Admission

Admission to the Master’s program in the Department of English is based upon the following criteria:

Applicants should have
an undergraduate degree in English or a closely related field;
a minimum 2.75 over-all undergraduate GPA and a minimum 3.0 undergraduate GPA in the major.

In addition, each applicant should submit
a letter of application stating the applicant’s reasons for requesting admission and his or her future plans;
three letters of recommendation written by persons with knowledge of the candidate’s potential for success in graduate school;
a writing sample—a critical/research paper from all applicants and, in addition, a creative work or collection of works from applicants pursuing the creative writing emphasis;

Applicants who have earned degrees at institutions in which English is not the native language must score at least 575 on the TOEFL Examination before they may be admitted to the program.

Admission to the program is recommended to the Department Chair by a committee consisting of the Director of Graduate Studies and two other members of the department’s Graduate Committee.

Academic Progress

In addition to meeting Graduate School requirements, to continue in good standing in the program the candidate must maintain a GPA of at least 3.0 and may accumulate no grades of D or F and no more than two grades of C and/or I. No course with a grade of C or lower can be applied toward the degree. Candidates whose grades fall below the minimum GPA or who accumulate two grades of I will be placed on academic probation and will have one additional semester to regain good standing; candidates who fail to raise the GPA to the 3.0 minimum and/or to remove at least one grade of I will not be permitted to continue in the program. Students receiving federal financial aid may have additional requirements.

Course Requirements (33 hours, minimum)

1. Core Courses (21 hours). To ensure both depth and breadth of study, in addition to taking EG 810 (Introduction to Graduate Studies—3 hours), students will select two courses from each of the following areas:
   
   Area A: Literature before 1830
   Area B: Literature after 1830
   Area C: Language/Rhetoric/Critical Theory
2. Elective Course Options. Students will select one of two options:

**Option A:** 9 hours of elective courses plus a scholarly thesis (4 credit hours), normally 40-50 pages—incorporating significantly more research than customarily expected of a graduate course paper—or a creative thesis (4 credit hours), a minimum of 40 pages, in which the student places the creative portion of his or her work within a critical or theoretical framework. (While a student may sometimes have reason to enroll for more than 4 hours of thesis credit, no more than 4 hours may be applied toward the degree.) The thesis, whether scholarly or creative, will be directed by a member of the graduate faculty selected by the candidate in consultation with the Director of Graduate Studies. Working with the thesis director, the candidate will select two additional members for the thesis committee, including one member of the graduate faculty outside the candidate’s area of specialization. The thesis committee will read and assess the thesis and recommend action to the Director of Graduate Studies. Upon acceptance of the thesis, the candidate will sit for a one-hour examination over the thesis; examiners will be the thesis committee, although other members of the department may attend the examination. In lieu of the one-hour exam, creative theses will be presented orally in a 20-30 minute reading, after which committee members will question the writer about the creative work and the critical/theoretical framework that accompanies it.

**OR**

**Option B:** 12 hours of elective courses, plus either

1) an independent research project (minimum length: 20 pages), customarily derived from previous course work, presented to an Examining Committee, consisting of the director of the project and two other members of the graduate faculty; the committee will read and assess the project and will meet with the candidate prior to recommending action to the Director of Graduate Studies;

or

2) a 20-minute scholarly paper, customarily derived from previous course work, presented to the public. The paper will be made available 10 days in advance of the presentation; all members of the department will be invited to attend, along with others interested in the topic. The examining committee, consisting of the director of the paper and two other members of the graduate faculty, will assess the paper, the presentation, and the candidate’s response to the public questions, and will recommend action to the Director of Graduate Studies.

**Portfolio Assessment**

At the end of the final term of study, the candidate will submit to the appropriate committee (either the examining committee or the thesis committee) a portfolio of work, consisting of (1) an introduction to the contents of the portfolio, including the contexts in which each of the pieces was written (class, semester, instructor, course emphases, etc.); (2) three papers written for courses in the student’s MA program, representing, as nearly as possible, the first, middle, and final semesters of
course work; (3) a copy of the final thesis or project paper completed for Option A or Option B; and (4) an analysis of the portfolio’s contents. In the analysis of the portfolio, the student has the opportunity to address such matters as what methodology informs a particular scholarly paper or what theory of fiction informs a short story, etc. A student may indicate his or her specific intentions in a paper and the extent to which those intentions were realized. Most importantly, analysis of the portfolio offers the opportunity to assess overall achievement and to reflect on how one has progressed professionally and intellectually during pursuit of the degree. The committee will read and assess the portfolio and recommend action to the Director of Graduate Studies. The student will have access, upon request, to the portfolio and the portfolio assessment, both of which will be filed with the director of Graduate Studies. The portfolio may be used for program assessment and for future examples.

Guidelines and Deadlines for Theses (Option A) and Project Papers (Option B)

The following guidelines are set forth with the thesis option primarily in mind, but they should be considered instructive with regard to the project paper as well; students in Option B often continue course work into their semester of graduation.

In the first few weeks of the semester before the semester of graduation, the student in option A must choose, in consultation with the Director of Graduate Studies, the committee chair, who will help in selecting the second and third readers. Ideally, the chair should be someone with whom the student has worked already, but that is not a requirement. At this time, in conjunction with the chair, the student should plan the general strategies for writing the thesis as well as a timetable for completing the work. For option B, the student must choose, during the first few weeks of the semester before the semester of graduation, the paper from past course work that will become the project paper (or choose the current course from which the project paper will come). As with option A, the committee should also be chosen at this time and a general timetable laid out.

For a creative thesis, the creative portion of the thesis should be brought to the polishing stage during this semester (i.e., the majority of the poems or stories should be finished and approved by the end of this second-to-last semester).

The university requires that every student be enrolled for at least one hour of credit during the semester of graduation. The student writing a creative thesis must be enrolled in at least one hour of independent study or thesis credit with the committee chair specifically. For a creative thesis, the student should focus during this time on developing the critical introduction to the material and completing the creative portion of the work.

The second reader should be involved throughout the process, but at the very least should have a completed draft of the thesis one month before the defense.

When the committee chair and the second reader have agreed that the manuscript is in its final stages, the student should make copies available to all three readers for their final comments and suggestions.

For a creative thesis, after the manuscript has been completed and accepted by the thesis committee on a preliminary basis, the student will present an oral reading/critical defense to the committee and other interested faculty members and students. The student will be expected to read for
approximately twenty or thirty minutes from the work and answer any questions that the committee might have. (The other audience members may ask questions as well, but the committee alone determines acceptance of the thesis.) For the scholarly thesis, the student will sit for a one-hour oral examination with the thesis committee and other interested members of the department. (As with the creative thesis, the committee alone determines acceptance of the thesis.) Because of university deadlines, exams for both scholarly and creative theses will usually be held three or four weeks before the date of commencement.

**Program Emphases**

While all students in the program must meet the same general requirements (listed above), students may elect an emphasis in any of three broad areas: literature, creative writing, or rhetoric/pedagogy.

- **Students pursuing the Literature Emphasis** may include among their electives up to six hours of courses outside the department.

- **Students pursuing the Creative Writing Emphasis** may take up to twelve hours of creative writing courses. Students pursuing this emphasis must choose Option A, the thesis option.

- **Students pursuing the Rhetoric/Pedagogy Emphasis** may take up to twelve hours of pedagogical courses, at least six of which must be in courses offered by the Department of English.