Graduate Student Handbook

Department of English
Middle Tennessee State University
Murfreesboro, Tennessee

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Introduction

The Graduate Student Handbook is designed to serve as a user-friendly, comprehensive guide to the graduate programs in the English Department at Middle Tennessee State University. Every effort will be made to update the handbook periodically. Students and faculty should be aware, however, that the university’s Graduate Catalog is the final authority concerning graduate school policies, programs, and curricula.

For more information about the graduate programs in English, students and faculty may consult the department’s website or any of the graduate program support personnel:

English Department website: http://www.mtsu.edu/graduate_english/index.php

English Graduate Program Office: (615) 898-2665 or Deborah.Flanagan@mtsu.edu

English Graduate Program Director: Dr. David Lavery, (615) 898-2665 or david.lavery@mtsu.edu

Director of Graduate Admissions in English: Dr. Amy Kaufman, (615) 904-8578 or amy.kaufman@mtsu.edu

Graduate Advisor in English: Dr. Rhonda McDaniel, (615) 898-5285 or Rhonda.McDaniel@mtsu.edu

Overview of the Programs

The Department of English at Middle Tennessee State University offers the Master of Arts and the Doctor of Philosophy degrees. Both degree programs provide students with the opportunity to integrate advanced training in traditional and emerging areas of English studies with teaching experience and pedagogical training. The programs seek to attract a diverse body of qualified applicants and especially welcome nontraditional students, including returning students, professionals, international students, and students historically underrepresented in the discipline.

The English Department has been involved in granting master’s and doctoral degrees for more than four decades. The M.A. program was established in 1966, fifteen years after the graduate school was added to the university. The Ph.D. program, first established in 2003, awarded its first two Ph.D. degrees in that same year. The Ph.D. program evolved from a Doctor of Arts (D.A.) degree program established in the late 1960s; the department granted its first D.A. degree in 1971. Many of our applicants to the doctoral program come from regional campuses of community colleges and small liberal arts universities, and in seeking an advanced degree such candidates enhance the intellectual culture of their campuses and the region, as well as contributing to the economic growth of the region and their own personal intellectual and economic prosperity.

The graduate programs in English at Middle Tennessee State University offer an especially rich curriculum within a flexible structure, with a full range of courses covering all literary periods and genres as well as pedagogical courses in English. The relatively small size of the seminars, usually eight to twelve students, allows for highly individualized attention to students. The curriculum provides opportunities in areas that are unique strengths to the department, such as film studies, Southern literature, and American folklore, in addition to all the major periods of British and American literature, including Old English language and literature, medieval literature, Renaissance literature, Restoration and eighteenth-century literature, British Romantic and Victorian literature, modern British literature, early American literature, nineteenth-century American literature, and
twentieth-century American literature. The graduate curriculum thus maintains considerable breadth as well as depth, allowing students to become adept in a variety of fields within English studies. The department’s faculty is engaged in research in traditional literary fields as well as popular culture, film and television studies, rhetoric and composition, linguistics, children’s and young adult literature, and other areas. The department sponsors established scholarly journals and high-profile conferences which offer rich opportunities for graduate students to learn skills that will prepare them to make important contributions to their fields of study. The graduate programs also afford opportunities to students to teach undergraduates, both in composition classes and in the University Writing Center, as well as opportunities to assist in research with faculty members. The university library, a beautifully designed and well equipped modern facility, prides itself on a meticulously maintained collection and a wide array of archival materials in early American and British literature available through electronic resources. The graduate programs in English have enjoyed a highly successful placement record for students. We are committed to continuing to attract and grow a diverse, well qualified student body and an engaged graduate faculty.

The Master of Arts degree is a non-specialized program that offers advanced studies in American and British literature, popular culture and film, children’s and young adult literature, Anglophone literature, rhetoric, composition, the English language and linguistics. Master’s students may demonstrate expertise in specific areas and topics by choosing the thesis option and writing a thesis under the supervision of a graduate faculty member. There is also a non-thesis option, which includes a comprehensive examination covering a broad range of literary genres and periods. Both options require the core course of Introduction to Graduate Study: Bibliography and Research (English 6660) and demonstrated competency in a foreign language. Both options also allow students to elect a minor.

The Doctor of Philosophy degree offers a generalist program allowing for specialization in a number of areas of emphasis. Students complete sixty credit-hours of English at the graduate level, up to twelve hours of which may be applied from master’s level coursework. Distribution requirements in American and British literature are complemented by a substantial number of electives. Students specialize in two areas on which they take preliminary examinations preparatory to the dissertation. These subject areas include all periods of American and British literature as well as popular culture, film, and folklore; children’s and young adult literature; Anglophone world literature; literary theory; linguistics; and rhetoric, composition, and pedagogy. The curriculum includes a twenty-four hour core composed of a required methods course (English 7660), a course in critical theory, and distribution requirements in British and American literature (six credits in early British literature, six in later British literature, and six in American literature). This leaves doctoral students with twenty-four hours worth of electives. The program is thus designed to provide doctoral students with flexibility in developing their own interests while at the same time providing them with a thorough background in the field. It is at the level of exams that students creatively define their specialties, which are further developed and more sharply focused in the dissertation.

The department administers a two-tiered system of doctoral exams. Before the completion of two semesters of coursework above the M.A. level (12 hours of 7000-level work), a student in the Ph.D. program will take a qualifying exam, comprehensive in scope. The qualifying exam is the same exam as the M.A. comprehensive exam and thus is based on the same reading list. Upon or near completion of coursework, a doctoral student will take preliminary exams in two of the examination areas approved by the department (presumably in areas most relevant to the student’s dissertation topic). Preliminary exams consist of both a written and an oral component. Currently approved
concentration areas are listed below in a separate section of this handbook which discusses the Ph.D. Preliminary examinations. Reading lists for Ph.D. Exams are available at the English Graduate Studies website. In addition to the currently approved examination areas, students are allowed to designate as a prelim area one of the following broad genres: drama, poetry, fiction, nonfiction literary prose. Students who choose to be examined on one of these genres design their own reading list in consultation with a faculty member. Coverage of the genre should be transhistorical and transnational in scope, ranging from antiquity to contemporary writing, and including literature in translation as well as in English.

The department offers a number of unique award opportunities for graduate students, including the William R. Wolfe Graduate Student Writing Award, the John N. McDaniel Award for Excellence in Teaching, the Margaret H. Ordoubadian Excellence in Tutoring Award, the Richard and Virginia Peck Awards, doctoral fellowships, scholarships, support for travel for research and conferences, and graduate assistantships in teaching, research, and administration.

Because university printing schedules make immediate updating of policies and procedures in written formats impracticable, students should be aware that inconsistencies may occur from time to time. Information in the English Graduate Student Handbook, based on information in the College of Graduate Studies Graduate Catalog or university department and program documents, is superseded by more recently communicated updated policies and procedures from the English Graduate Program office. It is the student’s responsibility to ask the English Graduate Program Director about any apparent inconsistencies that may come to the student’s attention. Students should keep in mind that they are generally governed by the policies and procedures stated in the catalog and handbook in place when they enter the program, unless they elect to be governed by newer policies and procedures when the option is available.
Admission to the Programs

Materials required for application to the M.A. and Ph.D. programs include official transcripts certifying coursework from each college or university attended, three letters of recommendation (preferably from those most familiar with the applicant’s academic achievement and potential for research and graduate-level work in English, such as current or former English professors), GRE scores taken within the past five years (English subject test optional), TOEFL scores (if required), and a 500-word statement of purpose outlining academic and research interests and professional goals.

Recommendations for admissions are made by the English Graduate Admissions Committee after they review all materials and determine the applicant’s capacity, suitability, and preparation for graduate study. Prospective students are recommended selectively from among a pool of qualified applicants. Admission to graduate study is therefore not guaranteed simply by meeting minimum admission requirements.

All application materials should be sent directly to the College of Graduate Studies (Box 42), except for the assistantship application, which should be sent directly to the Graduate Program Director in the Department of English (Box 70). Applicants can find graduate application forms at [http://mtsu.edu/graduate/apply.php](http://mtsu.edu/graduate/apply.php) or in the back of the Graduate Catalog. Applicants are required to pay a $25 application fee with their completed application. In order to complete an application, applicants must ensure that all materials be sent to the College of Graduate Studies (Box 42) before the stated deadline.

All required application materials must be received by the College of Graduate Studies before the deadlines stated below. It is the responsibility of applicants to ensure that their files are complete by the deadline. Applicants with incomplete files will not be considered for admission.

**Deadlines**
Application for summer/fall admission must be complete by March 1. Those seeking a teaching or research assistantship must apply by February 1 for the following fall semester. Application files for spring admission must be complete by October 1. Please note that Spring-admission applications are for admission only.

**Applying for Graduate Assistantships**
Applicants wishing to be considered for a graduate assistantship, in addition to supplying the materials for general application (including a general application form), must fill out an application for an assistantship. The application form may be found at the back of the Graduate Catalog as well as at the College of Graduate Studies website: [http://mtsu.edu/graduate/pdf/GraduateAsstApp.pdf](http://mtsu.edu/graduate/pdf/GraduateAsstApp.pdf). A 500-word statement of purpose (listed under “Admission Process” above) is required with the application for a graduate assistantship. The application for an assistantship and the 500-word statement of purpose must be sent directly to the Graduate Program Director (Department of English, Box 70).
Requirements of the Graduate Programs

The following general information applies to all graduate students and relates to advising, courses, course requirements and distribution, grades and grade appeals, and scholarly integrity.

Advising
Students assume a responsibility to work with the English Graduate Program Advisor to ensure they understand and comply in a timely manner with all requirements of the English Graduate Program and the College of Graduate Studies. Failure to do so may jeopardize degree candidacy or planned graduation dates. Completing the requirements for a graduate degree involves planning for courses, for examinations, and for other candidacy requirements (including foreign language requirements).

Students who wish to change their degree options after they have begun the program must work with the Graduate Advisor to ensure that they meet all requirements.

Students should review the section on Academic Regulations and the description of the English Graduate Program in the Graduate Catalog, where they will find specific requirements for changing the degree program, as well as topics addressed in various sections of this handbook—foreign language requirements, candidacy forms, advancement to candidacy, qualifying and preliminary graduate examination requirements, etc.

Degree Requirements in General
Students should become familiar with degree requirements to make sure they proceed efficiently through the graduate program. They should consult the Graduate Advisor early in their degree program about the courses they plan to take. For example, students should make themselves aware of which courses are required for all students.

Students will want to take classes that support their research and professional goals. For example, master’s degree students who plan to teach in secondary education will likely take different courses from those taken by students who plan to enter a doctoral program. In general, students should take courses that provide a broad foundation as well as courses aimed at their specific interests. No undergraduate courses can be applied toward graduate program requirements.

The Department of English, in conjunction with the university’s Graduate Council, determines credit-hour requirements for both the Master of Arts and the Doctor of Philosophy programs. The department also determines specific course requirements and a specified distribution of courses aimed at providing students with an appropriate background for the particular degree program in which they are enrolled. Students should consult the section of the Graduate Catalog entitled “Graduate Programs” for general information regarding degree requirements as well as the “Department of English” section for information about requirements specific to graduate degrees in English.

Students should make themselves aware of the various forms required of graduate students as they progress through their degree programs and the deadlines for filing those forms. For example,
master’s students are required to file a degree plan before completing 21 credit hours, and doctoral students before completing 30 credit hours.

Graduate students who have not been fully admitted into the English graduate program must have the approval of the Graduate Program Director in order to register for graduate-level English classes. Non-degree-seeking graduate students, or students who are seeking admission but have not yet been admitted to the English graduate program, may take no more than six graduate-level credit hours of coursework in English before being fully admitted into the English graduate program, and then only with the approval of the Graduate Program Director.

**Foreign Language Requirement**
A graduate degree in English carries the expectation of a well rounded general education as well as specialized knowledge of a field, and graduate students in English are expected to possess at least a reading knowledge of one or more foreign languages.

To demonstrate their proficiency in a foreign language, students must satisfy one of the following requirements:

a. completion of two 3-hour foreign language courses at the 3000 level or above emphasizing reading, translation, or composition; or
b. earning a final grade of B or better in one of the courses in MTSU’s Department of Foreign Languages and Literatures numbered 5990 (Techniques in Translation [German or French]) or in Spanish 5920 (Spanish for Reading Knowledge); or

c. passing an examination in reading proficiency administered by the Department of Foreign Languages and Literatures; or

d. earning a final grade of B or better in both English 6010 (Old English Language and Literature) and English 6020 (Beowulf), courses which must be taken sequentially.

M.A. students should plan to have fulfilled the foreign language requirement by the end of their third semester of coursework. Ph.D. students should plan to have fulfilled the foreign language requirement before taking preliminary exams. Students should be advised that the requisite classes in Foreign Languages and Literatures may not be available every term. It is necessary to plan ahead in fulfilling this and other degree requirements.

**Note:** Students holding graduate assistantships who register for an undergraduate foreign language class must obtain written approval from the graduate director in order to have the class paid for by their assistantship; the College of Graduate Studies will pay for undergraduate prerequisites only if they are identified on the student’s program of study. Graduate seminars offered through the Department of Foreign Languages and Literatures do not count toward the required number of credit hours for graduate degrees in English; the required number of credit hours earned for graduate degrees in English must all carry the ENGL designation unless a student declares a minor at the master’s level in a foreign language.
Master's Program Requirements

A. Thesis Option (with or without minor)

Course requirements:

1. Thesis with no minor:
   a. Completion of a minimum of 30 credit hours of graduate coursework in English, including ENGL 6640: Thesis Research and ENGL 6660: Introduction to Graduate Study. A minimum of 3 hours of thesis credit is required, and no more than 3 hours of thesis credit may be counted towards the 30-hour requirement, although students may take more than 3 hours of thesis credit. All thesis credit hours will appear on students’ transcripts. No more than 30% of required coursework may be taken at the 5000 level.
   b. ENGL 6660: Introduction to Graduate Study.

2. Thesis with a minor:
   a. Completion of 18 hours in English and a minimum of 12 semester hours in a minor subject (See Graduate Catalog page 23 on “Graduate Minors”). English hours include 3 hours of ENGL 6640: Thesis Research (see 1.a above regarding thesis hours).
   b. ENGL 6660: Introduction to Graduate Study.

Additional requirements for the M.A. thesis option include:
   a. Fulfillment of a foreign language requirement;
   b. Submission of Degree Plan form prior to completion of 21 credit hours;
   c. Approval and successful defense of thesis.

B. Non-Thesis Option (with or without minor)

Course requirements:

1. Non-thesis M.A. with no minor:
   Completion of a minimum of 36 semester hours of graduate coursework in English, including ENGL 6660, with no more than 30% of required coursework at the 4000/5000 level.

2. Non-thesis with a minor:
   a. Completion of a minimum of 24 hours in English course work, to include ENGL 6660;
   b. A minimum of 12 semester hours in a minor subject (see “Graduate Minors” on page 23 of the Graduate Catalog).

Additional requirements for the non-thesis option include:
   a. Fulfillment of a foreign language requirement;
   b. Submission of Degree Plan form prior to completion of 21 credit hours;
   c. Successful completion of the written M.A. Comprehensive Exam, which may be taken no more than twice (see “Graduate Examinations” section of this handbook). Students who receive a high pass on the Master’s Comprehensive automatically qualify for the Ph.D. program. Students must be enrolled in at least one credit hour during the semester in which they take the comprehensive examination. Students who have otherwise fulfilled their required coursework should enroll in ENGL 6999 for this purpose.

Intent to Graduate

Students must file an “Intent to Graduate” form with the College of Graduate Studies within two weeks of the beginning of classes in the semester in which they intend to graduate. The form may be obtained online at the CGS website as well as in the CGS office: Ingram 121A.
Changing Options
Students may change the option within the master’s program they are enrolled in after consulting with the graduate advisor to ensure that they understand the requirements for the new option and the policies below governing the change in options (also see “Graduate Examination” section of this handbook). Students who change options must file a new Advancement to Candidacy form.
1. A student who fails the M.A. exam twice is disqualified from the program. A student may not switch to the thesis option after failing the M.A. exam twice.
2. A student who fails the M.A. exam once may choose to switch to the thesis option to complete the degree program.
3. A student who chooses the thesis option and does not progress satisfactorily may elect to switch to the exam option but is awarded only one attempt to pass the exam in order to complete the degree program. Thesis hours do not count toward fulfilling course requirements for the non-thesis option.

Advancement to Candidacy: M.A.
Students are expected to proceed in a timely manner toward the completion of the degree. The maximum time limit for completing the master’s degree is six years from the date of matriculation in the program, though students normally should complete the degree in two to three years. Prior to the completion of 24 credit hours of English graduate coursework (normally during the semester in which the student will complete these hours), a master’s student must file a degree plan with the Dean of the College of Graduate Studies. The form must be signed by the student, by the English graduate advisor, and by the Dean of the College of Graduate Studies. The candidacy form is available in the English Graduate Studies office, in the office of the College of Graduate Studies, and online at the website for the department’s graduate program.

M.A. students should satisfy the department’s foreign language requirement before the completion of their third semester of coursework. The option according to which the student has fulfilled the foreign language requirement should be listed on the candidacy form under the section entitled “Language Research Tools.”
Doctor of Philosophy Program Requirements

Course requirements for the Ph.D. in English include a minimum of 60 semester hours of coursework. Up to 12 hours of master’s-level credit may be applied toward the 60-hour requirement if recommended by the Graduate Program Director and approved by the College of Graduate Studies. Master’s-level coursework must be recent (within the past ten years) to be considered. The 60 hours of required coursework include the following:

A. 12 hours of dissertation research (ENGL 7640). Students may take more, but only 12 hours count toward the 60-hour requirement. Students who have passed their prelims must be continuously enrolled in at least one semester hour of dissertation research each semester, excluding summers, until the degree is completed. Students planning to graduate in the summer must be enrolled in at least one credit hour.

B. At least 48 hours of 7000-level English coursework (or 36 hours if 12 hours of master’s-level credit have been approved to count toward this requirement, 39 hours if only 9 hours have been approved, 42 hours if only 6 hours have been approved, etc.). No undergraduate or dual-listed 4000/5000 courses may count towards this requirement. The 48 hours must include the following:

1. Three hours of ENGL 7660: Introduction to Graduate Study (this course may be taken at either the M.A. or Ph.D. level).

2. Three hours of theory fulfilled by either ENGL 7350: History of Criticism or ENGL 7380: Contemporary Critical Theory.

3. Six hours (or two courses) of distribution requirements from each of the following three groups (at least three hours in each group must be at the 7000 level):
Additional requirements include:
   a. Fulfillment of a foreign language requirement;
   b. Successful completion of the Ph. D. Qualifying Examination (see “Graduate Examinations” in this handbook)
   c. Submission of a Degree Plan prior to completion of 30 credit hours (see “Advancement to Candidacy” in this handbook and the Graduate Catalog)
   d. Successful completion of two Ph.D. preliminary exams (including both written and oral components) in designated areas of concentration. Students are required to notify the English Graduate office of the concentration areas of the Ph.D. preliminary exams within two weeks of the beginning of classes in the semester in which they intend to take the exams. For further information, see “Graduate Examinations” in this handbook.
   e. Successful completion of a dissertation and an oral defense

Advancement to Candidacy: Ph.D.
Students are expected to proceed in a timely manner toward the completion of the degree. The maximum time limit for completing the Ph.D. degree is ten years from the date of matriculation in the program. A total of 60 hours of graduate-level coursework in English is required, no more than 12 of which may be applied from master’s-level work, and no more than 12 from dissertation research credit (English 7640). Two courses (6 hours) must fulfill the student’s primary concentration requirement, which will be satisfied only upon passing a preliminary examination in the same area. Students who take two courses plus a preliminary examination in an area other than the one in which they write the dissertation may list this second area on the Degree plan form and on letters of application for employment as a secondary concentration.

Prior to completing 12 credit hours of coursework above the master’s level, students are required to take the Ph.D. Qualifying Examination (discussed in the following section of this handbook).

Prior to completing 30 credit hours of English graduate coursework beyond the master’s level, a doctoral student must file a degree plan with the Dean of the College of Graduate Studies. The form must be signed by the student, by the members of the student’s dissertation committee, by the Graduate Program Director, and the Dean of the College of Graduate Studies. The degree plan form is available in the English Graduate Studies office, and online at the website for the department’s graduate program. Note that the act of filing this form is only the initial step in the process of advancing to Ph.D. candidacy. Ph.D. candidacy is granted only when the student has successfully passed all required doctoral exams, including the qualifying exam and preliminary exams in two areas.

Preliminary examinations should be taken before students enroll in Dissertation Research (English 7640). Students should have fulfilled all distribution requirements and the foreign language requirement before taking preliminary exams.

Intent to Graduate
Students must file an “Intent to Graduate” form with the College of Graduate Studies within two weeks of the beginning of classes in the semester in which they intend to graduate. The form may be obtained online at the CGS website as well as in the CGS office: Ingram 121A.
Graduate Examinations

Graduate examinations are designed to ensure that both master’s and Ph.D. students have the breadth and depth of knowledge expected of candidates for advanced degrees in English. It is at the level of exams that doctoral students creatively define their specialties, which are further developed and more sharply focused in the dissertation. The graduate program director should be notified in the first week of the semester in which a student intends to take exams and which exams the student plans to take. No graduate exams are administered in the summer months. The English Graduate Studies office will announce exam dates in accordance with the guidelines set forth in the graduate catalog. Although faculty readers for specific examinations remain anonymous, graduate students are encouraged to consult with any graduate faculty members in preparing for exams.

Students preparing for the examinations are expected to read extensively in their chosen areas and well beyond the texts covered in their coursework. They should recognize that their course readings, no matter how thorough, reflect only a partial perspective on their exam fields. Course readings alone almost certainly will not be adequate to prepare students for the comprehensive, qualifying, and preliminary exams. One course alone, no matter how well a student performs in it, almost certainly will not be adequate to pass a preliminary examination in the field.

Early in each academic year, the Graduate Program Director will schedule a workshop to discuss expectations and preparation strategies for the exams. The workshop will draw upon the experiences of students who have recently taken the exams and faculty who have evaluated them.

Current reading lists, which are subject to periodic revision, offer representative major texts in all exam areas and may be obtained from the English Graduate Studies office and from the graduate program website. These reading lists serve to guide students toward essential readings. Students are expected to read the works on the lists and demonstrate their knowledge of those works in the written and oral components of their examinations. In writing answers to exam questions, a student may discuss texts not appearing on an exam list if doing so would effectively supplement a discussion of those that are; however, students must in all cases demonstrate competency in those texts generally accepted as defining the field.

One of three grades is awarded for every graduate examination: pass with distinction, pass, or fail. Students enrolling in the Ph.D. program who have received a pass with distinction on the M.A. Comprehensive Exam automatically qualify for the Ph.D. program. Thus, having received a pass with distinction on the M.A. comp effectively exempts a new Ph.D. student from having to take the Ph.D. qualifying exam. A student who fails any exam may take it only once more, in the semester following the first attempt. Graduate exams are read anonymously. For all exams, students will be on the honor system, and university policy on plagiarism will be in force. The Graduate Program Director will report the results of exams to students and to the College of Graduate Studies. For further information on assessing the quality of graduate examinations, see the list of “Criteria for Assessing the Quality of Graduate Exams” that concludes this section of the handbook.

M.A. Comprehensive Examination

Instead of writing a master’s thesis, students may obtain the M.A. degree by passing a comprehensive examination. The comprehensive exam covers the broad field represented by a
reading list of approximately 50 items, ranging across a spectrum of literature in English from the Middle Ages to the present. Depth of knowledge is also tested through close reading. Please refer to the description of graduate exams found in the “Graduate Exam Policy” and posted on the program website.

The M.A. comp is administered over a period of four hours at a designated time during each fall and spring semester. The exam consists of two parts: Part 1, drawing upon the entire reading list, is designed to demonstrate a student’s general knowledge of authors, periods, and genres; Part 2 involves close attention to five items from the list that will be announced two weeks in advance of the exam date; Part 2 is designed to demonstrate a student’s ability to analyze a few selected texts in depth, placing them in their literary-historical contexts and demonstrating knowledge of some of the most significant secondary scholarship on the works.

**Ph.D. Qualifying Examination**

Before completing 12 credit hours of coursework above the M.A. level, students in the Ph.D. program take a qualifying examination, comprehensive in scope. The qualifying exam is based on the same reading list as the M.A. comprehensive (see above), and it follows the same format and is administered under the same conditions.

**Ph.D. Preliminary Examinations**

Upon or near completion of all coursework and having passed the Ph.D. qualifying examination, a doctoral student will take prelims in two of the examination areas approved by the department (presumably in areas most relevant to the student’s research interests and dissertation topic). Students are expected to demonstrate a high level of expertise in these examination areas, appropriate for teaching advanced undergraduate and graduate classes. Students should take the preliminary examinations before enrolling in Dissertation Research (English 7640).

Preliminary examinations consist of both a written and an oral component. The written component of exams is administered individually over two days designated by the department, normally a consecutive Friday afternoon and Saturday morning. At each of those times students take one four-hour exam in an examination area they have chosen. Two readers prepare and review each preliminary exam. Readers evaluate exams independently of one another. Should the readers, in their independent evaluations, agree that the student has passed the written component of the exam, an oral exam will be scheduled, generally within a period of no more than two weeks and always before the end of the semester in which the exam was administered.

If the two readers disagree on the outcome of the written exam, the Graduate Program Director will retain a third reader to determine the results conclusively. Should the third reader pass the written exam, all three readers will conduct the oral component of the exam.

Students will be orally examined for up to 90 minutes in each of the two examination areas. The oral component may cover some of the topics addressed in the written exam but may also explore other aspects of the field not addressed in the written portion. Students must be present on campus for their oral examination. Students must pass both oral and written portions of their Ph.D. exams in order to advance to candidacy.
The following are the Preliminary Exam Areas which have been approved by the department. Current reading lists for these areas are available in the English Graduate Studies office as well as Graduate Studies in English.

I. Old and Middle English
II. Early Modern (1500-1660, including Milton)
III. Restoration and Eighteenth-Century British Literature
IV. Nineteenth-Century British Literature*  
   a. Romantics  
   b. Victorian
V. Twentieth-Century British Literature
VI. American Literature to 1830
VII. American Literature: 1830 to Modernism
VIII. American Literature: Modernism to the Present
IX. Criticism and Critical Theory
X. Composition, Language, Rhetoric
XI. Children's and Young Adults' Literature
XII. Linguistics
XIII. Popular Culture and Film Studies*  
   a. Popular Culture  
   b. Film
XIV. Anglophone Literature.
XV. Folklore

*Students may choose to be examined in either IV.a or IV.b only; or in XIII.a or XIII.b only.

In addition to these approved examination areas, a student may designate one of the following broad genres as a preliminary examination area: drama, poetry, fiction, nonfiction literary prose. A student wishing to take a preliminary examination in one of these genres should devise a list, subject to the approval of the Graduate Committee, of 40-50 works. The list should be transhistorical and transnational in scope, ranging from antiquity to contemporary writing, and possibly including literature in translation as well as in English.

A student who fails a preliminary exam in one area may choose to change fields but will be given only one chance to pass an exam in the new examination area. If the student who has failed a prelim opts to re-take an exam in the same area, the second exam will not be identical to the first.

Criteria for Assessing the Quality of Graduate Exams

A. Assessment of Ph.D. Preliminary Examinations

1. Ability to Compose a Reasoned and Sustained Response to the Question

   **High Pass:** Provides a direct response to the question which clearly pursues a reasoned path and may uncover additional questions or complications.

   **Pass:** Provides a direct response to the question but misses obvious opportunities to develop or complicate the response.

   **Fail:** Absence of a reasoned or sustained response to the question.
2. **Accuracy, Breadth, and Depth of Knowledge**

   *High Pass*: Demonstrates mastery of the area by discussing primary and secondary literature accurately and with an appreciation for complexity.

   *Pass*: Demonstrates knowledge of primary works but contains inaccuracies, oversimplifications, or little reference to key secondary literature.

   *Fail*: Does not demonstrate adequate knowledge of primary works.

3. **Ability to Establish a Critical Position**

   *High Pass*: Shows independent thinking through critical evaluations of primary or secondary literature.

   *Pass*: Exhibits elements of independent thinking but without sustained discussion.

   *Fail*: Response is limited to showing knowledge of primary works without any critical evaluation of primary or secondary works.

**B. Assessment of Ph.D. Qualifying Examinations**

1. **Response to Question**

   *High Pass*: Reasoned and sustained response, based on close scrutiny of the language of the question (e.g., its key terms).

   *Pass*: Responds to question, though without attention to its language.

   *Fail*: Misunderstands or otherwise fails to respond to the question.

2. **Breadth, Depth, and Accuracy of Knowledge:**

   *High Pass*: Demonstrates keen ability to discuss authors, genres, and periods by extrapolating themes, structural, narrative, or stylistic features as points of comparison.

   *Pass*: Demonstrates broad knowledge of authors, genres, and periods, but generally in terms of plot synopses; demonstrates ability to analyze a single work and engage secondary material; contains few factual errors.

   *Fail*: Does not demonstrate a broad knowledge of literature, nor the ability to analyze a single work and to engage secondary material; contains many factual errors.

3. **Writing Quality**

   *High Pass*: Well-organized and fluid, with no sentence-level errors, and a minimum of typographical errors.

   *Pass*: Organized and less fluid, with few sentence-level errors, and a minimum of typographical errors.

   *Fail*: Poorly organized or replete with intrusive sentence-level and typographical errors.

**C. Assessment of M.A. Comprehensive Examinations**

1. **Response to Question**

   *High Pass*: Reasoned and sustained response to the question.

   *Pass*: Responds to question, though not as reasoned or focused.

   *Fail*: Misunderstands or otherwise fails to respond to the question.

2. **Breadth, Depth, and Accuracy of Knowledge:**

   *High Pass*: Demonstrates keen ability to discuss authors, genres, and periods by extrapolating themes, structural, narrative, or stylistic features as points of comparison.

   *Pass*: Demonstrates broad knowledge of authors, genres, and periods, but generally in terms...
of plot synopses; contains few factual errors.

Fail: Does not demonstrate a broad knowledge of literature; contains little information or factual errors.

3. Writing Quality

High Pass: Well-organized and fluid, with no sentence-level errors, and a minimum of typographical errors.
Pass: Organized and less fluid, with few sentence-level errors, and a minimum of typographical errors.
Fail: Poorly organized or replete with intrusive sentence-level and typographical errors.
Coursework

Graduate students take courses at the 6000 (M.A.) or 7000 (Ph.D.) level. Some courses taught at the 5000 level may also be accepted. Students should consult the Graduate Advisor to make sure they can apply a 5000-level course to their program.

Descriptions for all graduate courses appear in the *Graduate Catalog*, both in print and online. In addition, fliers are often posted on bulletin boards in the English Department areas of the third floor of Peck Hall describing courses to be taught in the coming semesters. Students should feel free to consult with the professor who will be teaching a course to find out more about it.

Course offerings for each semester appear in a class schedule, which is available online usually in the month before the end of the current term. Once students know which courses they would like to take in a given semester, they can register for these courses online during their assigned registration period.

**Note:** Sometimes students try to “shop” courses; that is, they attend the first day of several courses, then decide which ones they will take and drop the others. This practice is actively discouraged as it effectively prevents some students from registering for courses that they need. Students who enroll in more than the allowed number of courses may be dropped immediately and without notice from all courses for which they have registered, necessitating their re-enrollment in whatever courses remain open at the time.

Course Load

Students should become familiar with the following information concerning status in regard to graduate loads to avoid problems with registration, financial aid, or academic status:

- **Full-time** status is 9-12 graduate hours.
- **Three-quarter time** is 7-8 graduate hours.
- **Half-time** is 5-6 graduate hours.

Graduate students may enroll in no more than 12 hours per semester (see *Graduate Catalog* under “Student Load”). Students with assistantships may enroll in no more than 6 hours per semester. Requests to take an overload must be approved by the Graduate Advisor, Graduate Program Director, and the Dean of Graduate Studies. Overload forms are available in the Graduate Office. Approval by the English Graduate Advisor and Graduate Program Director is based on the student's potential to complete the coursework successfully.

Directed Reading Courses

Directed reading courses (ENGL 6/7620) allow a student to study a specific topic independently with a professor in areas not already covered by the regular curriculum of courses in the *Graduate Catalog*, or that have not been offered recently or are not scheduled to be offered during the student’s tenure. These courses should be directly related to the student’s degree program and research and professional goals.

These courses require approval by the professor directing the reading and by the English Graduate Program Director. Students who wish to take a directed reading course should contact the specific
professor they would like to direct it well in advance of the semester they propose to take the course.

If the faculty member agrees to direct the course, the student should then bring the proposal to the Graduate Program Director. If the program director approves the directed reading course, the faculty member who will direct the course must send written confirmation of agreement to the Graduate Program Director. Students may take as many directed reading courses as they like; however, normally only one course (three hours) may be applied toward degree requirements, though exceptions may be made in special cases, subject to the approval of the program director.

**Directed Creative Writing**
Directed Creative Writing (ENGL 6630) is offered only at the master’s level. Master’s students may count either ENGL 6630 or ENGL 6620 toward their degree requirements, but not both. The procedure for setting up a Directed Creative Writing follows that outlined above for directed reading courses.

**Adding and Dropping Courses**
Students seeking to add a course or drop a course once a semester is underway should consult directions in the *Graduate Catalog*. Generally, these procedures require filling out a Drop/Add form, obtained in the Graduate Office, and obtaining required signatures.

** Cancelling Scheduled Courses**
If too few students register for a scheduled course, the Dean of the College of Liberal Arts may require that it be cancelled.

**Repeating Courses**
The College of Graduate Studies allows graduate students to repeat graduate courses in which a grade lower than B- was earned, with restrictions and limitations as follows:

1. A student may repeat a maximum of 2 courses, not to exceed 8 credits combined, for a grade change (the grade in the second attempt replaces the grade in the first attempt in calculating the GPA; however, grades for both attempts remain on the transcripts).
2. Any third or subsequent repeat by the student will not result in a grade change or replacement. In this case, all grades are calculated into the grade point average.
3. Graduate students may not repeat a course in which they have earned the grade of A, A-, B+, or B without written approval from the English Graduate Program Director and the Dean of the College of Graduate Studies. If granted, there will be no replacement in the GPA calculation; i.e., all attempts will be used in the GPA calculation and recorded on the transcript.

Students should consult with their advisor if they decide to repeat a course to make sure they are making the most prudent decision.
Graduate Assistantships

Graduate assistantships are available for qualified students. Assistantships fund tuition and provide a stipend in return for work that may include tutoring in the writing center, teaching courses, and assisting in research. Students desiring to be considered for a graduate assistantship must complete a Graduate Assistantship Application, which can be found at the back of the Graduate Catalog as well as at the website for the College of Graduate Studies. (This is a separate form from the Application to Graduate School.) The completed form should be sent to the Graduate Program Director, Department of English, P.O. Box 70, Middle Tennessee State University, Murfreesboro, TN 37132. All other application materials should be sent to the College of Graduate Studies. Assistantships normally begin in the fall term. Application files must be complete by February 1 for those wishing to be considered for graduate assistantships (a month earlier than the deadline for those not applying for support).

General Policies Concerning Graduate Assistants

Graduate assistants are designated by the following titles:

Graduate Assistant (GA) or Graduate Teaching Assistant (GTA): the general titles for either M.A. or Ph.D.-level students who are awarded assistantships.

Research Assistant (RA): a graduate assistant who is assigned to work closely with a particular professor on research project(s) of the professor’s choice.

Teaching Assistant (TA): a graduate assistant who is assigned to teach departmental courses, usually English 1010 or 1020.

Graduate assistants are assigned the equivalent of 20 hours of departmental work per week. Teaching assignments are based on departmental needs, and teaching assistants are sometimes assigned a combination workload that includes teaching one English 1010 composition class plus 10 hours in the UWC as a writing assistant or as a research assistant.

Until they have completed 18 hours of graduate-level course work in English, which is required before being placed in the college classroom, M.A.-level GAs are generally assigned as writing assistants in the University Writing Center for 20 hours a week; or they may be assigned as UWC writing assistants for 10 hours per week and as research assistants for particular professors for another 10 hours per week. Once students have completed 18 hours of coursework, they may be assigned to serve as teaching assistants, under the guidance of the department’s Supervisor of Teaching Assistants. M.A. graduate assistants normally begin their teaching in their second year. M.A.-level teaching assistants are generally assigned to one English 1010 composition course and to 10 hours per week as a UWC writing assistant or as a research assistant to a particular professor. Some M.A.-level Graduate Assistants may be assigned to a 20-hour per week research assistantship, depending on the needs of the department.

Ph.D.-level graduate assistants are generally given teaching assistantships (two English 1010 composition courses a semester) if they have previous tutoring or teaching experience. Those Ph.D.-level GTAs who have minimal or no tutoring or teaching experience will be assigned to the University Writing Center as writing assistants in their first year. Some Ph.D.-level graduate assistants may be assigned to a 20-hour per week research assistantship, depending on the needs of the department.
All new and returning graduate assistants are required to attend a week-long orientation the week before classes begin for the fall semester. During their first year teaching, teaching assistants are required to enroll in the Teaching Composition seminar (English 6/7560). Teaching Assistants can also enroll in the Practicum in Teaching Composition (English 6/7570) in the spring semester if they need further instruction or support in their teaching of writing.

After their first year as TAs or UWC Writing Assistants, one or two graduate assistants are asked to serve as Graduate Student Administrators (peer advisors) for the UWC based on their excellent record of tutoring and departmental service. Ph.D.-level teaching assistants in their second and third years may also be given the opportunity to teach English 1020, the second-semester freshman composition course.

Assessment of Graduate Assistants
Graduate assistants are evaluated in various ways, depending on their assignment. The UWC supervisors complete evaluations for each writing assistant each semester; these consist of written evaluations of tutoring sessions and also an evaluation grid that is produced by and sent to the Graduate College. The Supervisor of Teaching Assistants evaluates each teaching assistant with the assistance of Graduate Student Administrators (peer advisors) and the department’s Writing Committee; these evaluations consist of a grid detailing semester activity, a departmental classroom observation form, and an evaluation grid that is produced by and sent to the Graduate College. For research assistants, the Graduate Program Director works with individual professors to evaluate the semester activity of each RA; the Graduate Director also fills out an evaluation grid that is produced by and sent to the Graduate College.

Policies on Continuing Support
M.A. graduate assistants receive six semesters of support and continue to be employed for those six semesters provided that the evaluations completed each semester are positive. Ph.D. graduate assistants receive four years of support and continue to be employed for those four years if the evaluations completed each semester are positive. Graduate assistants who are making insufficient progress in their program or who violate academic integrity rules and regulations may have their assistantship terminated. In the event of negative evaluations, the Graduate Program Director or the Chair of the Department can terminate support.

Level of Graduate Assistant Support
Our M.A. graduate assistants receive an annual stipend of $6,000 distributed over an eight-month period ($750 per month) with a waiver of tuition fees and out-of-state fees if the GA is a non-resident. Doctoral-level stipends are presently $14,000 ($1166.67 per month) for a year-round contract, with a waiver of tuition fees and out-of-state fees if the GA is a non-resident.

The John N. McDaniel Excellence in Teaching and Margaret H. Ordoubadian Excellence in Tutoring Awards
Each spring, the graduate office will issue a call for self-nominations for the McDaniel and Ordoubadian Awards. All M.A.-level and Ph.D.-level teaching assistants are eligible to apply. Two $500-dollar McDaniel awards are given annually to outstanding classroom teaching assistants, based on teaching observations, student evaluations, a self-nomination letter, and other supporting evidence. One $300-dollar Ordoubadian award is given annually to a tutor in the University Writing Center, based on a self-nomination letter and tutoring portfolio. The McDaniel Awards are sponsored by Thomson Publishing. The Ordoubadian Award is sponsored by Bedford/St. Martin’s.
Standards and Expectations

The English Graduate Program assumes important responsibilities in preparing students for professional work in teaching and research. The faculty seeks to prepare students by providing courses, seminars, speakers, travel funds, research experience, and other activities and resources relevant to students’ studies and preparation. While faculty will attend to specific needs of students when feasible, students should understand that program demands render it ultimately impossible to make exceptions to policy or procedure for any but the rarest circumstances.

Graduate students in turn assume a responsibility to understand and meet all program requirements. Students should communicate their plans regarding dates for completion of coursework, theses and dissertations, exam scheduling, deadlines, and other information relevant to their satisfactory progress to the Graduate Program Director as soon as feasible.

Students are expected to arrange their schedules to accommodate class meeting times and the office hours of professors.

While faculty attempt to address individual needs when feasible, they are also obligated to apply all university, College of Graduate Studies, and English Graduate Program policies and procedures impartially to all students. Students who have special needs related to disability should work through the Disability and Access Center office (615-898-4893); Keathley University Center, Room 107.

Statement of Community Standards of Civil Behavior

The English Graduate Program fully endorses the statement regarding tolerance for diversity issued by the MTSU Office of Judicial Affairs and Mediation Services, found at http://www.mtsu.edu/judaff. Further, the English Graduate Program supports the statement of community standards issued by the College of Graduate Studies and appearing in their Graduate Handbook:

Statement of Community Standards and Expectations

Middle Tennessee State University is committed to the ideal of developing and nurturing a community of scholars. The choice to associate or affiliate with the MTSU community is freely made by students, staff, and faculty. Nevertheless, it is assumed that each person who joins the community will accept and practice the following core values and expectations:

1. **Value of Honesty.** The notion of personal honesty and academic integrity is central to the existence of the MTSU community. Community members will not engage in cheating, plagiarism, or fabrications of any type. All members of the community will strive to achieve and maintain the highest standards of academic achievement.

2. **Respect for Diversity.** The MTSU community is composed of individuals representing different races, ethnicities, sexual orientations, and cultures. The community embraces and celebrates this diversity as a pillar of its strength.

3. **Commitment to the Community.** Citizens of the MTSU community will be good stewards of the University’s resources and will not engage in conduct which damages or exploits the community.

These expectations for community standards would apply to all areas of graduate study—actual and virtual classrooms, writing labs, library, group meetings, presentations, all communication venues, and any other forum.
University Statement of Student Rights and Responsibilities
The Tennessee State Board of Regents and the university have developed a statement of student rights and responsibilities that pertains to all MTSU students, including graduate students, which is printed in the MTSU Student Handbook at http://www.mtsu.edu/stuaff/PDF/handbook.pdf. Students assume a responsibility to know and act according to expectations for academic community, and to understand their rights as students.

Scholarly Integrity
One aspect of professionalism involves integrity. Faculty members assume that students understand, subscribe to, and practice high personal and professional standards, and they hold students accountable to them. In the discipline of English studies, this includes the responsibility of doing one’s own work and for complying with professional standards and procedures for attributing the sources of information, images, and other forms of media.

The English Graduate Program takes its role in promoting its students’ professionalism very seriously; thus faculty report and act on any breaches of academic integrity, as indeed the university obliges them to do.

The following policies are disseminated by Middle Tennessee State University’s Office of Judicial Affairs and Mediation Services. The English Department and English Graduate Program comply with these policies and procedures.

Academic Misconduct Defined
Academic misconduct includes plagiarism, cheating, fabrication, or facilitating any such act. For purposes of this section, the following definitions apply:
1. Plagiarism—The adoption or reproduction of ideas, words, statements, images, or works of another person as one’s own without proper acknowledgment.
2. Cheating—Using or attempting to use unauthorized materials, information, or study aids in any academic exercise. The term academic exercise includes all forms of work submitted for credit or hours.
3. Fabrication—Unauthorized falsification or invention of any information or citation in an academic exercise.
4. Facilitation—Helping or attempting to help another to violate a provision of the institutional code of academic misconduct.

Academic Misconduct Policy
The professor reports allegations of academic misconduct to the English Graduate Program Director and to the Assistant Dean for Judicial Affairs (898-5812). The professor should attempt to inform the student of the allegation and notify the student that the information has been forwarded to the assistant dean. The professor may conduct a conference with the student in compliance with the following procedures:
1. The student will be provided notice that he or she is believed to have committed an act or acts of academic misconduct in violation of University rules.
2. The student will be presented with all evidence in the knowledge or possession of the professor that tends to support the allegation(s) of academic misconduct.
3. The student will have an opportunity to present information on his or her behalf.
Based upon TBR Policy # 3:02:00:01 regarding academic misconduct, the professor will assign an appropriate grade. This information, along with all supporting documentation of the violation, will be forwarded to the Assistant Dean for Judicial Affairs.

In the event a student believes he or she has been erroneously accused of academic misconduct, and at the discretion of the Assistant Dean of Student Life, a hearing before the University Discipline Committee may be arranged.

If the student is found responsible for the allegation(s) of academic misconduct, the grade, as assigned by the professor, will stand. Should the student be absolved of the allegations of academic misconduct by the Discipline Committee, the faculty member will reassess the student’s grade based on the Discipline Committee’s finding.

Consistent with other disciplinary cases, the Discipline Committee will forward their recommendation for sanctions to the Vice President for Student Affairs and Vice Provost for Enrollment Management. If the student withdraws from the University, and is ultimately found responsible for academic misconduct, the student will receive the grade as assigned by the professor.

**Class Attendance Pending Hearing.** The student may stay in class pending an appeal hearing if the faculty member determines that the student’s presence in the class does not interfere with the professor’s ability to teach the class or the ability of other class members to learn.

Graduate assistants found responsible for academic misconduct will have their assistantship terminated.
Theses and Dissertations

The finished thesis or dissertation is the culmination of a student’s graduate program, the document that secures a junior scholar the right to enter into the profession and provides proof of professional competence. The following comments are meant to provide some general guidelines to students preparing theses and dissertations. Students are also encouraged to consult The MLA Style Manual and Guide to Scholarly Publishing (3rd ed.).

Thesis
The thesis is a work of original, advanced research written in partial fulfillment of the requirements for a Master of Arts degree with a thesis option. A short monograph, usually 60 to 90 pages in length, the thesis develops a unified, coherent argument and makes an original contribution to the field of study. While a thesis may take an idea explored in a previous class and significantly expand and develop its line of argument into a much larger, more complex work, the research and writing done for the thesis should represent significant new work.

Once an M.A. student enrolls in ENGL 6640: Thesis Research, he or she is expected to enroll in at least one hour of thesis research each semester until the thesis is completed. However, only 3 hours of 6640 may be applied toward the requisite number of English course credits.

Dissertation
Like the thesis, the dissertation is a work of original, advanced research written in partial fulfillment of the requirements for a Doctor of Philosophy degree. The dissertation is not an option, but rather a requirement for the degree. A dissertation is a book-length, unified, coherent work, usually 200 to 250 pages, that makes an original contribution to scholarship in the field. This is the document that secures the candidate’s right to enter into the academic profession and provides proof of professional competence.

General information on dissertations is available in the Graduate Catalog in the section on Graduate Programs. Doctoral students are required to complete at least 12 semester hours of ENGL 7640: Dissertation Research. More may be done (and most Ph.D. candidates do more), but only 12 hours of ENGL 7640 may be applied toward the 60-hour requirement for the degree. Furthermore, once degree candidates enroll in dissertation hours, they are expected to enroll for at least one hour of dissertation research each semester (excluding summer sessions) until the dissertation is completed.

Selecting a Topic
Considering the amount of time a student will spend on the thesis or dissertation, the topic should be sufficiently complex and interesting to sustain concentrated effort over an extended period of months or years. The thesis or dissertation should make an original contribution to knowledge and scholarship on the topic. Students should become acquainted with the state of scholarship in their fields of concentration by keeping up with current published scholarship. The annual published surveys of scholarship in YWES, ALS, SEL, and other standard sources are useful for this purpose. Theses and dissertations often serve as source material for later publication as articles or books, so students should consider the possibility of future publication when selecting a topic.
Selecting a Director and Readers
First and foremost, the director should be a specialist in the area of interest. Students should choose a director who will require nothing less than their best work and for whom they will be willing to do their best work. Degree candidates invariably work closely with their thesis or dissertation directors, so the director should be someone from whom the student can take constructive criticism and with whom he or she can get along. The Graduate College stipulates that only members of the doctoral graduate faculty may direct Ph.D. dissertations; directors of M.A. theses must be at least associate members of the graduate faculty.

Thesis committees must have a director from within the English department and at least one other reader; dissertation committees must have a director from within the English department and at least two other readers, at least one from within the area of specialization (or a closely related area) and perhaps one from outside of the specialization or outside of the department. Upon request of the student and approval of the director, dissertation committees can have a maximum of five members (a director and four readers). If the thesis or dissertation draws significantly upon another discipline (such as history, for example) then a student may consider selecting a qualified reader from that discipline.

Common courtesy demands that a student should always approach a professor in person rather than by e-mail or note to inquire about directing or reading a thesis or dissertation. The members of the committee are being asked to make a commitment that will require a significant investment of their time for which they are not directly recompensed by the university. Students should also be aware that agreeing to serve as a director or reader for a thesis or dissertation does not obligate the professor to stick with the project to the end.

Changing a Topic, Director, or Readers
In order to change the thesis or dissertation topic, a student must first discuss the change with the director of the thesis or dissertation. Since a major change in the topic may require changes in the committee, perhaps even a change of director, it is important to discuss all of the ramifications of the change before committing to it. Depending on the kind of change, new paperwork may need to be filed with the graduate college.

A student may need to change his or her director for any number of legitimate reasons. The student should speak in person to the former director as well as to the potential new director concerning the reasons for the change. It may be necessary to file new paperwork with the graduate college.

A student may need to change readers during the writing of the thesis or dissertation, and such a change should be made in consultation with the director. The student should speak in person to the former reader(s) as well as to the potential new reader(s) concerning the reasons for the change. As with the change of director, it may be necessary to file new paperwork with the Graduate College.

Steps in Writing a Thesis or Dissertation
The Graduate Catalog refers to a Pre-dissertation Advisory Committee, whose purpose is to advise the Ph.D. student in selecting courses that will be of most use or benefit in the student’s major area of study. In the English Department, the Graduate Advisor, the Graduate Program Director, and, especially, the potential dissertation director fulfill this same function. They should be consulted as early as possible in the Ph.D. program.
Each thesis or dissertation is unique, and the preparedness of each student also differs widely, so the following list of steps is provisional, not absolute. The director may ask the writer of the thesis or dissertation to follow a different set of steps from those listed here, but this list will provide a general idea of what to expect.

1. **Statement of Intent** (1–2 pages): The Statement of Intent is an informal preliminary overview of research interest. It should address the purpose and rationale for the research and comment on the significance of the study to the field. Students would be well advised to bring this statement when approaching the potential director and readers.

2. **Advancement to Candidacy**: According to the Graduate Catalogue, students who have not advanced to candidacy are not permitted to present the prospectus for their dissertations.

3. **Prospectus/Proposal**: The prospectus should outline the background, research question, argumentative thesis, and planned methodology for addressing the topic, and it should discuss the potential contribution that the work will make to advancing scholarship and/or pedagogy. Students are required to submit completed proposals to their dissertation directors before completing their first semester of ENGL 7640 (Dissertation Research). If the proposed thesis is weak or there are flaws in the proposed methodology, the director may require revision—perhaps multiple revisions—before the prospectus is accepted. This step may generate a written outline of further requirements from the committee.

4. **Provisional Table of Contents, and Working Timeline for Completion**: The table of contents provides a broad, general outline of the plan to develop the argument. The timeline for completion will almost always change as one gets into the actual writing (it almost always takes longer than originally planned), but students should try to be as realistic and as honest as possible.

5. **Reading, Research, and Drafts of Chapters**: This process makes up the bulk of the time and is often cyclical. The director should see some sort of progress on drafts of chapters each semester before he or she turns in the requisite grade of S or U for that semester. The student should discuss with the director and readers when to send the drafts to the reader: some want to see the chapters as they are completed; others prefer to wait until a draft of the entire thesis or dissertation is complete.

6. **Revision**: Students should expect to have to make several revisions of each chapter, and they are expected to address the directors’ and readers’ comments on previous drafts in their revisions. Directors may require revision according to their comments on a chapter before sending it on to the reader, whose comments will probably require another revision. If there are conflicts, the director’s responsibility is to guide the student in negotiating with other committee members about which comments are most important to address and why. The director and all committee members must approve all revisions before the student produces the completed draft.
7. **Completed Draft**: The entire committee should be able to read the whole, revised text at least a couple of weeks before the defense. If there are any doubts about the quality of scholarship or argument at this point, the oral defense may be delayed until the student attends to the concerns of the committee. Completion of a draft does not automatically mean that the draft will be approved by the committee.

8. **Final Copy**: The argument should be sound and the text should provide ample proof supporting the argument. The writing should be sophisticated and clear and should present the ideas in an interesting, orderly, and persuasive manner. The thesis or dissertation should be carefully proofread and polished and should conform to all of the formatting requirements of the Graduate College. In short, it should be a polished, professional work. Students should bear in mind that theses and dissertations are automatically made available through University Microfilms International, from whom copies can be ordered. “Good enough” should not be the first impression people have of one’s work.

9. **Oral Defense**: The oral defense is an examination conducted by the committee on the material covered by the dissertation and its contribution to the field of study. The defense is announced ahead of time and is open to anyone who cares to attend. The student and all members of the committee must be present at the defense. Generally the oral defense will generate further “fine tuning” revisions necessary before the student turns in the polished copy to the Graduate College. Depending on the nature of such revisions, the director may or may not want to see this copy before submission.

10. **Final Submission Process**: Since several individuals must read and approve graduate theses and dissertations, the submission process involves several steps and several deadlines which occur fairly early in the semester in which a student graduates.

**Thesis**: The thesis must be submitted to the Dean of the College of Graduate Studies no later than 30 days prior to graduation. **Note**: The Chair of the Department of English requires submission of all finished theses to the department two weeks prior to the Graduate College deadlines. The student must submit the original and three copies with original signatures of the thesis director, reader, and department chair on the signature pages. Any thesis not meeting the standards of the Graduate College may be rejected by the dean, delaying graduation. Once approved, the copies of the thesis will be bound and one copy deposited in the library, one copy deposited with the department, one copy sent to the thesis director, and one copy sent to the student.

**Dissertation**: The original dissertation and four copies, all with signature pages containing original signatures from the committee and department chair, should be submitted to the Graduate College by the deadline found in the Graduate Catalogue and the current semester’s schedule of classes. The copies will be bound and distributed to the library, the department, the dissertation chair, and the student. Each copy of the dissertation should come with an abstract not to exceed 350 words. **Note**: The Chair of the Department of English requires submission of all finished dissertations to the department two weeks prior to the Graduate College deadlines.
Deadlines
Under no circumstances can the steps to completing a thesis or dissertation be shortened or amended to meet a student’s need to graduate by a certain date. Whenever possible, the director and readers may make all due efforts to accommodate external time constraints (e.g., necessity to complete the degree in order to obtain a job), but they are under no obligation or constraint to approve substandard work in order to accommodate a student’s plans.

The deadlines for defending theses and dissertations and for submitting the final, polished copies come very early in the semester of completion and are published in the calendar section of the Graduate Catalogue and are announced by the graduate director each semester. Students are responsible for knowing the deadlines they must meet in order to graduate and to make sure they complete their work in good time to meet those deadlines.

Missing a Graduate College deadline may result in a delay in graduation. Students should not expect the director of the thesis or dissertation to issue reminders about approaching deadlines, though the director should be involved in planning the timeline for completion. Good planning in consultation with the director and honest assessment of what one can do should allow for sufficient planning to meet the deadlines. Realistically, students should expect the process to run longer than outlined in the initial timeline—it almost invariably takes longer than initially planned or expected.

What Writers of Theses and Dissertations Should Expect
Students may reasonably expect the thesis or dissertation director to be a source of guidance as they develop the prospectus, plan research, and construct the argument. The director should guide the process, suggest avenues of research, question the writer’s assumptions, require a demonstration of competence in areas such as languages, etc., and make editorial suggestions, including expansion of the text. However, the ideas and argument must be the student’s own original contribution to scholarship. Students may expect the director to read and comment upon drafts within a reasonable amount of time (two weeks to a month).

Students may expect the reader(s) to read and comment on the drafts; the readers in turn may question the strength of the argument or proofs offered, suggest additional sources or avenues of research, and recommend that the student address additional issues—in short, the readers can be as involved as if they were directing the thesis, though the degree of involvement may vary from professor to professor and should be a topic of discussion between the student, the director, and the readers very early in the process. The readers may make recommendations and suggestions and may require additional work. The readers should read and comment upon the drafts in a reasonable amount of time, as should the director.

The committee will generally expect the following from the student:

1. **Quality.** They will expect the best possible work. Whether at the M.A. or the Ph.D. level, the thesis or dissertation director (and probably the reader) will be the primary source of letters of recommendation for Ph.D. programs, grants, fellowships, assistantships, and jobs, so students should work to ensure that the committee can give their highest, unqualified recommendations. For further guidance, see the “Criteria for Assessing the Quality of Dissertations and Theses” that concludes this section of the handbook.
2. **Responsibility.** The committee will expect the student to recognize that writing a thesis or dissertation is a major investment of time and energy requiring extensive reading, research, writing, and revising. Students must be self-motivated. They cannot expect constant hand-holding or nagging from the committee members.

3. **Honesty.** Students should not promise more than can be delivered and should always deliver what is promised. This applies to everything from showing up for appointments to meeting deadlines to being realistic about one's expectations of oneself and the committee. It goes without saying that the committee will expect each student to abide by the standards of academic integrity.

4. **Foreign-language competency.** The committee may reasonably expect the student to have (or have a plan to acquire) the knowledge of any foreign languages necessary to deal with texts in the original language. This is a **must** at the Ph.D. level and highly recommended at the M.A. level.

Most directors and readers will communicate their expectations to students verbally in a face-to-face meeting. Students should go to this meeting prepared to take notes on their expectations and they should not be afraid to ask for clarification about any of the expectations.

The director or readers may withdraw from the committee if the student does not meet their expectations.

**Criteria for Assessing the Quality of Dissertations, Theses, and Graduate Exams**

These criteria are derived from a recent AAUP study, Barbara E. Lovitt's "How to Grade a Dissertation" *Academe* 91.6 (Nov-Dec 2005). In this study, Lovitt asked 276 faculty members in 74 departments across 10 disciplines at 9 research universities "to characterize dissertations and their components (the problem statement, the literature review, theory, methods, analysis, and discussion or conclusion) at four different quality levels—outstanding, very good, acceptable, and unacceptable." Based on the responses, Lovitt compiled a list of criteria for each of the four evaluative categories. Lovitt, however, did not organize the criteria, even though most fall into traditional categories (e.g., criteria regarding presentation of the research problem, literature review, approach). The method of assessment used in the present report provides more structure by placing Lovitt's criteria into the following seven categories listed below in Section A: Assessment of Ph.D. dissertations. The criteria have been extended with appropriate alterations to assess the quality of M.A. theses and graduate examinations as well.

**A. Assessment of Ph.D. dissertations**

1. **Research Problem:** Ability to formulate a research problem based on knowledge of secondary literature.

   **Outstanding:** Contains a clearly stated problem and argues effectively that it raises new and consequential questions in the area of study.

   **Very Good:** Contains a clearly stated problem and, though the problem is smaller and traditional, argues effectively for its significance.

   **Acceptable:** Contains a clearly stated problem but is less successful in arguing its significance.

   **Unacceptable:** Fails to show that it addresses a central problem or question.
2. **Literature Review**: Ability to analyze and synthesize a large amount of complicated literature, including the ability to analyze, assess, and compare arguments.

   - **Outstanding**: Demonstrates command of the literature by exhibiting a thorough and critical understanding of the problems, claims, and arguments of the secondary literature.
   - **Very Good**: Demonstrates strong knowledge of the literature, though is not as successful in exhibiting a critical understanding of arguments.
   - **Acceptable**: Demonstrates knowledge of basic positions, or claims found in the literature, though without a strong understanding of the arguments.
   - **Unacceptable**: Limited or otherwise weak knowledge of claims and arguments.

3. **Approach**: Ability to understand and apply a particular methodology or theoretical approach.

   - **Outstanding**: Sophisticated or nuanced understanding of methodology and theory; uses new methods or theoretical approaches.
   - **Very Good**: Uses standard methodology or theoretical approach.
   - **Acceptable**: Minimal understanding of methodology or theoretical approach, competently applied to the problem.
   - **Unacceptable**: Understanding and application of methodology or theory is inappropriate or otherwise wrong.

4. **Research**: Ability to conduct research methodically, including the ability to select apposite sources from a wide range of literature, the ability to judge the reliability of information, and the ability to present evidence accurately outside of its original context.

   - **Outstanding**: Thorough and meticulous research, drawing on multiple sources.
   - **Very Good**: Well-executed research, though not thorough or meticulous.
   - **Acceptable**: Exhibits ability to conduct research
   - **Unacceptable**: Fails to use pertinent sources of information.

5. **Argument**: Ability to compose a complex and coherent set of arguments, including clear presentation of claims and reasons, appropriate use of evidence, and logical organization.

   - **Outstanding**: Presents a complex response to its research problem, with arguments that are focused, logical, rigorous, and sustained.
   - **Very Good**: Presents a complex response to its research problem, with a strong, comprehensive, and coherent argument.
   - **Acceptable**: Exhibits ability to conduct a sustained argument, but is not as complex or convincing.
   - **Unacceptable**: Exhibits weak, unconvincing, inconsistent, or invalid arguments.

6. **Conclusion**: Summary of the study, including discussion of the study's strengths and weaknesses, discussion of possible applications and other implications for the discipline, and discussion of future directions for research.

   - **Outstanding**: Summary ties together the entire study, reflects on the study's strengths and weaknesses, discusses implications and directions for future research.
   - **Very Good**: Summary ties together the study, but misses opportunities to identify strengths and weakness or to identify implications and directions for future research.
   - **Acceptable**: Attempts to tie study together, but lacks reflection on strengths and weaknesses, or lacks discussion of implications and directions for future research.
   - **Unacceptable**: Fails to tie study together.
7. **Quality of Writing**: Sentence and paragraph structure, logical connections from one paragraph to the next, and credible ethos.

   ** Outstanding**: Consistent control over language evidenced in well-structured sentences and paragraphs; voice is authoritative yet not officious, engaging rather than affectedly academic.

   ** Very Good**: Less consistent control over language evidenced in sentence and paragraph structure; voice is less authoritative and engaging but without detracting from the writer’s credibility.

   ** Acceptable**: Sentence and paragraph structure lack attention but does not consistently hinder understanding; lack of control may appear as unnecessary repetition; lapses in voice may detract somewhat from credibility.

   ** Unacceptable**: Sentence structure consistently hinders understanding; lack of connections between paragraphs; frequent repetition reflects basic lack of organization; inappropriate tone.

**B. Assessment of M.A. Theses**

Unlike the AAUP study on the grading of dissertations, there appears to be no similar study on the grading of M.A. theses. Hence the present assessment is based on a modified version of the AAUP study. All four evaluative categories and all seven conceptual categories are used, but the seven conceptual categories have been adjusted to reflect the lower expectation of M.A.-level work:

1. **Research Problem**: Ability to formulate a research problem and justify its significance.

   ** Outstanding**: Thesis contains a clearly stated problem and effectively argues that experts on the topic would regard the problem as significant.

   ** Very Good**: Thesis contains a clearly stated problem but is less successful in arguing its significance.

   ** Acceptable**: Thesis displays some evidence that it addresses a central problem or question.

   ** Unacceptable**: Thesis fails to show that it addresses a central problem or question.

2. **Literature Review**: Ability to understand pertinent research, including the ability to read for the problems addressed by others, the ability to read the arguments of others, and the ability to read for evidence.

   ** Outstanding**: Thesis displays an excellent knowledge of pertinent research and is clearly situated in relationship to the problems and arguments of that research.

   ** Very Good**: Thesis displays good knowledge of pertinent research and is less clear situating itself in relationship to the problems and arguments of that research.

   ** Acceptable**: Thesis displays only an acceptable knowledge of pertinent research and attempts to situate itself in relationship to pertinent scholarship.

   ** Unacceptable**: Thesis displays inadequate knowledge of pertinent research.

3. **Approach**: Exhibits a self-reflective awareness of its particular approach to the study.

   ** Outstanding**: Thesis describes its approach, justifies it, and perhaps acknowledges its limitations.

   ** Very Good**: Thesis describes its approach without justifying it.

   ** Acceptable**: Thesis exhibits some awareness of a chosen perspective, theory, or methodology.

   ** Unacceptable**: Thesis exhibits no awareness of a chosen approach.
4. **Research**: Ability to conduct research methodically on a limited topic, including the ability to select appropriate sources of information, the ability to judge the reliability of information, and the ability to present evidence accurately outside of its original context.

   - **Outstanding**: Thesis displays a *keen* ability to determine what information is needed to thoroughly address the research problem.
   - **Very Good**: Thesis displays an ability to determine what information is needed to address the research problem.
   - **Acceptable**: Thesis displays an ability to acquire pertinent information.
   - **Unacceptable**: Thesis omits pertinent sources of information.

5. **Argument**: Evidence of the ability to compose a complex and coherent set of arguments, including clear presentation of claims and reasons, appropriate use of evidence, and logical organization.

   - **Outstanding**: Thesis presents a complex response to its research problem, and clearly presents its arguments as an architectural whole, especially the relationship between primary and supplemental arguments.
   - **Very Good**: Thesis presents a complex response to its research problem.
   - **Acceptable**: Thesis provides an argued response to its research problem.
   - **Unacceptable**: Thesis fails to provide an adequate response to a research problem.

6. **Conclusion**: Summary of the study, including discussion of the study's strengths and weaknesses, discussion of possible applications and other implications for the discipline, and discussion of future directions for research.

   - **Outstanding**: Summary ties together the entire study, reflects on the study's strengths and weaknesses, discusses implications and directions for future research.
   - **Very Good**: Summary ties together the study, but misses opportunities to identify strengths and weaknesses or to identify implications and directions for future research.
   - **Acceptable**: Attempts to tie study together, but lacks reflection on strengths and weaknesses, or lacks discussion of implications and directions for future research.
   - **Unacceptable**: Fails to tie study together.

7. **Quality of Writing**, including sentence structure, paragraph structure, logical connections from one paragraph to the next, and credible ethos.

   - **Outstanding**: Consistent control over language evidenced in well-structured sentences and paragraphs; voice is authoritative yet not officious, engaging rather than affectedly academic.
   - **Very Good**: Less consistent control over language evidenced in sentence and paragraph structure; voice is less authoritative and engaging but without detracting from the writer's credibility.
   - **Acceptable**: Sentence and paragraph structure lack attention but does not consistently hinder understanding; lack of control may appear as unnecessary repetition; lapses in voice may detract somewhat from credibility.
   - **Unacceptable**: Sentence structure consistently hinders understanding; lack of connections between paragraphs; frequent repetition reflects basic lack of organization; inappropriate tone.
Preparing for the Academic Job Market

The job market in the field of English is highly competitive, and many newly minted Ph.D.s spend a few years in visiting professorships or teaching as adjuncts before obtaining a tenure-track position. M.A. students who plan to pursue Ph.D.s and all Ph.D. students should begin preparing for the academic job market as soon as possible by participating in professional conferences, publishing in professional journals, applying for grants and awards, and gaining teaching experience.

Professional Conferences
Presenting papers in professional conferences indicates that a scholar has interesting ideas and can develop them for consideration by other scholars in the field. Professional conferences can also indicate a scholar’s ability to answer questions from other scholars and to moderate discussions by presiding over sessions. Doctoral students should plan to develop one or two course papers each year into conference presentations. However, they should avoid presenting more than once a year or twice a year in order to allow sufficient time for their coursework and for revising papers to submit for publication.

Publication in Professional Journals
Publication in a professional journal demonstrates that a scholar’s research and ideas are sound and that the scholar is capable of expressing those ideas clearly, cogently, and persuasively. Publications are generally considered more important than conference presentations by hiring committees, since most journals employ a peer-review process that ensures that published papers meet professional standards of quality. One hears the good, the bad, and the ugly at conferences, but the peer-review process is supposed to weed out papers that employ poorly constructed arguments or provide unconvincing evidence. It is more important to invest time in publishing than in conference presentations and it is almost necessary to have one or more publications in peer-reviewed journals in order to be seriously considered for a tenure-track job at a university.

Grants and Awards
A number of grants, awards, and honors are offered by the department and the College of Graduate Studies. In addition, Ph.D. students may find a number of external grants available to support their participation in seminars or their dissertation research. The university’s Office of Research and Sponsored Programs provides information on finding appropriate grants. Students should be aware that grant-writing experience is considered a valuable asset for job-searchers—especially if the grant is obtained.

Teaching Experience
Students should obtain as much teaching experience as possible in both composition and literature. Most academic positions regularly require faculty to teach general education courses in composition and literature, so such experience is a valuable asset on the job market. The number of GTA positions is limited, so students should consider teaching a course or two as an adjunct at a community college in order to gain additional experience.
Applying for Jobs

Academic jobs are typically announced in professional journals and on university websites. The MLA Job Information List (JIL), published in October and periodically thereafter throughout the academic year, is the main source for academic employment opportunities in our discipline; the Chronicle of Higher Education is another important resource used by many universities for disseminating information about academic positions. It is important to do some preliminary research about jobs before applying, include learning about the nature of the school and the community in which it is situated, the size of the library and its potential for advanced research, course loads required of faculty, class sizes, and any other details considered important by the applicant.

The faculty search process takes roughly one academic year, beginning with the posting of job openings in the fall semester, so academic job-seekers should start applying for positions a year before they actually need a job. Most application due dates fall at the end of October or in November. About half of the colleges and universities advertising positions will conduct preliminary interviews at the annual MLA meeting between Christmas and New Year, so job-seekers may want to plan a budget that includes airfare, hotel, and food for this trip.

Application Materials
The following materials are commonly submitted when applying for academic positions:

**Cover Letter**
The cover letter provides the first impression of a candidate to a search committee. The letter should address one’s research interests and provide a brief synopsis of the dissertation. It should also mention teaching experience and any honors or awards that have been received for scholarly work or teaching excellence.

**Curriculum Vitae (C.V.)**
The curriculum vitae or c.v. (often alternatively referred to as the vita) is the academic equivalent of a professional résumé; it succinctly presents one’s credentials to the search committee. It should be thorough, but concise, outlining the applicant’s college education and degrees, publications, conference activities, teaching experience, honors and awards, grants, service, and any experience outside the university that is related to the applicant’s field of study. The c.v. should also include the names and contact information for three references who may attest to the candidate’s abilities as a scholar, teacher, and colleague.

**Abstract**
Many schools will request an abstract of the dissertation. The abstract should be no more than three pages in length.

**Philosophy of Teaching**
Many search committees require a statement of teaching philosophy. The statement should be 1 to 1½ pages long and should include views on lecturing, groupwork, the goal of writing assignments, the goal of studying literature, and how these work together in producing the overall goal of a liberal education.
Transcripts
Most committees will initially require unofficial copies of transcripts from all of the higher education institutions attended, showing the degrees earned. Official transcripts will be requested if the candidate is considered for the position.

Writing Sample
Writing samples are often requested along with other application materials. The sample should (obviously) represent the candidate’s best work, for instance, an excerpt from the dissertation or an offprint of a paper that has been published in a journal. The sample should be around 20 pages in length, though some committees may ask for less.

Letters of Recommendation
The letters of recommendation may be the most important part of the application dossier. Impressive as the c.v., writing sample, and transcripts may be, the letters are the search committee’s most revealing window into the candidate as a potential colleague. As a result, candidates should ask for letters from people who can attest not only to their brilliance as scholars, but also to their work habits, collegiality, and ability to meet challenges and overcome obstacles. The dissertation director should always be one of the references. The other two references should be people very familiar with the candidate’s scholarship and teaching abilities. If necessary, ask the referrers to observe a class you teach and to look over the syllabus, so that they will be able to write on this topic.

The referrers should always be given at least one month’s notice in advance of the date that letters will be needed. Each referrer should be provided with a sample of updated dossier materials and the due dates for the various applications being submitted. Applicants should not be afraid to ask for confirmation that the letters have been sent, though most referrers will send notification when they have done so.

Applicants should never ask for copies of the letters of recommendation. Some referrers will provide a copy; others will refuse to write the letters unless they can do so without providing a copy.
Appendix: Grades and Academic Standing

Grades are assigned by professors based on the following notations, mandated by the College of Graduate Studies. Individual professors provide the grading scale for the courses they teach, using some or all of the assigned notations:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Grade Points</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>4.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A-</td>
<td>3.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B+</td>
<td>3.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>3.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B-</td>
<td>2.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C+</td>
<td>2.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>2.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C-</td>
<td>1.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D+</td>
<td>1.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>1.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D-</td>
<td>0.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I (Incomplete)</td>
<td>Not calculated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>W (withdrawal)</td>
<td>Not calculated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P</td>
<td>Pass</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>Fail</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S</td>
<td>Satisfactory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>U</td>
<td>Unsatisfactory</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Incomplete

Incompletes (designated by an I on the transcript) indicate that the student has not completed all course requirements due to illness or other uncontrollable circumstances, especially those that occur towards the close of the term. Mere failure to make up work or turn in assignments on time will not result in an incomplete unless documented extenuating circumstances are acceptable to the professor, who finally determines acceptable criteria for assigning an I.

The College of Graduate Studies provides the following criteria in regard to uncompleted coursework:

1. If the student fails to appear for a final examination without known cause, the grade is determined as follows:
   a. If the student has done satisfactory work to that point, the grade I may be reported on the assumption that the student was ill or will otherwise present sufficient reason for the absence.
   b. If the student has attended irregularly and has not done satisfactory work to that point, the grade F should be reported.
2. The incomplete must be removed during the succeeding semester, excluding summer, or it will convert to a grade of F.
3. The I grade carries no value until converted to a final grade.
4. An I may not be removed by retaking a course. Only the professor awarding the I can remove it based on the student’s meeting the course requirements. If the professor does not change the I, it will convert to an F.

Individual professors may specify additional or more specific requirements for the assignment of an Incomplete.

**Accessing Grades**
Grades can be accessed online through PipelineMT at [http://pipeline.mtsu.edu/](http://pipeline.mtsu.edu/). Select WebMT, then select **Student and Financial Aid**, and then **Grades**. Outstanding financial balances prevent release of grades. WebMT provides an option that allows online payment by credit card or check card (VISA or MasterCard) to view grades. (See the Graduate Catalog for further information.)

**Grade Appeals**
The grade appeals process is available to any student who wants to contest a course grade. In general, grade appeals are adjudicated on the basis of policies and procedures outlined in the individual course guidelines and syllabus. The College of Graduate Studies provides the following policies and procedures, which constitute a two-level appeals process that the student initiates.

**Level One**
This process takes place within the English Department.
1. The student should first discuss the grade with the professor who taught the course. This step must take place within **40 days of the graduation date for each term**.
2. If the issue is not resolved at this level, the student should discuss the grade appeal with the chair of the English Department within **10 days of the conference with the professor**. (If the department chair is the professor against whom the complaint is lodged, the Dean of the College of Liberal Arts assumes the role of the chair for the appeals process). The chair investigates the circumstances, discusses the circumstances with the professor, and records the findings.
3. The chair documents the findings and either recommends retaining the assigned grade or changing the grade. **(Only the professor, and not the chair, can change the grade.)** This document becomes part of the appeals record if the appeal proceeds.
4. The chair sends a copy of the findings and recommendations to the student and faculty member within **10 days of the notification of the department chair of the complaint**.

**Level Two**
If the issue is not resolved at this point, the appeal moves to the Provost’s Office and the University Grade Appeals Committee, and must be initiated within **15 days following the English Department Chair's recommendation**.
1. The student files an appeal with the Senior Vice Provost for Academic Affairs (Cope Administration Building, room 111), providing all relevant documentation:
   a. The student’s discussion of why the appeal has not been satisfied;
   b. The department chair’s recommendation.
2. The Associate Provost sends the appeal documents to the appropriate college grade appeals committee.
3. The Grade Appeals Committee considers the documentation and meets with the student and faculty member. The Committee then renders a decision to retain or change the grade.
4. The Grade Appeals Committee notifies the student, faculty member, department chair, college dean, the AssociateProvost for Academic Affairs, and the Director of Records.

5. The decision of the Grade Appeals Committee is final.

Other grade appeals policies:
1. The number of days at each level indicated above is considered the maximum; however, every attempt should be made to expedite the process.
2. The failure of the student to proceed from one level of the appeal process to the next within prescribed time limits shall be deemed to be an acceptance of the recommendations and/or decision previously rendered. All further considerations and proceedings regarding that particular appeal shall cease at that point.
3. A grade appeal may be withdrawn at any level without prejudice.
4. All appeal proceedings shall be kept as confidential as may be appropriate at each level.
5. The grade appeals committee shall have reasonable access to all official records for information necessary to determine a recommendation.

Information about grade appeals also appears in the Graduate Studies catalog and the MTSU student handbook, in print and online. Students can call the Associate Provost's office at any time for information and help regarding grade appeals.

Academic Standing
Students should acquaint themselves with the following policies from the “Academic Regulations” section of the Graduate Studies catalog:

1. No more than six semester hours of C grade (C+, C, or C-) coursework may be applied towards a master’s degree.
2. No courses with a C grade may count toward Ph.D. requirements.
3. No course with a grade lower than a C- may be applied toward any graduate degree requirement.

Master's degree students are required to maintain a cumulative grade point average of at least 3.00 for all graduate work completed at MTSU as well as in the major.

Doctoral students must maintain a minimum GPA of 3.25.

Academic Probation
A graduate student who fails to meet the following academic retention standards will be placed on academic probation for the subsequent term:

a. the applicable minimum cumulative graduate GPA retention standard listed below; or
b. cumulative GPA less than 3.00 for three consecutive semesters.

Academic Retention Standards
The table below represents the absolute minimum GPA needed to avert graduate academic probation status. However, a cumulative GPA greater than or equal to 3.00 is required for satisfactory academic progress at the graduate level. (See “Academic Regulations” section of the Graduate Catalog for details.)
If the student has completed the following number of quality hours:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of Hours</th>
<th>Then the following cumulative GPA must be achieved to avoid academic probation:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1-6 credit hours</td>
<td>2.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(If 6 graduate hours have been completed, a GPA of 2.00 reflects a quality or grade point deficit of 6. Next term, unless a course is repeated, 3 or more hours of B or higher grades (no B- or lower) will generate a GPA greater than or equal to 2.33 as reflected below.)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More than 6-9 hours</td>
<td>2.33 (see “Academic Regulations” section of Graduate Catalog for more calculations)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More than 9-12 hours</td>
<td>2.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More than 12-15 hours</td>
<td>2.60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More than 15-18 hours</td>
<td>2.83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More than 18-21 hours</td>
<td>2.85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More than 21 hours</td>
<td>3.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Probation in itself has no serious consequences other than to alert the student to potential academic problems and the requirement to (re)establish satisfactory academic status. However, a student on academic probation who fails to meet the above applicable standard during the next term in which enrolled will be suspended. Graduate assistants who are placed on academic probation are also placed on probation in regard to their assistantships. Graduate assistants placed on probation have one semester to restore their GPA to the necessary level.

See the guidelines for maintaining or (re)establishing satisfactory academic status in the “Academic Regulations” section of the Graduate Catalog under the subtopic “Academic Standards—Retention, Probation, and Suspension.”

**Academic Suspension**

A graduate student on academic probation who fails to meet the applicable standard described above during the next term in which enrolled will be placed on academic suspension. Academic suspension means that the student may not enroll in classes for at least the following semester, not including summer. The student also forfeits any assistantships. The student may file an appeal by following the policies described below.

**Academic Suspension Appeal**

Students may appeal academic suspension after at least one semester, not including the summer, by contacting the College of Graduate Studies, Ingram Bldg. Rm. 121A, Box 42. The College of Graduate Studies office will supply its policy on appeals of academic suspension.

This form of appeal does not include grade appeals, which are described above, page 33.
Reapplicant Following Suspension
Students who do not successfully appeal the suspension must reapply to the Graduate College. The application must include all new documents, including new letters of recommendation (the same individuals who wrote initial recommendations may provide new letters). The letter accompanying the application must address the facts of suspension and support the request for readmission. The student must also reapply for assistantships. The application will be considered alongside all new applications.