
- The semester the course was taken.
- The instructor of the course.
- A brief but sufficiently detailed course description (may be quoted from the syllabus).
- A list of all texts and films required for the class. All texts included on the class schedule must be listed individually; for example, if an anthology was used in the course, the student must list not just the title of the anthology, but also the titles of the individual readings from the anthology.

To assist with the completion of the reading list, the student should save copies of syllabi from all of his or her courses.

### **Oral Exam**

All graduate students must pass an oral exam during their final semester in order to receive the M.A. degree. Option A (thesis) students must sit for the oral exam by the graduate school's oral exam deadline for Option A students. Option B (portfolio) and Option C (written exam) students must sit for the oral exam by the graduate school's capstone deadline.

The oral exam lasts for two hours. During the first hour, students who have chosen the thesis or portfolio options defend their projects, while students who have chosen the written exam option defend their written exam. According to the Graduate School Regulations and Procedures, "[T]he committee and candidate should recognize that an advanced degree is more than evidence of satisfactory completion of courses and that integration of the content of the program is expected of successful candidates." For this reason, questions asked during the second hour of the oral exam should focus on the student's coursework and should require the student to demonstrate the ability to synthesize subject matter drawn from a variety of courses.

The *Graduate School Regulations and Procedures* offers the following suggestions regarding the oral exam:

*Each Master's degree candidate is required to pass an oral examination by a specified date. The examination should be approximately two hours in length and cover research (if required), the courses included in the graduate plan of study, and ability to apply knowledge of the field.*

*The time and place of the examination are posted on the Graduate Office bulletin board. While persons not on the examination committee are not excluded from attending the examination, it is in the best interest of the student if visitors attend only after obtaining permission of the [thesis or exam advisor] and the student.*

*The members of the examination committee should:*

- 1. Determine the nature of the examination. The Graduate School has no desire to stereotype examinations, but offers the following guidelines:
  - a. When a thesis or research paper is involved, about one hour will be spent on it. The remainder hour should be spent on coursework.*
  - b. Where no thesis or research paper is involved, the entire examination will be based on coursework.*
  - c. About one-third of the time used for questioning on coursework will be allotted to minor or supporting courses.**
- 2. Come to the examination prepared to test the student's ability to think, to use the subject matter of his/her field(s), and to demonstrate academic and research (when applicable) accomplishment commensurate with the requirements of the degree to be earned.*
- 3. Come to the examination on time, prepared to stay until the examination is completed. Although the suggested length of time for an oral examination is two hours, this is not a time limit and the committee members should always be prepared to stay longer if necessary.*
- 4. Judge whether the student passes or fails on the basis of the oral examination (or oral plus written examination) and not on the basis of class performance. The chair should be sure that all members of the committee have equal opportunity for examining the candidate and that no one member dominates the questioning.*

*The results of the examination are to be reported to the Graduate Office on the appropriate form furnished by the Graduate School Office. If the student fails, this should be reported on the form and, when possible, a new date for oral retakes determined and entered on the form. Passing the examination requires the approval of the Graduate Faculty representative and all but one of the other members of the committee.*

For Option A (thesis) students, the Graduate School will send the thesis advisor an evaluation form prior to the oral exam. This form must be signed by all committee members and submitted to the graduate school by the advisor immediately after the exam.

The thesis/portfolio/exam advisor must also bring a copy of the English department's M.A. Oral Exam Assessment Form for each committee member to the exam. After each committee member has completed this form, the thesis/portfolio/exam advisor will submit all copies to the Graduate Coordinator for filing.

### **Timeline**

The M.A. program in English is a two- to three-year program. During the second semester of their first year, students must inform the Graduate Coordinator whether they will be choosing the thesis, portfolio, or written exam option in order to complete their degree.

The timelines outlined below apply to students with graduate teaching assistantships. They are approximate and may vary by individual student. Teaching assistants may take slightly longer to complete the program, while students who are not teaching assistants may complete the degree in a shorter period of time. Not completing the program within three years is considered unsatisfactory progress.

#### *Thesis Option*

24 credits of coursework; 6 credits of thesis; 30 credits total.

#### 1<sup>st</sup> Year (12 credits total)

- 1<sup>st</sup> Semester (6 credits). Teach 2 courses, take 2 courses. Includes English 705: Seminar in Teaching.
- 2<sup>nd</sup> Semester (6 credits). Teach 2 courses, take 2 courses. Includes English 704: Introduction to Graduate Studies. Determine thesis topic, choose thesis advisor, and form thesis committee. File Plan of Study Form and Advisory Committee Request Form.

#### 2<sup>nd</sup> Year (18 credits total)

- 1<sup>st</sup> Semester (9 credits). Teach 2 courses, take 2 courses, take 3 credits of thesis. Present thesis proposal early in semester.
- 2<sup>nd</sup> Semester (9 credits). Teach 2 courses, take 2 course, take 3 credits of thesis. Apply for graduation, file Change of Plan of Study if required, schedule and take oral exam, and submit thesis by appropriate deadlines.

### *Portfolio Option*

30 credits of coursework; 2 credits of research; 32 credits total.

#### 1<sup>st</sup> Year (12 credits total)

- 1<sup>st</sup> Semester (6 credits). Teach 2 courses, take 2 courses. Includes English 705: Seminar in Teaching.
- 2<sup>nd</sup> Semester (6 credits). Teach 2 courses, take 2 courses. Includes English 704: Introduction to Graduate Studies.

#### 2<sup>nd</sup> Year (12 credits total)

- 1<sup>st</sup> Semester (6 credits). Teach 2 courses, take 2 courses. Choose portfolio advisor and form portfolio committee. File Plan of Study.
- 2<sup>nd</sup> Semester (7 credits). Teach 2 courses, take 2 courses, take 1 credit of research.

#### 3<sup>rd</sup> Year (6 credits total)

- 1<sup>st</sup> Semester (7 credits). Teach 2 courses, take 2 courses, take 1 credit of research. Early in semester, assemble reading list and distribute to committee (provide syllabi to individual committee members upon request). Apply for graduation, file Change of Plan of Study if required, schedule and take oral exam, and submit portfolio by appropriate deadlines.

### *Written Exam Option*

36 credits of coursework.

#### 1<sup>st</sup> Year (12 credits total)

- 1<sup>st</sup> Semester (6 credits). Teach 2 courses, take 2 courses. Includes English 705: Seminar in Teaching.
- 2<sup>nd</sup> Semester (6 credits). Teach 2 courses, take 2 courses. Includes English 704: Introduction to Graduate Studies.

#### 2<sup>nd</sup> Year (12 credits total)

- 1<sup>st</sup> Semester (6 credits). Teach 2 courses, take 2 courses. Choose exam advisor and form exam committee. File Advisory Committee Request Form.
- 2<sup>nd</sup> Semester (6 credits). Teach 2 courses, take 2 courses. File Plan of Study.

#### 3<sup>rd</sup> Year (12 credits total)

- 1<sup>st</sup> Semester (6 credits). Teach 2 courses, take 2 courses.
- 2<sup>nd</sup> Semester (6 credits). Teach 2 courses, take 2 courses. Early in semester, assemble reading list and distribute to committee (provide syllabi to individual committee members upon request). Apply for graduation, file Change of Plan of Study if required, schedule and take written and oral exams by appropriate deadlines.

## **Annual Review**

In compliance with Graduate School policy, all graduate students must complete an annual review. Students who have not completed or scheduled their oral exam during a given academic year should plan to hold an annual review during the spring semester. During the annual review, students will meet with the Department Head, Graduate Coordinator, and thesis/portfolio/exam advisor (if applicable). During the review, the faculty members present will review and evaluate the student's progress toward the completion of the degree and recommend goals for the upcoming year. Faculty members will complete an annual review form, providing one copy to the student and placing one copy in the student's file.

## **Advising**

In the English department, each graduate student works closely with two departmental advisors: the Graduate Coordinator and the thesis/portfolio/exam advisor.

The Graduate Coordinator serves as the students "major advisor," or academic advisor. The Graduate Coordinator begins working with students during the application process and will continue to do so until they have completed the degree. The Graduate Coordinator provides advice and guidance relating to all elements of the program. This includes developing a Plan of Study, choosing and registering for coursework, fulfilling degree requirements, filing paperwork, and following guidelines for the completion of the degree. Students are required to meet with the Graduate Coordinator for advising each semester and should consult regularly with the Graduate Coordinator regarding their progress in the program.

The thesis/portfolio/exam advisor guides the student through the process of writing the thesis, developing the portfolio, and taking the written exam. The thesis/portfolio/exam advisor advises the student in all aspects of this process, including developing a timetable for completion of the final project, coordinating meetings, scheduling written and/or oral exams, and submitting any paperwork associated with the completion of the final project and oral exam.

## **Registration**

Each graduate student must meet with the Graduate Coordinator for advising during the registration period for each semester, at which time the Graduate Coordinator will register the student for classes.

## **Credit Hour Requirements for Graduate Students**

Graduate teaching assistants should register for no more than six credit hours of coursework per semester. They may register for thesis or research credits on top of their six hours of coursework as needed. Students who are not graduate teaching assistants

may register for as many credits as they wish, but must register for nine credit hours in order to be considered full time.

### **Registering for Thesis and Research Credits**

Students must have a thesis or portfolio advisor in order to register for thesis or research credits. Students wishing to register for thesis or research credits must email a request to the Graduate Coordinator that includes their student ID number, the name of their thesis or portfolio advisor, and the number of credits for which they'd like to register.

### **Continuing Enrollment**

Students who have completed all required credit hours for the degree but who have not yet completed the oral exam must remain active by requesting registration for one thesis, research, or exam credit per semester (excluding summer) until the completion of the program. A student who is not registered for the duration of an entire semester will become inactive and will have to reapply to the program in order to gain readmittance. Readmittance is not guaranteed.

### **Obsolete Coursework**

A student's coursework will become obsolete after six years and will no longer be counted toward the degree. Please refer to the Graduate Catalog for further information regarding obsolete coursework.

### **Summer Enrollment**

A student will need to enroll for credit during the summer semester only if he or she intends to graduate during the summer. Because graduate teaching assistants in the English department do not teach in the summer, the tuition waiver does not apply to credits taken during the summer semester.

### **Awards**

#### *The Maud Adams Award for Outstanding Graduate Student in English*

The Maud Adams Award Fund was established by her sister, Mary Adams. It is awarded annually to one outstanding advanced graduate student in English. Maud Adams was born in 1915 and grew up near Jefferson, South Dakota. She earned a B.A. degree in Latin and Greek from University of South Dakota. She received a degree in Nursing from Case Western Reserve University in Cleveland, Ohio, and a Master's degree in Public Health Nursing from Columbia University in New York. Maud worked for the Visiting Nurse Service of New York and was assigned to neighborhoods characterized by extreme poverty. Later, she was a World Health Organization Fellow. She then taught at Morningside College and for several years was director of the college's nursing program.

The Maud Adams Award commemorates Maud Adams as a sister, scholar, and humanitarian. It is hoped that through the years the recipients of these awards will exemplify the values and ideals of Maud Adams, especially the enthusiasm for reading, the admiration of quality writing, and the belief in sharing one's talents.

#### *Outstanding Graduate Teaching Assistant Award*

Each year, the English department presents this award to one graduate teaching assistant who has demonstrated excellence in teaching.

#### *Award for Excellence in Graduate Student Scholarship*

Each year, the English department presents this award to a student who has written an outstanding paper for a graduate-level seminar.

### **Best Practices for Graduate Students**

#### *Professional Etiquette*

- Check email frequently, at least once a day, and respond to emails from faculty and students promptly (ideally within twenty-four hours).
- Be on time for the classes you are taking and the classes you are teaching.
- Submit your assignments on time.
- Follow the attendance policy for the classes you are taking, but—generally speaking—do not miss class except in emergencies or in case of real illness (yours or a child's). If you must miss a class, email your professor right away.
- Do not cancel the classes you teach unless an emergency or illness necessitates that you do so. If you cannot teach a class, contact both the Department Head and the Coordinator of Composition right away. Always notify them if you are unable to teach your class for any reason, even if you've found someone to cover for you.

#### *General Quality of Graduate-Level Work*

- Graduate students are advanced students in their field and should submit advanced work that goes beyond work submitted at the undergraduate level in terms of quality and sophistication.
- Assignments submitted at the graduate level must fulfill the requirements of the assignment and must be polished and error-free.
- When developing research projects, graduate students are expected to engage in exhaustive research; for example, when you write about a specific literary text, you should be familiar with the critical conversation about that text (including all current and recent criticism and influential past criticism) so that you can make an educated and informed contribution to that conversation.