VANDERBILT
College of Arts *and* Science

Department of English

Graduate Student and Faculty Handbook

It is the responsibility of each student and each member of the Graduate Faculty to be familiar with the information in this document.

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The Department of English reserves the right to alter all deadlines within this document. Any changes that occur will be communicated promptly and directly to students.

**

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1. DOCTORAL PROGRAM ADMINISTRATION

The Doctoral Program is administered by the Graduate Studies Committee (GSC), which is chaired by the Director of Graduate Studies (DGS). The GSC is typically composed of five English Department faculty members who are appointed (or continued) each year by the Department Chair.

The GSC conducts all business that concerns the nature and function of the Graduate Program. It has the following responsibilities:

- consider petitions for variances from stated regulations
- serve as the admissions committee for applicants to the doctoral program
- evaluate and recommend nominees for internal awards and fellowships
- discuss, formulate, and present to the full faculty recommendations for changes to the program
- consider appeals from individual graduate students on matters pertaining to comprehensive exams
- consider and present to the faculty proposals for new graduate courses
- consider requests for graduate student leaves of absence
- consider student requests for funding from the departmental endowments
- conduct annual reviews of all current Ph.D. students for progress and standing.

Appointed for terms of three years, the DGS serves as a liaison between the English Department and the Graduate School, as well as between the individual graduate students or groups of graduate students and the Graduate School. The DGS also monitors each graduate student's progress toward the degree; schedules and administers the comprehensive exams; if needed, mediates conflicts between graduate students and faculty; and, in consultation with the department chair, schedules graduate course offerings to ensure adequate coverage in the fields that the graduate student body represents at a given time.

The Department of English also maintains a full-time Graduate Studies Program Coordinator (GSPC) for the Ph.D. and M.F.A. programs. The GSPC facilitates all academic, administrative, and financial processes for the Ph.D. and M.F.A. programs, including all event scheduling, student stipends, award disbursement, and individual student credit-hour tracking. The GSPC functions as a go-to resource for all Ph.D. and M.F.A. students and faculty, and all paperwork for the Ph.D. and M.F.A. programs, both internal department forms and Graduate School paperwork, flows through this position.

DOCTORAL PROGRAM OVERVIEW

2. THE DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY DEGREE

The Ph.D. is designed to be completed by a full-time student in six years.

2.1 Overview of Graduation Requirements for Doctoral Students

- ENGL 8110, Proseminar (First Years Only)
- M.A. thesis
- ENGL 8120 and 8121, Pedagogy Seminar and Workshop (Fall and Spring of Year Three)
- At least two ENGL seminars outside of the student's period or topic of specialization
- A translation exam (see 3.8 The Foreign Language Requirement below)
- Comprehensive written and oral examinations (see 3.9 The Comprehensive Examination below)
- A dissertation proposal and a dissertation (see 3.9.4 The Final Dissertation Proposal and 3.10 The Dissertation below)
- Teaching a minimum of four courses as instructor of record (see 3.7 The Teaching Requirement below)
- ENGL 8112, Project Publish (see 7.4.2 Project Publish below)

- Responsible Conduct of Research (RCR). This requirement has two parts: the first one is online (CITI), the second one is covered by ENGL 8110
- Application for outside funding (see 7.4.4 Applying for External Funding below)

2.2 M.A. THESIS

Students earn an M.A. en route to the Ph.D. Full-time doctoral students must complete all requirements for the M.A. by the end of the fall semester of Year Two to be eligible to continue in the program (see Graduate School for deadlines and forms for December degrees). The Vanderbilt English Department does not typically offer a terminal M.A. degree.[1]

First-year graduate students register for classes with the advice and consent of the DGS and an initial faculty advisor, who will be appointed by the DGS. This advisor will make early plans with the student about course selection, language study, long and short range preparation for the comprehensive and oral examinations, and the dissertation. By mid-May of their first summer, students submit an internal M.A. Thesis Registration form that confirms the preliminary M.A. thesis title and the thesis reader/supervisor.

M.A. Thesis: Under the direction of a thesis supervisor, first-year students will rewrite a paper from a first-year course as an article suitable for submission to a scholarly journal. To qualify as an M.A. Thesis, the article need not have been accepted for publication; but it does have to be professional enough to be ready, in the opinion of the supervisor, for submission. Students should consult with the Graduate School about thesis formatting and regulations. The preliminary M.A. thesis is due to the DGS office in mid-August following Year One. The final draft of the M.A. thesis is due to the DGS office at the beginning of November in Year Two. At that point, the Graduate Studies Program Coordinator works directly with the students to submit

[1] It is at the discretion of the GSC to make occasional exceptions.

M.A. paperwork with the Graduate School. The M.A. degree is typically conferred at the end of the Fall semester in Year Two.

In Fall Semester of Year Two, all second-year students participate in the Second-Year Conference. This conference, organized by the DGS, is a showcase for the students' M.A. theses. All students in coursework are required to attend; students who have completed coursework are highly encouraged to attend.

2. 3 Course Work and Progess to Degree

Students complete 72 credit hours in the Ph.D. program. 56 credit hours are completed as coursework (so-called quality hours). Students take 24 hours in their first year, 24 hours in their second year, 6 hours in their third year (Pedagogy Seminar and Workshop), and 2 hours of coursework in their fourth year (Project Publish). The majority of these courses – taken in the first two years of study – are graduate seminars that offer in-depth study of a particular genre, author, historical period, or a special topic. The department also offers mezzanine or "combined" undergraduate and graduate enrollment classes for graduate credit. The remaining 16 credit hours are completed through non-candidate and dissertation research hours.

2.3.1 Courses outside of the English Department

Students are permitted to take up to two courses outside of the Department of English for graduate credit. A student wishing to take additional hours outside of the department must petition the GSC, explaining the usefulness and appropriateness of such courses for their plan of study. If you take a three credit-hour course in another department, you will need to add 1 hour of ENGL 7999 Master's Thesis Research with the Director of Graduate Studies to make up for this deficit.

2.3.2 Undergraduate courses for graduate credit

A student may sometimes find it appropriate to enroll in a 2000-level (or above) undergraduate course for graduate credit, but only with the permission of the course instructor

and the DGS. In such cases, students will do additional work beyond the undergraduate requirements for the course. Please note that not all 2000-level (and above) courses are open for graduate credit.

2.3.3 Independent Studies (English 8150)

Independent studies are one-on-one tutorials in which student and professor agree on a one-semester course of study that includes a reading list and writing assignments. Students may take one such course in their graduate career and petition the GSC for a second course. Students wishing to do an independent study must consult with the DGS and fill out the necessary permission form.

2.3.4 Grades

Students are expected to earn at minimum a grade of B in all courses. Grades lower than a C- are not computed toward fulfillment of the 24-hours required by the Graduate School. Students who receive a C or lower in any course taken for Graduate School credit must discuss the grade and their future in the program with the DGS.

Any student earning two Cs and/or four Bs (or lower) in graduate courses in the Department of English will be placed on academic probation and will be ineligible for departmental funds. A pattern of poor grades will result in dismal from the program.

Students enrolling in English 8999 (Non-Candidate Research) and English 9999 (Ph.D. Dissertation Research) will be assigned S(atisfactory) / U(nsatisfactory) grades in accordance with the Graduate School's policy: “One U grade requires consultation between the student and the research adviser; a second U grade triggers a locally defined program-level intervention process involving (at least) the student, the research adviser, the student's thesis or dissertation committee and the DGS; and a third U grade leads to de-matriculation. These steps are triggered by the accumulation of U grades, not simply U grades in succession. Each U represents approximately one-half of one academic year of unsatisfactory progress. No credit hours are

awarded for an enrollment that earns a grade of U." In exceptional cases, it is possible for the instructor, in consultation with the DGS, to award a grade of Incomplete for these courses.

2.3.5 Incompletes

The accumulation of Incompletes in any given term hinders progress toward the degree and may imperil continuance of financial support. By action of the Departmental Faculty, graduate instructors may give Incompletes only in cases of illness or unusual personal circumstances, and only with the written approval of the DGS. Students who take Incompletes in any year of study must resolve those grades before registering for the next term.

2.3.6 Annual Faculty Evaluation of Students' Progress

At the conclusion of each academic year, the GSC calls a meeting of the entire graduate faculty to evaluate the progress of each graduate student. These evaluations may result in a variety of recommendations—e.g., continued progress toward the degree, academic probation (see 3.5 Academic Probation above), discontinuation of financial support, dismissal from the Program. For instance, students' financial support may be terminated if the GSC, in its annual review of all graduate students, finds that insufficient progress is being made toward the degree (e.g., un-met course or language requirements, one of more "incompletes" or "unsatisfactories," poor academic evaluations). When necessary, the DGS will communicate such recommendations in writing.

2.3.7 Transfer Credit for Students Admitted with an M.A. degree

The Department of English does not accept transfer credit for course work completed prior to enrollment at Vanderbilt University.

2. 4 Leaves of Absence and Reinstatement

2.4.1. Part-time status

All students are full time; part-time status is not permitted.

2.4.2. Medical and personal leaves

Students seeking a leave must do so in writing to the DGS and the GSC, explaining the reason(s) for the request. If the GSC approves the request, the DGS will forward it to the Graduate School. Only the Graduate School is empowered to grant leaves of absence of any sort.

In endorsing a request for leave, the GSC will require that the student notify the Department of English and the Graduate School well in advance of their plans to re-enter, extend the leave, or withdraw from the program. In practical terms, this means that for leave of one fall-to-fall academic year, the committee must be notified by December 1 of plans for the following fall, by April 1 for a spring semester leave. The early dates of notification are primarily for budgetary reasons.

2.4.3. Reinstatement after prolonged absence

If a student leaves the doctoral program before having completed the dissertation and wishes to re-enter the program and the Graduate School to do so after a prolonged absence, they must apply to the Graduate School for reinstatement. Such reinstatement is granted rarely, and only on the recommendation of the student's dissertation committee, the GSC, and with approval of the Graduate School.

2.5 Research Advising

There are three points during the progress to degree when students are assigned or select an advisor.

2.5.1 First-Year Faculty Mentors

Upon arrival, first year students are assigned a faculty mentor to advise on coursework, schedules, and any questions related to the program and a student's academic endeavors.

2.5.2 Faculty MA Thesis Advisors

At the end of the first year, students select a director for the M.A. Thesis. This person does not have to be the first-year advisor.

2.5.3 Doctoral Exam and Thesis Committee Chair/ Co-Chairs

In the second year, the student will select a faculty member to chair, or two faculty members to co-chair the qualifying PhD exam. Typically, this faculty chair will also chair or co-chair the dissertation committee. Our department feels strongly that dissertations are advised by committees more than a single research advisor.

2.6 The Teaching Requirement

All students in the program are required to teach at least four undergraduate courses as instructors of record. This means that all students are required to be in residence through their sixth year. All students will teach their first course in their third year in the spring semester that directly follows the required Pedagogy seminar; and, typically, their second and third courses in Year Four; and at least one course during Year Six. Students may elect to teach a fifth course either in Year Six or Five.

To petition for an exemption from any portion of this requirement, a student will need the written support of their academic advisors. If a student wishes to be exempt from teaching a course in the spring semester that immediately follows the pedagogy course, the GSC will grant such a petition *only* under the condition that a member of the student's dissertation committee agrees to serve as a teaching mentor for that term. This is to ensure that first-time graduate instructors have the same support that the other members of their cohort routinely receive from the instructor of the pedagogy course, who also serves as their teaching mentor for that spring term. Serving as a teaching mentor involves observing the student's classes at least twice during the term and meeting with them every two weeks during the semester to discuss pedagogical matters and the class.

2.7 The Foreign Language Requirement

Students are required to pass a foreign language translation exam. Students may take the exam more than once, starting in Year 1. Tests are coordinated and administered in September and January. Students should notify the DGS's office before the beginning of the semester as to

whether or not they intend to take a translation test during that semester. Whenever possible, members of the Department of English will conduct the tests. The exam typically consists of excerpts from scholarly articles and books in the student's chosen language.

Exam details are as follows:

- There is a two-hour time limit. Each student may use one online dictionary during the translation.
- There is no limit on re-takes, except in cases where the department has to pay for a faculty member from another institution to create and grade the exam. This would be the case when the language in which a student prefers to take the exam is not taught at Vanderbilt. The limit in those cases is one retake.
- The student must show that they are able to comprehend a scholarly source text in a foreign language. Criteria for passing are a good command of the structure of the language; a strong understanding of the meaning of the source text at the sentence level; and completion of a translation of at least 2/3 of the original text. Exams are created such that a competent test-taker can complete them in two hours.

2.8 The Comprehensive Examination

Students take their comprehensive exams in their third year. All Incompletes must be resolved before a student may sit for their exam. The comprehensive exam has four components:

- The written exam (administered during Spring Break in March)
- The dissertation prospectus (due by mid-April)
- The oral exam (to be completed by the end of May)
- The final dissertation proposal (due by mid-June)

2.8.1 The Comprehensive Examination Committee

Students must register their internal committee members with the DGS by the end of May in the Second Year. The exam committee is composed of three English Department faculty and one outside reader. The outside reader reads the written examinations but does not grade them. The outside reader does participate in the oral examination, serves on the dissertation committee, and participates in the dissertation defense. Students should consult with their other committee members about the most appropriate faculty member to fill this role.

Students must declare their outside readers with the Graduate School *before the written examination takes place*. If the reader is not a member of Vanderbilt's graduate faculty (meaning that they are appointed in a program with a graduate program) or a faculty member at a university other than Vanderbilt, the Graduate School requires the following documents from the student: (a) a copy of the reader's Curriculum Vitae, and (b) a note from the student to the DGS describing how the reader's scholarship contributes to the student's dissertation-writing process. Once the outside reader is approved by the DGS, students must submit the "Appoint or modify Ph.D. committee" form under "Doctoral Actions" section of the Graduate School's Academic Forms & Guidelines page.

2.8.2 The Examination Fields

The written exam covers *two major fields and one minor field*. These fields may be organized historically, generically, theoretically, or in other ways that reflect a coherent argument. At least one field must cover a substantial historical period.

The Department does not impose numerical requirement on reading lists. The length of each list will be determined through consultation between the student and their examination committee members. Major lists tend to fall between 75-100 texts; minor lists tend to fall between 50-65 items. Each student should have an early discussion with their exam committee to sets these target numbers. Preliminary reading lists are due from second-year students in late

May, followed by the first tiered lists due in mid-October and the final tiered lists at the end of January.

The minor list typically supplements the two major lists. This can work in a number of ways. The list sometimes provides context by taking the study of a particular issue, movement, or genre backward or forward historically. It sometimes concentrates on a sub-genre, development, debate, or other focal group of texts. It sometimes assembles texts—theoretical, historical, or otherwise methodological—that the student and committee members anticipate will provide an analytic structure for the dissertation. The Department recommends that each student conduct an early discussion with their committee about the most effective ways to use this third list. The three fields and the reading lists are subject to the approval, first, of the candidate's committee, then by the GSC.

2.8.3 Preparation for the Written Exam

The exam emphasizes the importance of a broad grounding in each field, while also beginning the transition from general reading to targeted research. In the third year, then, the shared project of the committee and the student is twofold: a) to make certain that the student has a strong knowledge of their fields of study; and b) to develop a subset of each list, representing both teaching and research priorities, on which the written exam will focus. These preliminary lists are due in late May during the summer between a student’s Second and Third Years.

Students read most, ideally all, of the material on their preliminary lists during the summer after their second year. The fall semester of the student's third year is thus dedicated to organizing lists into levels of priority, re-reading as particular emphasis and connections develop, and learning the relationships between a general field of knowledge and a particular intervention in that field. The student identifies texts of greater and lesser importance (that is, tiers) to their exams and provides a rationale that precedes each list.

Students are expected to work closely with their committee members throughout the exam preparation process. After the beginning of September of the third year, students meet with each of their committee members on a biweekly basis.

2.8.4 Lists and Tiers

Each exam list is divided into two tiers of priority through this process of continued reading and regular consultation. Final lists, with a two-tiered structure, that is, texts of primary and secondary significance to the student's three fields, MUST be approved by the committee and submitted to the DGS office by the end of January of the student's third year. While the written exam focuses primarily on the first-tier lists, the second-tier lists also remain important: they will continue to provide context for discussions between student and committee members and will contribute to the student's credentials as a scholar and a teacher in their fields.

If committee members have reservations about a student's preparation, they may decide, as a group, not to let the written exam go forward. If this occurs, the student must take the written exam by the last day of classes in their third year. See also *Postponements* below.

2.8.5. The Written Examination

The written examination is to be completed in March of a student's third year for that student to be in good academic standing. The exam begins at 4:00 P.M. on the Thursday before Spring Break and ends by 9:00 A.M. on the second following Monday (10 days).

Students choose to answer one of three questions in each examination field and will write a conference-length paper (2,500 words, excluding foot- or endnotes) for each of the three exam questions they select. Strong exam essays will show research skill and acumen, strong critical familiarity with both primary and secondary texts, and the ability to state and sustain a critical argument. The writing submitted for the exam answers must be original writing. The DGS releases the exam questions to students individually and directly. Students return exam responses

electronically in Microsoft Word format, by email, to the DGS, along with a copy of their exam questions.

2.8.6. Post-Examination Meetings

After the written exam, each student schedules formal meetings with ALL members of their committee. These discussions will address strengths and weaknesses of the exam, as well as areas for further development. They also serve as preparation for the oral exam (see 3.9.3 The Oral Examination).

2.8.6.1 Postponements

Postponements (usually only until the following semester) are very rarely granted and only in cases of unusual hardship. A request for postponement must be made in writing to the GSC. Failure to take the written exam on schedule without an authorized deferral constitutes unsatisfactory progress toward the degree and will result in the termination of financial support.

2.8.6.2 Failure to Pass the Written Exam

If a student fails all or part of the written exam, they have one opportunity to retake the examination in early August of the same year. They will, however, be ineligible for the renewal of their UGS or PGF during the spring term of their third year and will be placed on academic probation until they retake exam.

Failure of all or part of the retake will result in dismissal from the Graduate Program. If the student passes the retake, they will submit a preliminary dissertation prospectus to the committee not later than mid-September; sit for the oral examination not later than mid-October, and submit the final dissertation proposal not later than mid-November.

2.8.7 The Dissertation Prospectus

The dissertation prospectus (at least 10 pages plus a working bibliography) is the initial working draft of the formal dissertation proposal, which presents the student's dissertation project in the most precise terms available at this stage. The student draws on the experiences of

focusing the exam lists and writing the exam essays, linking the prospectus closely to the development of ideas fostered by those earlier stages. The prospectus will concentrate on argument, contribution to the field, research plans, and methodology. Although a list of chapters may be included at this stage, the prospectus should not be dominated by detailed chapter descriptions. The prospectus has two major purposes, then: a) to distill the student's plans for the dissertation, and b) to provide a focal point for the oral exam. The dissertation prospectus must be submitted to the committees and the DGS office in mid-April of the Third Year.

2.8.8. The Oral Examination

Once the student has passed the written exam and has submitted an approved dissertation prospectus, the two-hour oral exam takes place in person around the middle of May in the third year. The outside reader participates in the exam, if necessary via Zoom or telephone. While the oral exam may engage questions from the written exam, it prioritizes the dissertation project as represented in the dissertation prospectus. The oral exam leads to the final dissertation proposal and toward the dissertation itself.

If the dissertation committee does not find the discussions that precede the oral exam satisfactory, they may decide, as a group, not to let the oral exam go forward. If this occurs, the student must petition to take the exam later, by which date the student must obtain the committee members' consent to proceed. The petition, which specifies the date, must be approved by the student's committee and by the GSC. If the student does not pass the oral exam by the new set date, they are allowed one retake of the oral exam before losing their standing in the Program (see below).

2.8.8.1 Retaking the Oral Examination

If a student fails the oral exam, they are allowed one retake. Failure of the retake will result in dismissal.

2.9 The Final Dissertation Proposal

The final dissertation proposal includes an overview of the project—argument, contribution to its field, research plans, and analytic methodology—a description of each chapter, and a detailed working bibliography. It is typically about 20 pages long (plus bibliography). The proposal must be approved by the student's dissertation committee and submitted to the DGS office by mid-June of the third year. The submission must include a cover sheet signed by the student's dissertation director(s), indicating the committee's approval of the proposal as presented. After this approval has been received, the student will be officially admitted to candidacy. Please note that all approved dissertation proposals will be made available to the department's graduate faculty.

Students will enter Year Four fully prepared a) to apply for dissertation-year fellowships (both internal & external) and other research grants, and b) to participate successfully in Project Publish (see below).

2.10 The Dissertation

After approval of the Final Dissertation Proposal, each student begins to draft a dissertation chapter. An initial draft of 20–25 pages is due to the dissertation committee by early October of the third year. A complete version of one chapter is due for submission for a departmental award in mid-December. Students should confer closely with their committee about which chapter to write first.

2.10.1 The Dissertation Committee

Except in unusual cases, which must be approved through a petition process, the Graduate School requires that each Dissertation Committee include at least three English Department faculty members, and limits total dissertation committee size to five faculty members. For most students, the dissertation committee is the same as the committee they used for their exams: it includes a dissertation director (or two co-directors), two additional English Department faculty (one in the case of co-directors), and an outside reader. Students must keep

each member of the committee informed of the progress of the dissertation and usually submit portions of their work as it progresses for comments and corrections. Students also need to be aware of the schedule the Department and the Graduate School set each term for submission of a final dissertation draft to the committee and a final copy to the Graduate School.

2.10.2 What is a Dissertation?

Writing a dissertation is the most demanding project a doctoral candidate undertakes. Students produce a considerable amount of scholarly writing during course work. When appropriate, some of that writing can, usually with extensive revision, be incorporated into the dissertation. Beginning with the 2019-2020 academic year, the Graduate School began filing all electronic theses and dissertations in VIREO.

The English department expects a dissertation to demonstrate breadth of familiarity with the scholarship in the field; a well-defined and sharply focused approach to a problem in that field; a high level of effectiveness in scholarly discussion; and clear potential for the candidate's independent research in the field after graduate school. Further, the Department considers the dissertation to be a book-length thesis of original, independent scholarship that seeks to make a key contribution to the life of the scholarly community in our fields. The dissertation consists of at least three to four substantial chapters plus an introduction and a conclusion and must be a minimum of 150 pages in length (not including notes and references). The Department encourages students to publish in professional journals prior to the dissertation.

The dissertation committee evaluates the dissertation according to the following criteria: originality of contribution to existing scholarship and/or theory; quality of critical insight; range and depth of scholarship; soundness and appropriateness of method; organization and style. The dissertation must be a book-length thesis of original scholarship that shows promise for eventual publication.

2.11 The Dissertation Defense

Students are required to participate in a defense of their dissertation during the late spring or early summer of their sixth year. The final draft of the dissertation must be in the hands of the entire committee at least one month prior to the scheduled date for defense. *The Department will not usually schedule a dissertation defense with less than a month's notice.*

2.12 Time-to-Degree Limit

By regulation of the Graduate School, a student has four years after passing the comprehensive examination to complete their dissertation. During this time, a student must maintain continuous registration with the Graduate School, even if they are not in residence (a significant fee is charged each term). A student who does not complete the dissertation within the allotted time is terminated from the program. With the support of the dissertation committee members and the DGS, the student may apply to the Dean of the Graduate School for an extension of eligibility or for readmission at a later point. There is no guarantee this petition will be approved.

2.13. Academic Probation

The GSC may place a student on academic probation under the following circumstances:

- Low grades (see 3.6.4 Grades below)
- More than one unfinished grade of incomplete at the end of an academic year (see 3.6.5 Incompletes below)
- Failing the written comprehensive examination (see 3.9 The Comprehensive Examination below)
- Missing more than one of the benchmarks for chapter submissions (see 4. TYPICAL ACADEMIC SCHEDULE AND BENCHMARKS below)

Anyone on academic probation is ineligible for conference travel funding for the duration of the probation. They remain eligible for research-related travel.

3. ACADEMIC SCHEDULE AND BENCHMARKS

(Please consult the AY departmental academic calendar for doctoral students for the exact dates for Intent to Graduate Forms and the submission of M.A. theses and dissertations.)

Any student who fails to meet annual benchmarks may be ineligible for departmental research and conference funding.

Six-Year Schedule (**required coursework*)

Year One

1. Fall Semester: 12 hours of coursework (3 courses), including ENGL 8110 Proseminar*
2. Spring Semester: 12 hours of coursework (3 courses)
    a. Mid-May: M.A. Thesis Registration Form due
3. Summer
    a. Mid-August: Preliminary M.A. Thesis due

Year Two

1. Fall Semester: 12 hours of coursework (3 courses)
    a. September/October: Participation in 2nd Year Conference
    b. November 1: Final M.A. Thesis due to DGS with advisor approval
    c. Early November: Submit all M.A. paperwork for December graduation to Graduate School
2. Spring Semester: 12 hours of coursework (3 courses)
    a. Late May: Preliminary Comprehensive Reading Lists and Comprehensive Exam Registration Forms due to DGS
3. Summer: Read for Exams

Year Three

1. Fall Semester: 4 hours of coursework (ENGL 8120, Pedagogy Seminar*) and 5 hours of ENGL 8999 (non-candidate research) with the DGS
    a. Mid-October: First Tiered Comprehensive Exam Reading Lists due to committee
2. Spring Semester: 2 hours of coursework (ENGL 8121, Pedagogy Workshop*) and 3 hours of ENGL 8999 (non-candidate research) with the DGS
    a. Teach one undergraduate course as Instructor of Record*
    b. End of January: Final Tiered Comprehensive Exam Reading Lists due to committees and DGS
    c. Spring Break: Written Comprehensive Exams
    d. Mid-April: Preliminary Dissertation Prospectus due to committees and DGS.
3. Summer
    a. May: Complete Oral Exams. Begin the dissertation phase; attend shorter summer institute if desired.
    b. Mid-June: Final Dissertation Proposal and approval form due to committees and DGS office.

Year Four

1. Fall Semester: 5 hours of ENGL 9999 (dissertation research) with dissertation chair
    a. Beginning of September: Preliminary First Chapter Draft due to committees
    b. Meet with full dissertation committee
    c. Teach second undergraduate course as Instructor of Record*
    d. Mid-December: Final version of First Chapter due to committees and DGS (deadline for Myers First Chapter Awards)
2. Spring Semester: 2 hours of coursework (ENGL 8112 Project Publish*) and 3 hours of ENGL 9999 (dissertation research) with dissertation chair
    a. Teach third undergraduate course as Instructor of Record*

    b. Meet with full dissertation committee
    c. End of April: second dissertation chapter due
3. Summer: continue to work on dissertation; attend shorter summer institutes if doing so is useful for the dissertation.
    a. End of August: third dissertation chapter due

Year Five

1. Fall Semester: 0 hours of ENGL 9999 (dissertation research) with dissertation chair
    a. Instructor of Record teaching option (one course)
    b. Meet with full dissertation committee
    c. Mid-December: Fourth dissertation chapter due
2. Spring Semester: 0 hours of ENGL 9999 (dissertation research) with dissertation chair
    a. Revise dissertation chapters and write introduction
    b. Meet with full dissertation committee
    c. June 1: Draft of complete dissertation due to committees and DGS office
    d. Attend all meetings of the Job Placement Committee in preparation for entering the job market in the fall.
3. Summer:
    a. Start revising full dissertation draft and work on materials for jobs and post-doctoral fellowships.

Year Six

1. Fall Semester: 0 hours of ENGL 9999 (dissertation research) with dissertation chair
    a. Revise the dissertation for submission and to turn it either into articles or a book manuscript.
    b. Teach fourth undergraduate course as Instructor of Record*

c. Conduct a full-scale job search with the assistance of your committee and the Job Placement officers.

d. Meet with full dissertation committee

2. Spring Semester: 0 hours of ENGL 9999 (dissertation research) with dissertation chair

a. Continue with dissertation revisions as needed and focus on turning it either into articles or a book manuscript.

b. Meet with full dissertation committee

c. Teach fifth undergraduate course as Instructor of Record (optional)

d. For Spring/May graduation: defend dissertation and submit all materials for graduation by mid-March (check exact deadlines for Intent to Graduate and other needed forms). *Please note that students who wish to participate in May's commencement ceremonies must defend by the spring deadline; summer graduates may participate in the following May's graduation ceremonies.*

e. For Summer/August graduation: defend dissertation and submit all materials for graduation by mid-July (check exact deadlines for Intent to Graduate and other needed forms).

Summary of Important Benchmarks for dissertation writers:

Year Three

- Mid-June: Final Dissertation Proposal and approval form due

Year Four

- Beginning of September: Preliminary First Chapter Draft due
- Mid-December: First Chapter due
- End of April: Second Chapter due
- End of August: Third Chapter due

Year Five

- Mid-December: Fourth Chapter due
- June 1: Complete Dissertation Draft due

Year Six

- Spring/Summer: Defend Dissertation

All chapter drafts must be complete and not partial drafts. They must be sent to all members of the dissertation committee at the same time unless the committee has made other arrangements. We expect of all committee members that they return feedback on the submitted chapter drafts within one month of receipt. Each dissertation student is required to meet with their full committee once a semester. The Graduate Studies Program Coordinator will be happy to facilitate scheduling these meetings.

Transitioning to the Six-Year Model: All students admitted prior to Fall 2023 are considered in transition. This means that they are eligible for a sixth year of funding and that their schedules for the fifth and sixth years follow the above requirements and deadlines, with two exceptions: (1) though urged to teach four courses, they are only required to teach two as instructor of record and (2) they do not have to apply for external funding as a graduation requirement. A sixth year of funding for students in transition is contingent upon demonstrated dissertation progress and meeting all other program requirements.

4. FUNDING

4.1 Graduate School Funding

4.1.1 Graduate Fellowships

All students admitted to the doctoral program receive full tuition and a base stipend of $36,500 (AY 2025-2026) and full health insurance coverage. Beyond this, Vanderbilt

University's Graduate School offers a number of Graduate Honor Fellowships (formerly so-called topping-up awards), all of which are merit-based and competitive (see below). Qualifying students are nominated at the admissions stage. Amounts and conditions for each of these additional stipends varies. Stipends are paid out on a 12-month schedule (beginning in August) and are limited to a period of 6 years. Because all of our students receive full-time support, they may not accept any additional employment beyond working as a Research Assistant when they are not teaching (with permission of the DGS).

4.1.2 Graduate Honor Fellowship Awards (Topping-Up Awards)

There are two such awards:

- The University Graduate Fellowship (UGF) is a $5,000 three-year topping-up award. This award is given to students entering the doctoral program and is renewable for up to three years on a competitive basis, then with continued success in the program it is renewable for two more years as the Harold Stirling Vanderbilt Fellowship. Its continuance is contingent upon satisfactory progress toward the degree. UGF awards are competitive among applicants to all graduate programs at the University.
- The Provost's Graduate Fellowship (PGF) is a $10,000 annual topping-up award that supplements the student's base stipend for up to five years. The PGF is merit-based and recognizes students from traditionally underrepresented backgrounds.

4.1.3 Travel and Research Grants

- *Graduate School Travel Grants:* Students may apply for three Graduate School Travel Grants (maximum one per year) over their six-year tenure in the program. Grants are limited up to $1,000 per trip for foreign or domestic travel. The applicant must be the sole presenter of research at a major regional, national, or international conference.

- *Russell G. Hamilton Graduate Leadership Institute:* The GLI Professional Development & Training Grant provides up to $1000 of support for graduate students seeking opportunities to further their professional and/or academic development, for which funding is commonly unavailable. Students are allowed one GLI PD&T grant per academic year. This funding is separate from the standard Graduate School Travel Grants (see above) and funds awarded through that program do not count against eligibility for GLI grants. First-year doctoral students are not eligible. Annual application deadlines in November and July for Spring/Fall funding cycles.
- *Russell G. Hamilton Graduate Leadership Institute:* The GLI Dissertation Enhancement Grants provides up to $2,000 for research expenses related to a student's dissertation. Annual application deadlines in November and July for Spring/Fall funding cycles.

4.2 College of Arts and Science Funding

4.2.1 Summer Research Awards (SRAs)

The SRA program assists graduate students with outstanding potential to accelerate progress on their research. SRAs provide funds for research expenses related to the doctoral thesis, other advanced research projects, or scholarly activities that significantly advance professional development. Doctoral students in good standing are eligible for the SRA. A student may receive this award **no more than twice** during their career at Vanderbilt. SRAs are granted on a competitive basis. Students may request awards of up to $5,000. In determining the amount of each award, the Committee on Graduate Education will consider the degree of need demonstrated by the proposal and budget, the number of successful applications, and the total available funds. Award funds will either be provided directly to vendors upon receipt of an invoice or will be provided to award recipients in the form of reimbursement for expenses.

Application materials: 2-page maximum CV; 1-2 page proposal; detailed budget (which the applicants submits to the DGS office as a single PDF); two 1-page letters of support, one from a faculty member who will supervise the proposed research (to be submitted to the DGS in advance of the deadline); SRA Cover Sheet filled out by the DGS. Because the GSC nominates SRA applicants and the DGS forward applications to the Dean's office, all applicants must contact the DGSs well in advance of the **deadline**, note an intention to submit an application, and request a date by which to submit their materials to the committee.

4.2.2 Summer Language Training Grants (SLTs)

The SLTG program provides awards for "language training" broadly conceived, including skills such as paleography or instruction in computer/technical languages. Availability of these grants varies from year to year.

4.3 Department-sponsored Funding

The English Department has several endowments dedicated to supporting doctoral students intellectually and financially. To apply, students submit a description of the proposed project, a rationale that situates the project in relation to the overall development of teaching, scholarship, or professional development, and a detailed budget to the DGS.

Approved requests are taxable and will be disbursed in advance of travel. In addition to writing a one-page report about their experiences, each student who receives departmental funding for any purpose is also required to account for the use of these funds by submitting receipts to the Graduate Studies Program Coordinator. Both the report and the receipts are due within a month of returning to Nashville.

4.3.1 The Drake Series:

The annual endowed Drake Series, which typically occurs in April, is designed to give graduate students extended contact with world-class scholars in diverse fields. Drake speakers are in residence for 4–5 days, during which time they deliver one formal public lecture and meet

with graduate students in more informal settings. Drake visitors usually meet with groups of students in two workshops to discuss the students' scholarly interests and conduct a seminar either on their own work-in-progress or a published essay (circulated in advance).

4.3.2 Summer Institutes

The English Department funds students' participation in summer institutes with which we are affiliated, on a competitive basis. We prioritize applications in which the institute theme aligns with the dissertation project. Interested students notify the DGS of their intent to apply, explaining how the institute they wish to attend would benefit their graduate career and research specialization. Students may select from the Institutes below or suggest a new affiliation. The Department will release calls for interested participants as the institutes announce them throughout the fall term and will set internal application deadlines. In the case of multiple applicants, the GSC will make a selection based on plausibility and merit of the proposal.

- The School of Criticism and Theory (SCT)
- London Critical Theory Summer School
- The Institute of World Literature (IWL)
- Dickens Universe
- The Folger Institute at the Folger Shakespeare Library, Washington, D.C. The Folger programs tend to be highly competitive. However, if you are admitted, you will automatically receive a Grant-in-Aid to subsidize travel and lodging costs.

4.3.3 Myers Funding

The Department's Robert Manson Myers Endowment Fund supports professional development, including the attendance of summer institutes. This funding is meant to supplement the opportunities available from the Graduate School, such as Travel Fellowships and Summer Research Awards (see above), to which students should apply first, unless they are not yet or no

longer eligible. (Please note that in certain years, such as AY 2025-2026 the Graduate School will require that students first apply for departmental funds.) Grants from this fund may support visits to archives, summer institutes, pedagogical development opportunities, specific research toward your dissertation or a publication, conference attendance not covered by existing resources (see above), or other projects that advance scholarly, pedagogical, or professional goals. Proposals that clearly advance a student's dissertation project will receive priority.

4.3.4 Research Assistantships (RAs)

Beginning in the second year, graduate students, with the authorization of the DGS, may earn an hourly wage as an RA for a faculty member during a summer or a semester when they are not teaching.

4.3.5 Academic Job Search Support

Through the Job Placement Committee (see below), the Department of English has developed a thorough program of mentoring and advising students seeking academic employment.

4.4 Other Funding Opportunities

- The Writing Studio offers paid consultantships for eligible graduate students.

5. DEPARTMENTAL AWARDS

Each year, the English Department, through the GSC, bestows the following awards for outstanding graduate student work. The GSC may decide whether, in any (or all) of these competitions, to split awards or offer no award at all for the year.

5.1 The Robert Manson Myers Distinguished Graduate Student Award

This award honors the graduate student who has demonstrated the highest standards of achievement and promise for the future. The DGS solicits nomination letters for fifth- and sixth-year graduate students from the Graduate Faculty, and the Graduate Studies Committee evaluates the nominees. The evaluation process takes into account nominating letters from the students'

dissertation committee, course work, performance on the comprehensive examination, teaching, conference participation, publication(s), and service. This award is funded by Vanderbilt alumn and author Robert Manson Myers.

5.2 The Thomas Daniel Young Award

This award honors superior classroom teaching by a graduate student. Any doctoral student who has taught *at least four courses at VU* as instructor of record will be considered for this annual award.

5.3 The John M. Aden Award

This award is for the best essay written by a graduate student in the context of a graduate course. Students may self-nominate and/or are nominated by members of the faculty. The GSC reads the papers anonymously and delivers its recommendation to the DGS.

5.4 The Robert Manson Myers First Chapter Award

This award is for the best First Chapter submitted by the mid-December deadline. The chapter can be any chapter from the dissertation; it need not be the first chapter in either sequence or chronology.

5.5 The Robert Manson Myers Dissertation Award

This award is given to the sixth-year graduate student who has written what the GSC deems the year's most distinguished dissertation. All those who meet the Graduate School deadline for an August 31 graduation in their fifth or sixth year will be eligible for the award.

6. PROFESSIONALIZATION AND JOB PLACEMENT

In concert with the Graduate School, the doctoral program aims to provide training and support in the following areas:

6.1 A Comprehensive Sense of the Profession

All first-year students enroll in a Proseminar designed to help them to become familiar with various aspects of our rapidly changing profession. In addition, the DGS and the EGSA may arrange a series of plenary events designed to help students with different aspects of the profession. We also devote considerable attention to research and publication (see Project Publish) to undergraduate teaching (see pedagogy seminar) and broad humanistic education; and to new developments and changes in the field.

6.2 Directed Information and Guidance

Our graduate program provides extensive guidance along the way, through individual faculty mentor and regular cohort meetings with the DGS to discuss everything from the first-year M.A. thesis to preparing for comprehensive exams; assembling dissertation committees; applying for inside and outside fellowships and grants; to going on the job market.

6.3 Job Placement Services

The English Department's Job Placement Committee typically consists of three faculty members who help guide students through the application process, from the drafting of application letters and *curriculum vitae* to conducting practice interviews and practice job talks. This process begins during the summer preceding the fifth year and picks up in intensity in the early fall before the first job listings are advertised. Students who receive campus callbacks have the opportunity to practice the talk, Q & A, and receive extensive feedback on their performance.

Each year, beginning in mid-September, the Modern Language Association (MLA) publishes a *Job List* on their website, which is available as an electronic database or as a printable pdf file. The MLA *Job List* is the recognized professional source for announcements and full-time faculty positions available in the fields of English and foreign languages in North American colleges and universities (and often beyond). The database allows job-seekers to search by field, language, geographic region, key word(s)/ phrase(s) in a job description (e.g., "women's studies", "romanticism", "drama"), and by rank. The site is free to candidates, and no

log-in is required to search. The Job Placement Committee will help guide students through the application process.

6.3.1 Some Nuts and Bolts

Dossiers are typically handled electronically these days (most through Interfolio). The dossier should include a CV and at least three letters of recommendation. Other documents, such as award citations, may also be included. Students should update their dossier periodically. Dissertation and Job Placement Committee members and the DGS are happy to work with students on the format and content of their CVs. The Graduate School also offers regular workshops on this and other job-search related topics. Students should also discuss their job search with as many members of the faculty as possible. Most English Departments require a completed and approved dissertation from each job applicant. Moreover, publications have become increasingly important for successful applicants. It is, therefore, advisable to consider each seminar paper as an opportunity to contribute to an ongoing conversation in hopes, ideally, of publishing a revised version before entering the job market.

Students should apply for post-doctoral fellowships concurrently with the job search. There are many more post-doctoral fellowships in the humanities than there used to be. There are many opportunities to apply for external postdoctoral fellowships in the humanities.

6.3.2 Careers Outside of Academia

Increasingly, the MLA and graduate programs have come to acknowledge that, given the shortage of tenure-track jobs nation-wide, doctoral students also need counsel regarding alternative academic careers and non-academic options for employment. To this end, Vanderbilt's Graduate School has a Career Development program. The English Department also gathers information about the variety of paths our own Ph.D.'s have taken over the years. The MLA website also contains some useful links for those seeking non-academic careers.

The Job Placement Committee seeks to maintain active relationships with ENGL alumni who have transitioned into careers both within and without academia. Graduates from the program have successfully moved into careers in the community college sector; library sciences and arts administration; freelance editing and writing; small business ownership; and investment futures.

6.4 Professional Development Programming and Requirements

6.4.1 Career Mentoring

Our doctoral program supplies several layers of mentoring for students. First-year students have the benefit of two mentors: (a) a current graduate student mentor assigned by the EGSA (see below) and (b) a faculty mentor assigned by the DGS. Once a student selects a committee for comprehensive exams and dissertations with the guidance of the DGS, committee members take on the role of mentors.

6.4.2 Project Publish

Project Publish is a required course that prepares students to submit an article for publication. The submission of one article to a peer-reviewed journal by the end of the fourth year is a program requirement. The course combines analysis of exemplary critical articles, practical advice about the mechanics of publishing, and writing workshop sessions.

6.4.3 Graduate Student Conferences

The Second-Year Conference: Organized every fall by the DGS, this conference gives our students a valuable opportunity to practice their conference skills, with feedback from fellow students and faculty across the department and from other departments.

6.4.4 Applying for External Funding

An application for external funding by the end of the fourth year is an additional graduation requirement. A successful application will be rewarded by a bonus from the dean's office and/or the Graduate School. But even an unsuccessful application will fulfill this requirement.

International students are often not be eligible to apply to U.S. funding sources and may fulfill this requirement by writing a practice application. Please note: This requirement does not apply to Students in Transition.

6.4.5 English Graduate Student Association (EGSA)

Each year, the EGSA hosts an array of events for graduate students aimed at developing research, pedagogical, grant applications, and paper performance skills. It also keeps an up-to-date database of job application materials – from CVs and application letters to teaching philosophy statements – to support students as they begin to prepare for the job market.

6.4.6 Writing Support

The Writing Studio at Vanderbilt supports graduate students in different ways. The primary way that the Writing Studio can support graduate students looking to improve their writing is through one-on-one consultations, which are scheduled through the Writing Studio's website. Most graduate students who seek out an appointment are proactive about choosing to work with one of the Studio's graduate consultants, our Postdoctoral Associates, or one of the three Academic Support Coordinators (who have doctorates in a variety of fields). John Bradley, the Director of the Writing Studio, is always happy to help facilitate an effective referral. Whether they are looking for a source of external accountability for their writing, a regular opportunity to discuss and reflect on their ongoing projects, or sustained individual support for writing challenges, many of the graduate students who seek out the Writing Studio come back to meet with the same consultant on a regular and ongoing basis throughout the semester.

For students in the dissertation phase, the Writing Studio offers extended two-hour appointments. The process for setting up an extended appointment is found here: https://www.vanderbilt.edu/writing/about/faq-and-policies/. For graduate writers who primarily want structured time to write, the Writing Studio also offers a series of Dissertation Writers

Retreats throughout the year. The Studio hosts a weeklong Dissertation Writers Retreats in the summer (often in May) and then two-day mini retreats over fall break and spring break.

7. ADDITIONAL CAMPUS RESOURCES

7.1 Robert Penn Warren Center for the Humanities

The Robert Penn Warren Center (RPWC) supports interdisciplinary scholarship and research in all its forms. Graduate students and members of the graduate faculty often (co-)organize and participate in the Center's seminar series. The RPWC also offers exclusive graduate student programming, including a dissertation bootcamp, journal article writing workshop, and drop-in writing hours.

7.2 Graduate Certificate Programs

Vanderbilt offers a number of interdisciplinary certificate programs. While we encourage our PhD students to check the graduate course listings for these programs every semester and to enroll in their classes, the pursuit of the graduate certificate itself requires additional coursework that may not be feasible for most of our students. The Graduate School does not allow for more than 50% of the coursework done for a graduate certificate to count towards the primary (English PhD) degree; this would require students take a minimum of two additional graduate courses during their first two years of coursework. Please schedule an appointment to consult with the DGS if would like to pursue one of these certificates, keeping in mind that our students are encouraged to count two class outside of the department towards their English graduate coursework.

- African American and Diaspora Studies
- Asian Studies
- Gender and Sexuality Studies

- Global Health
- Jewish Studies
- Medicine, Health & Society

8. ADDITIONAL POLICIES

8.1 Vanderbilt's Free Expression Policy

At Vanderbilt, we have a long tradition of free expression, which is one of our core principles. We believe in bringing together people of differing viewpoints for a common purpose. Learn more about how we practice free expression at Vanderbilt and read Vanderbilt's Freedom of Expression policy in the Student Handbook.

8.2 Appropriate Use of AI

The Vanderbilt Department of English acknowledges that AI in its various forms are unavoidable and often used in academic work. While such tools may assist students in some aspects of their scholarly endeavors, they should not be a substitute for thinking, writing, and original research.

Graduate students are expected to follow these best practices when using AI tools. The following guidelines cover all writing carried out in this program, including, but not limited to admission materials, writing for coursework (unless faculty-of-record have a different policy), M.A. thesis, qualifying exams, language exams, dissertation, and job application materials.

- Submitted work must reflect the student's own research, ideas, analysis, and scholarly/ creative voice.
- Significant use of AI must be disclosed
- Students must verify the accuracy of all AI content incorporated into research
- Students must guard the confidentiality of sensitive, personal, or unpublished materials and upload only appropriate documents to AI systems
-

Allowable limited uses of AI may include such activities that compliment but do not replace a student's original thinking and writing:

- Spelling and grammar checks
- Document formatting

- Brainstorming
- Outlining

Prohibited uses include:

- Submitting AI-generated text and analysis as original work without disclosure and prior faculty approval
- Using AI to create arguments, interpretations, and conclusions
- Using AI in ways that violate the integrity of an exam or assignment guidelines

Graduate Faculty must clearly communicate AI policies on syllabi and assignments. MA thesis and dissertation advisors should remind students of these guidelines and the principles of academic honesty.