

PhD in English Handbook

Welcome

Welcome to the English Department at UNLV. We offer programs recognized internationally for their excellence and for their innovative response to both traditional and newly emerging issues of language, writing, and literature. The department offers programs of study leading to the Master of Arts, Master of Fine Arts, and Doctor of Philosophy degrees.

The post-bachelor's and post-master's PhD tracks in literary studies offer a highly specialized course of study designed to develop a capacity for research, original thought, and academic writing and to equip students for careers in the teaching of English at the college or university level and in writing, editing, and publishing. The program emphasizes literary studies, although a concentration of six credit hours may be earned in composition studies. Each student chooses a field in which to specialize. Such field knowledge is tested in a qualifying examination and is also the basis upon which the student writes the doctoral dissertation.

The Department of English in partnership with the Beverly Rogers, Carol C. Harter Black Mountain Institute also offers a three-year course of study leading to the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in English with a Creative Dissertation. The program centers on the study of English and American literature and includes coursework in English and creative writing, a qualifying examination, and a creative dissertation—typically an original collection of poems, literary nonfiction, or short stories; a novel; or a cross-genre manuscript. The Ph.D. in English with Creative Dissertation is designed to prepare students for careers in professional writing, in the teaching of English and creative writing at the university or college level, in editing, publishing, and the literary arts and humanities.

Dr. Denise Tillery, Chair

Dr. Megan Becker, Director of Graduate Studies

TBD, Director of Creative Writing

Mission Statement

The graduate faculty in English at UNLV are dedicated to the careful mentoring of each student. Individual attention to student progress and research goals is paramount. Throughout the academic year, the department offers activities designed to prepare degree candidates for the job market and for college and university careers. In addition to teaching and tutoring, graduate assistants are involved with research assistance to individual faculty members, with journal editing, and with program administration. The department's commitment to its students includes the guiding of their research towards publication and the provision of funds for travel to conferences and research facilities both in the United States and abroad.

Purpose

The purpose of this handbook is to provide program specific information that is not found in [the UNLV Graduate Catalog](#). Students are responsible for understanding and following the policies and procedures delineated in this document and the [UNLV Graduate Catalog](#), as well as the NSHE Code, UNLV Bylaws, and the UNLV Student Conduct Code. Questions about policies should be directed to the Graduate College: valarie.burke@unlv.edu or GradAssociateDean@unlv.edu.

Department Graduate Faculty

A current listing of the graduate faculty can be found in the [UNLV Graduate Catalog](#). Faculty must hold the appropriately approved graduate faculty status to be involved in graduate education at UNLV. For up to date information regarding graduate faculty status in your department, visit the [Graduate Faculty status web page](#).

Program Information

[Ph.D. in English](#)

[Post-Master's Literature](#)

[Creative Dissertation](#)

[Post-Bachelor's Literature](#)

Contact Information

English Department:

Website

<http://www.unlv.edu/english>

Department Chair

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Graduate College:

Main Office

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International Graduate Student Services

internationalgrad@unlv.edu, 702-895-3367

*Student Financial Services** gradfinancialsvc@unlv.edu, 702-895-4273

*for help related to Graduate Assistantships, scholarships, and fellowships

*Retention Promotion and Completion (RPC) Team**

grad.rpc@unlv.edu, 702-895-2702

*for help related to Graduate College forms, requirements, and academic policies

*Graduate Academy: Leadership and Professional Development **

gradrebel@unlv.edu, 702-895-3320

*for non-academic advisement and help related to thesis/dissertation formatting and submission processes, Grad Rebel events, and other sources of support for UNLV graduate students

Program Requirements

Program requirements regarding [admission, coursework and culminating experience for the MA and PhD are found in the graduate catalog](#).

Advisory Committee Guidelines

All PhD students in English will organize a committee of at least three department members, one of whom (the committee chair) serves as the student's advisor. Additionally, a fourth member from outside the department, known as the Graduate College Representative, must be appointed. This committee will guide, examine, and mentor the student throughout the graduate experience. They will also sign many of the forms and documents required after each step in the process. See the [Graduate Catalog](#) for further committee appointment guidelines.

Until they form advisory committees, the Director of Graduate Studies (DGS) serves as academic advisor to all PhD students.

Degree Program Benchmarks

PhD Language Requirement

All PhD students must demonstrate either reading knowledge of one foreign language or, with approval of the academic advisor, competency in one computer language. PhD students are expected to fulfill the language requirement before submitting the Advancement to Doctoral Candidacy Form.

The practical goal of the language requirement is to prepare students to read literary and critical works in languages other than English. Our faculty believe that all students, regardless of career path or field of specialization, gain substantially by engaging in language study, by situating their work globally, and by making meaningful connections with non-English-speaking cultures and conversations. At the same time, we recognize that facility in computer languages may be equally important to the intellectual and professional development of some students.

Each student should thus choose—in consultation with the DGS and their academic advisor—the language most appropriate to his/her/their academic program, field(s) of specialization, intellectual projects, and career goals. PhD students are urged to consult with their advisors and advisory committees about the language competencies required or expected in a given field or for a particular dissertation project, as these may well differ from and exceed the minimum departmental requirements outlined here.

Reading knowledge of a foreign language may be demonstrated by passing a translation exam administered by the department or by earning a B or better either in an upper-division or graduate course in the literature of a language, taken within seven years of enrollment, or in WLC 555, a translation course for graduate students offered by the Department of World Languages and Cultures.

Competency in a computer language is demonstrated by successful completion of an appropriate project supervised by UNLV faculty, with approval of the student's academic advisor and the DGS.

As a rule, department translation exams are given twice yearly. At the beginning of each fall and spring semester, the DGS will notify all graduate students of the exam date. At least three weeks before that date, students interested in taking the exam should notify the DGS, indicating the language in which they wish to be examined. The DGS will arrange a suitable location, proctor, time, and faculty evaluator for all exams.

Faculty in the English Department are equipped to evaluate exams in Spanish, French, German, Latin, Portuguese, and Italian. The DGS can arrange for exams to be given in other languages including but not limited to Japanese, Russian, Chinese, and Arabic.

All exam evaluations will be anonymous. Faculty evaluators will provide to the DGS passages for each exam and assess translations according to the guidelines below. The DGS maintains a pool of sample passages for students to use in reviewing for exams.

Students who fail an exam may re-attempt once during the same semester and as many fall/spring semesters thereafter as needed. (Students who wish to re-attempt during the same semester should notify the DGS within one week of receiving their initial exam results.) Students who do not pass the first attempt will be placed on academic probation via the Graduate College process. Students who fail the second attempt may be separated from the program after being placed on probation.

For translation exams, students are given a short passage (250-300 words) of nonfiction prose, usually an excerpt from a scholarly essay or monograph. Whenever possible the passage should be in modern (non-archaic) prose, nothing too technical or highly stylized. Students are given one and a half hours to translate with the use of one dictionary, if desired. The faculty evaluator will review the translation to determine whether it demonstrates a satisfactory level of reading knowledge. To pass, students should produce a fairly complete translation of the entire passage. The translation may contain some errors or omissions but should demonstrate that the student can make sense of relevant works in the chosen language. The faculty evaluator will forward a recommendation (pass/fail) to the DGS, who will inform the student of the outcome and note the results in their records.

PhD Post-Bachelor's Track Portfolio (Embedded MA)

During their third semester in the Post-Bachelor's PhD Track, students will work with faculty to develop a portfolio for review. This portfolio should be comprised of the following elements:

1. The portfolio should be 30–50 pages in length, containing two or three complete pieces of writing revised from classes taken during the first two semesters of the program. The portfolio must demonstrate scholarly research.
2. The work will also be accompanied by a reflective statement of no more than 1000 words. The statement might include a discussion of how the work in the portfolio connects to larger research interests and/or a potential dissertation project.

The portfolio will be submitted to the Graduate Studies Committee no later than week ten of the third semester.

The committee will grade the portfolio as follows:

1. Pass: Student will receive MA degree and move on to PhD work.
2. Low Pass: Student will receive MA degree, but not be invited to continue on for the PhD.
3. Fail: Student will be allowed to submit a revised portfolio for reconsideration to obtain the MA degree, but will not be invited to continue on for PhD. Students failing a second time will not receive a degree.

Following the portfolio review process, students will meet with the DGS to receive feedback on their portfolio, including recommendations of professors with whom the student could work during the dissertation project if they are invited to continue on to the PhD.

PhD Doctoral Research (ENG 798) & Doctoral Dissertation (ENG 799) Hours

Graduate College policy mandates that doctoral candidates not register for ENG 799: Dissertation until they have submitted the Advancement to Candidacy form—approval of which depends, in our program, on having passed qualifying examinations, defended the prospectus, and fulfilled the language requirement.

Doctoral students who are completing or have completed other required coursework and are preparing for qualifying exams and/or crafting the prospectus should instead register for ENG 798: Doctoral Research. (Except in exceptional circumstances, only 3 credits of ENG 798 may be counted toward the degree, which requires a minimum of 12 hours of ENG 799.)

As a general rule, the advisory committee chair serves as instructor of record for both ENG 798 and ENG 799, though students may, when appropriate and with their committee's approval, take 3–6 credit hours with another committee member with appropriately approved graduate faculty privileges. (Since students may opt to make changes to committees as late as their final semester, they may obviously count toward the degree any and all ENG 798 and ENG 799 credit hours taken with a former advisory committee chair and up to 3–6 such credit hours taken with former committee members.)

Each semester that they wish to enroll for ENG 798 or ENG 799, students must first complete the departmental [graduate independent study form](#) in consultation with their instructor. Each independent study form should specify the expectations to which the instructor and student have agreed regarding work to be completed, feedback to be provided, and minimum number of meetings to be held during the semester. The form must then be approved and signed not only by the candidate and instructor but also by the Director of Graduate Studies (in that order). (After submission of the form, a section of ENG 798 or ENG 799 will be created exclusively for that candidate.)

PhD Qualifying Examination

During their final semester of coursework or the following fall/spring semester, PhD students must take a pass/fail

qualifying examination. To prepare for this examination, students must—in consultation with their advisory committee—prepare two readings lists: a “major” list of 40–50 texts and a “minor” list of 20–25 texts. These lists should be prepared and approved in the semester prior to the examination. The major list should correspond with a professional field (i.e. a hiring field), likely a historical period, perhaps linked with a genre or a major author, while the minor list might be representative either of a critical theory or of a more specific professional focus. (So, for example, one student might have a major list in early modern literature and a minor list in feminist criticism; another student might have a major list in twentieth-century American poetry and a minor list in the Harlem Renaissance.)

The qualifying exams will have both a written and an oral component. For the written component, students will receive from their committee a set of six questions (or prompts) pertaining to their major and minor lists; students will not know these questions in advance. They will select and address three (3) of these questions over the course of ten (10) calendar days and submit the resulting essays to their advisory committee. Students may access their own materials (books, notes, etc.) and write the essays at home, though they will also have an opportunity to use the English Department’s exam room. The student’s advisory committee members will expect each essay to be roughly 10–12 double-spaced pages in length, with appropriate citations of texts from the lists.

This written exam will be followed by a ninety-minute oral defense pertaining to the student’s essays and to the reading lists generally. This oral defense will be scheduled for a date within two weeks of the delivery of the essays.

Both components of the exam are based on the two reading lists prepared with the supervision of the student’s advisory committee. If any portion of the exam is not passed, the student is allowed ONE additional opportunity to pass the exam. Students will be recommended to the Graduate College for probation if they are not successful in passing the exam in the first attempt.

Before or after taking qualifying exams, students should submit the Plan of Study Parts I and II.

PhD Dissertation Prospectus

All PhD students must submit a dissertation in accordance with the guidelines set forth by the Graduate College in the [graduate catalog](#) and in its [Thesis and Dissertation Guidelines](#).

Before advancing to candidacy, submitting the Graduate College Advancement to Candidacy Form, or enrolling in ENG 799: Dissertation, doctoral students must both submit a dissertation prospectus to their advisory committee and meet with the entire committee for a prospectus defense—ideally no later than the end of the semester following that in which the student passes Qualifying Exams.

Though the prospectus thus proceeds the Advancement to Candidacy Form, it can be helpful, as students begin thinking about the prospectus, to consider the three things about the dissertation they will be required to describe very briefly on that form, as students should be able to extract these from the prospectus:

- * brief abstract or description of topic;
- * key research question(s); and
- * brief description of methodology/approach.

The prospectus itself is not submitted to the Graduate College but rather crafted by the student in consultation with the advisory committee before review by the entire committee.

The prospectus should be 6–12 double-spaced pages and demonstrate that the student:

- * has defined and delimited a compelling research question/thesis;
- * can explain the importance of the research question/thesis and the contribution that it will make to the field;
- * is familiar with the existing scholarship related to the research question and can describe the relationship/contribution of the dissertation to that scholarship;
- * has identified appropriate primary materials; and
- * has a workable plan for both organizing and completing the dissertation.

A prospectus is a proposal, not a draft of the introduction to the dissertation, though a prospectus may contain the kernel of outline of an introduction and requires similar rhetorical moves. As a genre, the prospectus is most akin

to the narrative portion of a grant or fellowship proposal, and many of our PhD students actually do draw heavily on their prospectuses in crafting applications for Graduate College doctoral research fellowships, as well as external grants and fellowships. (The National Endowment for the Humanities [NEH] posts samples of successful fellowship application narratives [here](#).)

Like grant or fellowship proposals, the best prospectuses often use present rather than future tense, describing what a project *does* do, as if it already exists, rather than talking about what it *will* do or what you will do in it (e.g. “Beyond *Beloved*: Toni Morrison’s Influence on Recent American Fiction’ is the first scholarly effort to explore this complex process” versus “For this dissertation, I plan to look at ...”).

Proposals typically include the following elements, usually in this order:

1) project overview and rationale/motive (at least 2 pages):

- * What is your central research question and/or thesis? What body of primary texts or materials will you be focusing on?

- * Why does your question/thesis matter? That is, what is your field, to what specific scholarly conversation(s) are you contributing, and how? Or what is your critical intervention? (e.g. “Most scholars writing about X talk about Y, but less attention has been paid to Z.” Just remember that the fact that little or no attention has been paid to Z isn’t by itself a sufficient reason or motive to do so: what specifically do scholars have to gain or how might our understanding of X be altered, complicated, or enriched by looking at Z?)

2) chapter overviews (approx.. 1 page each):

- * What is the focus and argument of each chapter and, if appropriate, of each section into which that chapter is divided?

- * How does the second chapter build on the first? the third on the second? And so on. (In other words, what’s the logic behind, and payoff for, dividing and ordering the chapters this way? e.g. “While Chapter 1 demonstrates the influence of Morrison’s multifaceted editorial work, subsequent chapters consider instead that of her novels, beginning, in Chapter 2, with *Beloved*.”)

3) timeline (1 page):

- * In what manner and order and by what rough dates (or what point in each coming semester) do you expect to research, draft, and submit your chapters? (Be sure to indicate the nature and timing of any archival research that might be required.)

4) preliminary bibliography (including works mentioned in the overview, approx.. 1–2 pages):

- * What are the key primary texts or materials your dissertation will analyze?

- * What are the scholarly secondary sources (especially critical and theoretical) that most inform your dissertation, and/or which are especially important to, or representative of, the scholarly conversation in which your dissertation intervenes?

PhD Dissertation Prospectus Defense

Once the candidate and the advisory committee chair feel that the prospectus is ready for review, the student should share it with the rest of the committee and work with them to identify a date and time for the prospectus defense. (There are no Graduate College deadlines to consider here, as there are with the dissertation defense itself.)

Generally speaking, no committee should move forward with a defense for a prospectus that any of its members consider to be unworthy of approval as is or with minor revisions. This is why it is imperative that all committee members have a chance to review a semi-final draft at least 14 days in advance of the defense and to specify any revisions required to ensure the prospectus is ready to defend.

Despite its label, the prospectus “defense” is less about “defending” a proposed project than it is a valuable opportunity for the student to get the entire committee’s feedback and guidance, with the goal of establishing a shared understanding and a shared set of expectations regarding the dissertation’s scope, shape, rationale, methodology, and timeline before the research and writing process begins in earnest.

Though the length and format of the prospectus defense are left to the individual advisory committee’s discretion, defenses typically last 30–60 minutes, and the department recommends that they be held either face-to-face on campus or remotely on Zoom (in which case the department also recommends that the chair set up, send invitations to, and host the meeting). Often, defenses begin with a brief (5-to-10-minute) presentation by the student, who might—for example—describe the inspiration and origins of the project, highlight particular parts or aspects of it about which they feel most assured and excited, and identify aspects or issues about which they need

feedback or guidance. Though each committee member should have roughly equal time to respond, ask questions, and offer suggestions, the best defenses typically turn into conversations.

Whatever its length and format, the Graduate College requires that all committee members participate. And by the end of the defense, the chair will need to confirm with the entire committee that they approve the prospectus as is (or as it has been verbally modified by the group during the defense), though committees also have the option of approving it conditionally and requiring specific changes before final approval. Either way, committee members have the option of conferring privately in order to arrive at a consensus, in which case the student will be excused temporarily (or, in the case of remote defenses, moved briefly to the lobby or waiting room).

PhD Advancement to Candidacy

PhD students who have completed the language requirement, passed qualifying exams, and secured advisory committee approval of the dissertation prospectus should submit the Advancement to Candidacy Form.

PhD Dissertation

Overview

The dissertation is the defining feature and culminating product of the doctoral degree, the fullest and most visible expression of a candidate's intellectual values, expertise, and accomplishments. The traditional model for the dissertation is the scholarly monograph, typically including an introduction, three-to-five chapters, and a conclusion. Though quality, rather than quantity, is the key criterion by which dissertations are judged, the usual benchmark is 200–300 pages. Students writing a creative dissertation should discuss the appropriate length (especially according to genre) with their committees.

Generally speaking, dissertations should be formulated and framed in a manner appropriate for their imagined and actual audience: scholars in the field of specialization. Given the increasing importance of more public-facing humanities work, however, the department sees potential value in dissertations that, while meeting scholarly standards, are addressed, in whole or in part, to a wider audience.

If a dissertation aims, in whole or in part, to address an audience extending beyond scholarly specialists, however, specific audiences and aims must be clearly spelled out in the prospectus, ideally with reference to specific models and publication venues, and the entire committee must both approve these plans and provide more than usually careful mentoring and guidance along the way.

All dissertations must demonstrate command of, and specialist expertise in, a recognized scholarly field (or fields); entail theoretical and critical reflection; and make an original contribution to scholarship in the field(s). Dissertations should demonstrate skill at analysis of texts and primary materials, sophistication in historical and/or theoretical framing of issues, and engagement in at least one ongoing scholarly conversation concerning important issues of current concern. Dissertations will be evaluated in terms of the originality of their contribution to existing scholarship and the clarity of their articulation of that contribution; quality of critical insight; range and depth of scholarship; soundness and appropriateness of method; organization and style. Dissertations will be held to the most rigorous intellectual and scholarly standards and should be, in whole or in part, of publishable quality.

Dissertations must be formatted in accordance with all Graduate College Thesis and Dissertation Guidelines, including consistent use of an appropriate citation/documentation documents system (MLA, APA, etc.).

Timeline

To meet such standards, candidates are generally expected to devote at least two to four semesters to the actual writing and revision of the dissertation, which may—when appropriate—incorporate or draw on work published by the candidate while in the doctoral program and/or substantially revised and expanded versions of work originally produced for doctoral coursework.

Chapter Drafts

Throughout the process, the candidate should remain in close contact with the advisory committee, especially its chair. (See “Doctoral Research & Doctoral Dissertation Hours” above.) Each chapter draft should be submitted to all members of the committee (with the possible exception of the Graduate College Representative) so that all members may comment on the draft as it takes shape. (Chapter meetings with the committee are recommended but not required.)

Final Draft and Defense

All members of the advisory committee should have the opportunity to review a complete draft of the dissertation no later than 30 days before the defense, so that they may ask for revisions while time remains. (To ensure timely progress, committee chairs and members are urged to respond to drafts in as timely a manner as possible, ideally

within two weeks—assuming that candidates have alerted them in advance when to expect drafts.) If the student passes the defense, the committee may or may not ask for a few final revisions before the student submits the dissertation to the Graduate College. It is thus imperative that candidates and chairs keep abreast of, and plan around, graduation deadlines for the relevant semester.

PhD Dissertation Defense

The traditional culminating experience for all doctoral programs, the 90-minute dissertation defense should be a satisfying, useful experience in which the candidate and the advisory committee have a last chance to review and discuss together all that the candidate has achieved in the dissertation; its strengths and contribution to the field; issues for further consideration; and opportunities for future development and possible publication. Like the dissertation itself, this is also an occasion for the candidate to demonstrate mastery of the field, as well as the ability to think critically about their work and its contribution to the field.

Generally speaking, no committee should move forward with a defense for a dissertation that any of its members consider to be of less than passable quality, either as is or with minor revisions. This is why it is imperative that all committee members have a chance to review a semi-final draft well in advance of the defense and to specify any revisions required to ensure the dissertation is ready to defend.

The department, like the Graduate College, strongly recommends face-to-face defenses (which must be held on campus), whenever possible. But both hybrid defenses (held on campus but allowing for remote participation) and remote defenses (conducted entirely via an approved online meeting space such as Zoom) are allowable in cases where an exclusively face-to-face defense would either pose a serious health risk to, or entail financial hardship for, the candidate or any member of the advisory committee, all of whom must be either physically or virtually present for and participate fully in the entire defense. Per the Graduate College, should technical or other difficulties seriously interfere with that participation, the defense must be suspended and rescheduled.

Candidates are responsible for coordinating with their committee members to identify a date and time for the defense—prior to the specified Graduate College deadline. In the case of hybrid and remote defenses, the department strongly recommends that the chair take responsibility for setting up the remote meeting; sending invitations to the candidate and committee members; and serving as host during the defense. For hybrid defenses, the chair should also work with department staff to ensure that the required technology is set up and operational at least fifteen minutes before the defense is scheduled to begin.

Two weeks before the defense, candidates must do the following:

- * arrange for the defense to be announced by both the Graduate College and the department by following [these Graduate College guidelines](#), remembering to include remote meeting link, ID, and password, if appropriate, and copying the Director of Graduate Studies on the email to the Graduate College;
- * run an [iThenticate similarity report](#) on the dissertation; and
- * submit the first/summary page of that report to all members of the advisory committee, along with the final dissertation draft, if not already submitted.

Ordinarily, the defense begins with a roughly 10-to-15-minute presentation by the candidate, describing the genesis and evolution of the project, giving an overview and assessment of the finished product, and discussing any future plans they might have for it. Committee members and, if appropriate, guests then take turns offering comments and asking questions. Though each committee member should get roughly equal time (15–20 minutes), defenses often turn into group conversations. At the end of this question-and-answer period, the candidate will be excused temporarily—or, in the case of remote defenses, sent into the lobby or waiting room—so that the committee may confer. The committee will then invite the candidate back into the room to discuss the defense results and any revisions the committee has decided to require before final submission to the Graduate College. (The department thus recommends the candidate bring to the defense both a copy of the dissertation and a notepad.)

The candidate's opening presentation and the initial question-and-answer session are public, and guests, as well as committee members, may pose questions. However, the advisory committee has the option of excusing guests after this point in order to conduct a more intensive private questions-and-answer session with the candidate. The department thus strongly recommends that the entire committee should confirm the exact format of the defense and inform the candidate at least seven days in advance. And in all cases, guests must be permanently excused before the committee begins its deliberations. Only after the dissertation is completed and acceptable to all committee members, do the committee members sign the Culminating Experience form. Member signatures signify that dissertation is ready for final formatting and submission to the Graduate College.

PhD Dissertation Submission

The final, properly formatted dissertation must be submitted to the Graduate College by the posted deadline. As of Spring 2020, all graduate students in English have the option of submitting to the Graduate College a paper copy of their thesis or dissertation in lieu of the otherwise mandatory digital upload. Students choosing this option must adhere to the procedures outlined in [“Thesis & Dissertation Optional Paper Submission Process for Department of English Graduates.”](#)

Sample Program Timeline

PhD in English – Post-Bachelor’s and Post-Master’s Literature Tracks

Six full-time (6–9 credit) semesters or three full academic years is the minimum duration of the Post-Master’s PhD program (subplan 1). Graduate College regulations stipulate a maximum of 5 years without an extension; the actual duration has typically been 5–7 years.

Post-Master’s PhD students who are GAs new to UNLV should take ENG 791: College Teaching in Language and Literature during their first semester in the program, and all Post-Master’s PhD students should, if possible, take ENG 703: Survey of Literary Criticism and Theory in their second semester.

The minimum duration of the Post-Bachelor’s PhD track (MA-PhD) is four-and-a-half academic years or nine full-time (6–9 credit) semesters.

In their first year, Post-Bachelor’s PhD students should take ENG 700: Bibliography and Methods in the fall and ENG 703: Survey of Literary Criticism and Theory in the spring of their first year. If they are GAs, they should take ENG 791: College Teaching in Language and Literature in the fall of their second year. Portfolios are submitted in the third semester.

PhD in English – Creative Dissertation

Of the 48 total credits required (see [Graduate Catalog](#) for the kind and number of credit hours that must be taken to complete the degree): Six full-time (from 6 credits with GA to 9 credits without) semesters or three full academic years is the minimum duration of the program of study for the Ph.D. Graduate College regulations stipulate a maximum of 4 years without an extension; the average duration has been between three and four years.

Professional Code of Ethics/Discipline Guidelines

UNLV Graduate College policy regarding academic integrity can be found in the [graduate catalog](#).

Annual Review Procedures

Annual Mandatory Individual Development Plan: Each winter break and early spring term, graduate students are **required** to complete the Graduate Student Individual Development Plan (IDP) form [Formerly known as the Student Annual Review]. The review covers the prior calendar year and assesses student progress, and it establishes reasonable goals for the year ahead. Faculty Advisors/Graduate Coordinators have the option to provide feedback to each student’s submitted IDP and provide acknowledgement that they have reviewed the IDP. Reported student data is shared with students’ graduate coordinators and advisors to foster opportunities for discussion about students’ strengths and weaknesses, accomplishments and next requirements, and mentoring plans so that students know what they need to do in order to progress successfully through their programs in a timely manner. Students who are graduating are also required to complete the form in order to record their achievements since the data is also used to track UNLV metrics related to the annual productivity of all students.

Probation

If a student fails to successfully progress in their degree program, their department/school will recommend that the student be placed on probation by the Graduate College. Students on probation may be dismissed/separated from their program for failing to successfully meet the conditions of their probation by the deadline provided. Please see the **Probation and Separation** section of the [Graduate Catalog](#) for more information.

Additional Program Information

Courses

The English Department offers graduate classes at the 600 and 700 levels. Except in extraordinary circumstances and with prior approval of the DGS, only 700-level courses count toward the PhD. Generally capped at twelve students, 700-level classes are exclusively designed for, and typically enroll only, graduate students (MA, MFA, and PhD).

Independent study courses (ENG 796), which are variably weighted from one to three credits each, are arranged between individual students and faculty, who together decide on their focus, modality, and requirements. Independent studies are designed to meet curricular needs not met by regular course offerings and to help students prepare for comprehensive and/or qualifying exams. Whenever possible, however, students should enroll in regularly scheduled courses, as full student participation in 700-level courses is necessary to ensure that they can be offered and that they provide a true seminar experience. Since ENG 796 does not automatically fulfill requirements for MA students in the Literature and Language/Composition Theory tracks, these students can count such courses toward their degree only if they receive advance approval from the DGS. PhD students may count up to 6 credits of ENG 796 toward the degree. (See below for more information on how to register for ENG 796.)

ENG 798: Doctoral Research is a special independent study reserved for PhD students who, under an advisor's supervision, are preparing for qualifying examinations and/or crafting a prospectus. Three credits of ENG 798 may be counted toward the PhD degree. (See below for information about registering for ENG 798.)

Course Scheduling

Course scheduling is ultimately the prerogative of the department chair. All required 700-level courses are on a regular rotation. ENG 700: Bibliography and Methods and ENG 791: College Teaching in Language and Literature are offered each Fall, ENG 703: Survey of Literary Theory and Criticism each Spring. To meet the needs of MFA and PhD with Creative Dissertation students, one graduate creative writing workshop (ENG 705) in each genre is offered every Fall and Spring, as are one or two "Forms" classes (ENG 729). In addition, the department typically offers five graduate "elective" courses each Fall and Spring—in literature, literary theory, and rhetoric/composition. The Graduate Studies Committee recommends to the chair the slate of these elective courses to be offered over a two-year period, based on student input, faculty course proposals, and the need to ensure both an equitable teaching rotation and a balance of national literatures (British/American), genres, and periods (especially post- and pre-1800). This recommended schedule of courses may well change due to shifts in enrollment and/or in faculty status and workloads (e.g. retirements, hires, leaves). The department chair makes decisions about all such changes, in consultation with the Directors of Graduate Studies and Creative Writing, as well as individual instructors and, as appropriate, the Graduate Studies Committee.

Registering for Independent Studies, Doctoral Research, and Thesis and Dissertation Hours

To enroll in ENG 796: Independent Study, ENG 798: Doctoral Research, or ENG 799: Dissertation, students must first complete and submit the English Department [Graduate Independent Study Form](#), which requires a description of the proposed course (including objectives, requirements or description of final product, methods of evaluation, and bibliography or reading list), as well as the signatures of the student, instructor, committee chair/advisor (if applicable), and DGS — in that order.

Only once the form is submitted and processed can staff create a section of the course for each student in MyUNLV.

Course Load & Enrollment Policies

The usual full-time graduate course load for Fall and Spring is 9 credits per semester, and GAs must enroll in at least 6 credits per fall/spring semester.

The Graduate College requires both that all graduate students register for 6 graduate credits per every three rolling semesters in order to avoid separation and that all graduate students register for 3 credits in the semester of graduation.

Financial Support

With very few exceptions, all GAships in English are state-funded, either out of the department's GA budget or out of the GA budgets of the College of Liberal Arts (COLA), Graduate College, and/or Honors College.

In addition, any graduate student in English may apply for any of the Professional Development Graduate Research Assistantships (PDGRAs) sometimes available in non-degree-granting units on campus (e.g. the Graduate College or Career Services) for which they qualify. (No student, of course, may hold more than one GAship simultaneously.)

Minimum GA stipends are determined by the Graduate College, as is the department's yearly GA budget. The Nevada System of Higher Education (NSHE) determines all student fees. Specific funding amounts and fee information are communicated to students at admission.

PhD GAships include a yearly stipend of \$21,000, typically guaranteed for three years for Creative Dissertation students, four years for Post-Master's literature students, five for Post-Bachelor's literature students. All GAs must, however, apply for renewal of funding each academic year through the Grad Rebel Gateway, usually in December-January.

Extension funding (or funding beyond the time period originally stipulated) may be possible, subject to availability of GA funds and based on student progress toward degree and other factors. Students interested in extension funding should notify the DGS no later than their final semester of regular funding.

Limited summer funding and teaching opportunities are available through the department, usually to PhD GAs only, on a competitive basis, by application. (See the appropriate link below for additional summer fellowships and scholarships available through the Graduate College.)

Department funding for research-related travel is available to all graduate students through application to the Research Resources Committee, with conference-travel funding often dependent on the student's having a paper accepted for presentation. Although students must apply in advance for travel funding, funding is available only through reimbursement. The Graduate Professional Student Association (GPSA) also offers competitive [travel grants, as well as book scholarships](#), by application.

Additionally, the department often invites graduate students to apply for its [Dorothy Mae Freischel Scholarships](#), while the Graduate College offers several [fellowships and scholarships](#) for MA, MFA, and PhD students, as well as [Emergency Graduate Retention Awards](#). Applications for most Graduate College fellowships and scholarships are due 1 December of the previous calendar year (i.e. December 2025 for fellowships to be held Summer 2026-Spring 2027). (Exceptions currently include the Grad Rebel Doctoral Finishing Fellowship, the McNair Post-Baccalaureate Scholarship, and the UNLV Graduate Access Childcare Scholarship.)

Annual Awards

Each year, our department awards at least one [Brooks Family/Chris Hudgins English Literary Essay Award](#) to an essay written for an English graduate course by a full-time English MA, MFA, or PhD student. Essays are nominated by English Department faculty, and winners are judged anonymously by a faculty committee. The award carries a cash honorarium ranging, in recent years, from \$250 (for runners-up/honorable mentions) to \$1000 (for first prize).

Another annual department award for which graduate students are eligible is the [Dr. Richard Layne Harp Memorial Scholarship](#) in Renaissance/Early Modern Studies. The annual winner of this scholarship is selected by the English Department Advisory Committee, with priority going to the candidate nominated by the department Graduate Studies Committee.

Our department also awards at least one Outstanding Graduate Student Teaching Award each year. The winner of this award is then nominated for the College of Liberal Arts (COLA) Outstanding Graduate Student Teaching Award, competing for the chance to be the COLA nominee for the [university-wide Outstanding Graduate Student Teaching Award](#). Applications for the department award are generally due in September or October (in response to a call for applications from the DGS), and they are reviewed by an ad-hoc faculty committee appointed by the Graduate Studies Committee. In recent years, we have been able to offer winners of this award a cash honorarium of \$100-200. Winners of the UNLV Outstanding Graduate Student Teaching Award generally receive \$1500 (for third place), \$2000 (for second), and \$2500 (for first).

The department may also nominate one MA or MFA thesis and one PhD dissertation to be the COLA nominees for the annual [UNLV Graduate College Outstanding Thesis and Dissertation Awards](#), which generally carry a cash prize of \$750 and \$1000 respectively. To be considered for the department Outstanding Thesis and Dissertation awards, graduating students should email an electronic copy of their final, properly formatted thesis or dissertation to the DGS, indicating that they would like to be considered. (The DGS will invite all graduate students to submit their theses/dissertations and will also ensure that all submissions are shared only with faculty on the department Graduate Studies Committee.) Department winners will be chosen by the Graduate Studies Committee. Each year's competition takes place in the Fall and is open to all thesis/dissertation students who successfully defended the previous fall through summer semesters (December-August).

Assignment of GA Duties

Our department offers its GAs an unusually wide array of both teaching and non-teaching opportunities and training. In addition to first-year composition, all of our doctoral GAs may teach (as appropriate) World, American, and/or British literature, as well as Business Writing and/or Mythology. Beyond the classroom, our GAs tutor in the

UNLV Writing Center and Honors College and serve as faculty research assistants. They collaborate in producing both academic journals (*MELUS*) and literary magazines (*Witness*, *Interim*). They may gain experience in mentorship, curriculum development and assessment, administration, and social media by assisting our Directors of Composition, Creative Writing, Graduate Studies, and Undergraduate Studies.

The Department Chair, Director of Graduate Studies, Director of Creative Writing, and Director of Composition coordinate GA assignments, in consultation as necessary with supervisors in other units (e.g., Honors College, Black Mountain Institute [BMI], Writing Center).

Generally, in their first fall semester, PhD students with GAships either teach two sections of ENG 101 or teach one section of ENG 101 and work 10 hours per week in the Writing Center. BMI PhD Fellows teach one course and work 10 hours per week on a BMI publication.

In subsequent semesters, efforts are made to allow PhD GAs a variety of teaching experiences. In the second year, PhD students can be assigned a world literature course; a business, technical, or advanced composition writing course; or, for Creative Dissertation students, a creative writing workshop (Course assignments for workshop courses, ENG 205 and ENG 402A, are determined through an application process overseen by the Director of Creative Writing.) In their third year, PhD students might be assigned an upper-division literature course; generally, the department prefers that PhD students teaching upper-division literature courses have completed their qualifying exams. Every effort is made to rotate students through such course assignments to allow all to teach a variety of courses pertinent to their areas of expertise/specialization and professional goals. Some online teaching might be possible, based on students' preparation and availability of courses. All course assignments are made based on student enrollments and availability of sections, and there is no guarantee of a specific assignment. Faculty members have first priority for teaching assignments, but GA teaching assignments are also an important priority. Decisions about teaching schedules are made during the semester prior, and final decisions are made by the department chair.

Non-teaching GA assignments, except for work in the Writing Center and Honors College, are generally made based on an application process or by request of an individual faculty member (in the case of research assistantships). The nature and availability of such positions depends upon budgetary constraints and teaching needs, and more thus tend to be available in Spring. Though, again, the availability of no position is guaranteed, our non-teaching positions in recent years have included the following:

- Graduate Coordinator Assistant/DGS;
- Graduate Coordinator Assistant/Director of Creative Writing;
- Composition Graduate Assistant Directors (GADs)/Director of Composition;
- Research Assistant to the Director of Undergraduate Studies;
- UNLV Writing Center Lead Consultant/Director of the Writing Center;
- Editorial assistants (of various kinds) to *MELUS* (ed. Gary Totten);
- Editorial assistants (of various kinds) to one of two literary magazines (varying number of positions, usually open to all GAs), *Interim* (ed. Claudia Keelan) and *Witness*;
- Research assistant to a designated faculty member (varying number of positions, usually open to all GAs).

Most non-teaching positions are part-time (10 hours per week), and students are generally prohibited from holding multiple such positions simultaneously. Efforts are made to rotate students through these positions as possible, and the department is always looking for new and varied non-teaching opportunities for our students.

Calls for applications for non-teaching positions generally come from the DGS, Director of Creative Writing, or Graduate Coordinator Assistants. Applications are vetted by the relevant immediate supervisor, who makes recommendations to the department chair. The department chair makes all final decisions on assignments based on department need and availability of positions and also serves as the ultimate supervisor of all GAs in the Department of English.

Volunteer opportunities with our journals and magazines may be available and open to any student (including non-GAs), which could lead to more formal assignments for GAs. And interested students are encouraged to contact the appropriate editor/immediate supervisor listed above for more information.

Additional Work for GAs

GAs may—with permission—work an additional 10 hours per week (or the equivalent). Such work must contribute to (rather than detract from) their academic and professional development and must be formally approved every semester or year, as appropriate. (Please first speak with your advisor and the DGS, then submit the GA Request for Additional Employment Form available in the Grad Rebel Gateway under “Additional Forms.”)

Additional work must be pre-arranged by you and an employer. (In other words, the GA Request for Additional Employment Form does not secure you a job, only permission to take one already offered to you.) No GA in our department will be hired to teach an additional course within the department. GAs may apply to teach one additional course for another department, program, or institution, but such requests will generally be approved only for advanced students making good progress and having a compelling rationale specific to a given teaching opportunity. Regardless, please be aware that extra paid work will affect your tax status, at least or especially if you work at UNLV or another NSHE institution. (Please consult the [Graduate Catalog](#) and Graduate Financial Services for further information.)

University Resources

[The Graduate Academy: Innovative Leadership, Professional, and Career Development](#)

The goal of the Graduate Academy is to serve as a virtual resource providing support and many professional opportunities to UNLV graduate students. The Academy offers information about events and services such as graduate certificate programs, workshops, training sessions and career services. You can follow Academy activities via social media or look for regular updates on the website.

[Alumni Engagement](#)

With an alumni base 150,000+ strong, the UNLV Alumni Engagement offers a variety of services and opportunities in support of alumni and their families. UNLV alumni are encouraged to support the values of higher learning through advocacy, involvement, and giving.

[Commencement Office](#)

Located in the UNLV Office of the Registrar, the [commencement office](#) is the last step in the graduation process. Please check with the commencement office for information on the commencement ceremony and your diploma; for all other information about graduate student degree completion and graduation, including thesis/dissertation requirements and doctoral hooding, please contact the Graduate College. It is the students' responsibility to ensure they apply for [graduation on time](#) and submit all required forms to the Graduate College. Questions regarding thesis/dissertation should be directed to the Graduate College [Student Services Team](#) and questions regarding required forms should be directed to the Graduate College [RPC Team](#).

[Office of Diversity Initiatives](#)

The vision of the [Office of Diversity Initiatives](#) is to advocate, promote, and support the advancement of equity, inclusiveness, and empowerment of a continuously changing collegiate and global community. The mission of the Office of Diversity Initiatives is to provide leadership and support for UNLV's diversity mission: *to nurture equity, diversity, and inclusiveness that promotes respect, support, and empowerment*. This Office also handles UNLV Title IX questions, inquiries, and reporting.

[Disability Resource Center \(DRC\)](#)

The [DRC](#) is committed to supporting students with disabilities at UNLV through the appropriate use of advocacy, accommodations, and supportive services to ensure access to campus courses, services, and activities. The DRC is the university-designated office that determines and facilitates reasonable accommodations in compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. Graduate students with disabilities must disclose to the DRC in order to receive appropriate accommodations.

[Office of International Student and Scholars Services](#)

[International Students and Scholars \(ISSS\)](#) ensures compliance with both SEVIS (Student and Exchange Visitor Information System) and federal law, so that the university can continue to be authorized by the U.S. federal government to enroll international students; host and hire international scholars; assist and advise employment eligibility and authorization relating to international students and scholars, and visa, travel, and immigration issues; provide critical and specialized services to the international students and scholars of the UNLV community; and facilitate their transition to the campus and the U.S.

[The Care Center](#)

The [Care Center](#) is committed to creating a supportive and inclusive environment for all genders through programming, services, and advocacy for the UNLV community. The Women's Center has informational resources, brochures, and flyers for a variety of on and off campus organizations to help empower and protect yourself, and learn about your options. They also provide free tampons, pads, and condoms.

[The Intersection](#)

[The Intersection](#) is a one-stop resource for UNLV's highly diverse student body — a comprehensive multicultural center grounded in the academic life of our students. As an intersecting campus resource, the Intersection helps

ensure students, particularly first-generation and students of color, successfully navigate their academic careers. Here, all members of campus can discuss their differences, discover their similarities, and build a shared sense of belonging.

UNLV Libraries

[UNLV Libraries](#) has always been more than books; they are about encouraging students and creating quality programs that elevate growth and learning. Please visit their website for important information about the services they offer to graduate students.

Graduate & Professional Student Association (GPSA)

The [Graduate & Professional Student Association](#) serves all currently enrolled University of Nevada, Las Vegas graduate and professional students. The GPSA maintains the Graduate Student Commons located in the Lied Library room 2141 and Gateway Building PDAC Room. The facility a working office equipped with a copier, fax, flatbed scanners, color laser printer, office supplies, and computers with printers and a small kitchen area. The GPSA is the graduate student governance body at UNLV; the GPSA Council consists of one graduate student representative from each graduate department, and they meet monthly. The GPSA also provides volunteer opportunities, sponsors social events, and supports graduate student research through the graduate research and travel grants program.

Office of Student Rights and Responsibilities

The [Office of Student Rights & Responsibilities](#) is a student-centered, service-oriented office located within the Division of Student Affairs. The Office of Student Rights & Responsibilities collaborates with the UNLV community to provide an inclusive system through enforcement of the *UNLV Student Code of Conduct* by:

- Promoting awareness of student rights and responsibilities;
- Establishing accountability for student choices;
- Creating opportunities for involvement in the process; and
- Striving to uphold the values and ethics that advance the common good.

Military and Veteran Services Center

The [Military and Veteran Service Center](#) is staffed with veterans and veteran education benefits-experienced staff to assist more than 1,800 veterans, dependents, active duty service members, National Guard members, and reservists attending UNLV. Their mission is to develop a welcoming, veteran-friendly campus environment that fosters academic and personal success.

The Financial Aid & Scholarships Office

The [Financial Aid & Scholarships Office](#) supports higher-education access and persistence by providing financial aid to eligible students. The office partners with student organizations, the UNLV Foundation, the Graduate College, and other external constituents to provide financial aid learning opportunities and scholarship support for graduate students.

Writing Center

This is a free service to UNLV students to help you with any writing project, from papers to creative writing, to resumes, and we can work with you at any stage of the writing process. The center can help you brainstorm, make an outline, work on your drafts, or just be a soundboard for your ideas. The center staff can assist you in person, or via the [Online Writing Lab \(OWL\)](#) page.

University Policies and Procedures

Graduate students are responsible for knowing and acting in accordance with UNLV Policies and Procedures. To view the most commonly referenced campus policies and procedures, you can refer to the [Graduate Student Handbook](#), and following websites:

- [Academic Integrity](#)
- [Activation for Military Service](#)
- [Change of Address](#)
- [FERPA/Privacy Rights](#)
- [Health Insurance - Mandatory](#)
- [Jean Clery Campus Safety and Security Report](#)
- [Proof of Immunization](#)
- [Policies and Procedures on the Protection of Research Subjects](#)

- [Rebelmail Policy](#)
- [Student Conduct Code](#)
- [Student Computer Use Policy](#)
- [Title IX](#)

UNLV does not discriminate in its employment practices or in its educational programs or activities, including admissions, on the basis of sex/gender pursuant to Title IX, or on the basis of any other legally protected category as is set forth in NSHE Handbook Title 4, Chapter 8, Section 13. Reports of discriminatory misconduct, questions regarding Title IX, and/or concerns about noncompliance with Title IX or any other anti-discrimination laws or policies should be directed to UNLV's Title IX Coordinator Michelle Sposito.

The Title IX Coordinator can be reached through the online reporting form at [Title IX Reporting Form](#), by email at titleixcoordinator@unlv.edu, by phone at (702) 895-4055, by mail at 4505 S. Maryland Parkway, Box 451062, Las Vegas, NV, 89154-1062, or in person at Frank and Estella Beam Hall (BEH), Room 555.

To ensure compliance with Graduate College policies and procedures, please review the relevant sections of the [Graduate Catalog](#):

- [Academic Calendar](#)
- [Academic Policies](#)
- [Admission and Registration Information](#)
- [Progression and Completion Policies \(listed alphabetically\)](#)

In addition, the [Graduate College website](#) contains additional information regarding policies and procedures.

Nothing in this handbook supersedes any NSHE, UNLV, or Graduate College policy.

Handbook Information

Last revised	Revised by	Changes summary
4/04/25	John Hay, Director of Graduate Studies	Creation of stand-alone PhD program handbook (Dept vote: 23 yes; 0 no; 0 abstain)