

# Handbook to the Graduate Program in English: Policies & Procedures

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## ***Application Procedures***

To apply to the program students are required to submit:

- an electronic application form (available from the School of Graduate Studies web site);
- an official copy of all transcripts (excluding any that are currently housed in the WIU Registrar's Office);
- a one-page personal statement which concerns their larger purposes and career goals, and how an MA in English will further those objectives;
- a scholarly writing sample, such as an essay from an upper-division English course;
- three letters of recommendation.

Applications will not be reviewed until all materials have been received. It is the student's responsibility to ensure the completeness of the file. In the consideration of these materials, the Graduate Committee may request a personal interview with the applicant.

All students will be considered for departmental assistantships unless they decline consideration.

Applications must be submitted by February 15.

### ***Graduate and Teaching Assistantships***

The program presently offers two forms of assistantship funding: (1) the graduate assistantship; and (2) the teaching assistantship.

Graduate assistants report directly to the Director of the Writing Center. They are required to spend 15 hours each week tutoring students in the Writing Center, and must attend weekly meetings organized by the Director of the Writing Center, as well as meetings and workshops designed by other writing faculty in the department.

GAs must enroll in nine hours of coursework per semester.

Teaching assistants report directly to the Director of Writing. Each teaching assistant teaches two lower-division writing courses per semester (as determined by the Director of Writing) and must attend weekly meetings and workshops designed and organized by the Director of Writing and other writing faculty in the department. Additionally, TAs are required to take English 580: Teaching Assistants Colloquium, which is offered every fall semester.

TAs must enroll in six hours of coursework per semester.

### **Accepting and Renewing Assistantships**

Students who are already GAs or TAs must submit a letter to the Graduate Director by February 15, indicating their commitment to: (1) remain a GA or TA; (2) be considered for a TA (if currently a GA); (3) be considered for a GA (if currently a TA); (4) decline any assistantships.

When offered a teaching assistantship or a graduate assistantship, whether new or renewal, students must write a letter indicating they intend to accept the offer. This letter must be received within two weeks of the initial offer. When this letter is received, contracts will be processed.

All letters must be received and all files completed by May 1.

### **Summer GA Policy**

Graduate students wishing to apply for a summer graduate assistantship should send a letter to the Director of Graduate Studies in English indicating so by March 15. Students who have experience as GAs in the Writing Center will have priority in the consideration of applications. Also, students who have one or more Incompletes in their graduate coursework will be excluded from the consideration of summer applicants.

Students should note too that the summer awards depend entirely on the WIU summer budget. As a result, students should be aware that contracts may not be issued until after the ending of the spring semester. As with the regular eight-month contracts, students will need to respond immediately as to whether or not they accept the offer. When this letter is received, contracts will be processed.

### **Other Assistantship Policies of Note**

Both graduate assistants and teaching assistants are required to attend a two-day workshop the Thursday and Friday before classes start in the fall.

Students with more than one Incomplete in their graduate coursework may be excluded from consideration for assistantships.

### **Admission**

To be admitted into the program students must meet the requirements of the School of Graduate Studies. Additionally, students must have a minimum GPA of 3.0 in their English courses.

### **Probationary Admission**

Students who do not meet the requirements for regular admission may be recommended for probationary admission. Upon completion of at least six hours of graduate-level work with at least a B average, probationary graduate students may petition the School of Graduate Studies for a change in their admission status. The petition form is available from the School of Graduate Studies website: <http://www.wiu.edu/grad/>

### **Conditional Admission**

Students with strong potential, but whose undergraduate preparation suggests areas where improvement is needed, may be recommended for conditional admission. In such cases, the Graduate Committee will notify students, in writing, of academic needs they must address through additional courses or individual work. Students will be expected to fulfill these deficiencies in the first year of their graduate-level work.

Conditionally admitted students with assistantships may apply courses taken to satisfy these needs towards the required number of credit hours to be taken for the assistantship.

### **Student Responsibility**

Students are responsible for knowing degree requirements and program policies. They are also responsible for enrolling in courses that will enable them to complete their degree program. It is also their responsibility to know University regulations for the standard of work required to continue in the School of Graduate Studies. Degree requirements are available at <http://www.wiu.edu/grad/> or in the graduate catalog.

### **Student Activity**

The Graduate Faculty, the Graduate Committee, and the Director of Graduate Studies in English all strongly encourage students in the program to be active and energetic in their studies. It is extremely beneficial to attend workshops, meetings, and other extracurricular activities while one is also working on course work and teaching/tutoring assignments. These activities give students a sense of the profession that they are training in, and likewise open up possibilities and ideas for further career development and academic pursuits. Specific examples of such activities include being involved with the English Graduate Organization (EGO), with NCTE, and with the annual graduate conference in the department. Graduate students should also be aware of a

number of scholarship/award possibilities. This information can be found at <http://www.wiu.edu/Scholarships>.

### ***Recommendation to Prepare a Dossier***

As they are working through the MA program, students are advised to prepare a file for the Career Services Center on the Macomb campus. Students should place letters of recommendation, writing samples, goals statements, and other such documents in the file in preparation for future professional endeavors beyond the MA in English. The Department will make a commitment to offer workshops and other activities that will aid students in the preparation of this file. A complete listing of all services offered by The Career Services Center is available at <http://www.careers.wiu.edu>.

### ***Incomplete Grade Policy***

The department strongly encourages students to avoid acquiring any Incompletes in their graduate work.

A temporary grade of I (Incomplete) indicates that the student has been unable to complete the course work due to circumstances beyond his or her control. With the assignment of a grade of I, the student and faculty member will agree, in writing, upon the criteria and deadline for completion of course work. This agreement should be filed with English Graduate Studies office.

Students failing to complete incomplete grades within one year will receive a default grade if assigned by the faculty member or a grade of "F" if no default grade was submitted. Faculty members may approve an extension of time for the Incomplete.

Completion of the graduate degree will not be allowed with Incompletes on the transcript.

### ***Time to Complete the Degree/Revalidation Policy***

The work required for the MA in English must be completed within six consecutive calendar years. Students may petition the University's Graduate Council for an extension of time for outdated courses. Evidence must be shown that such courses have been revalidated by the department. In order to revalidate such courses, the student must contact his or her previous professors, or professor who is teaching the course which is out-of-date, and ask them to outline additional work to be done in order to update and revalidate the particular course. In this initial contact students are expected to describe the course, texts read in the course, and assignments completed in the course. The nature of the additional work required for revalidation is to be determined by the professor. Examples of such work may include significant additional reading, writing, or other such kinds of academic exercises.

### ***Program Core Requirements***

#### **English 500**

All students in the graduate program are required to take English 500: Graduate Studies in English. This course must be taken as soon as possible after the student is admitted. It is offered every fall semester in Macomb and every other fall semester in the Quad Cities.

## **The Language Requirement**

Students are also required to demonstrate a reading proficiency in either a language from antiquity or a modern language other than English. Students seeking to demonstrate such proficiency should contact the Department of Foreign Languages and set up a reading exam. Obtaining a B or better in English 512: The English Language in the Making will also satisfy this requirement.

Other ways to possibly fulfill this requirement include the completion of at least two years of coursework at the undergraduate level in an ancient or modern language and/or a significant time spent abroad in a culture where the primary spoken or written language is a language other than English. Students are required to submit a petition to the Graduate Committee if they desire that either of these options, or any other possible option, is to be used as a fulfillment of the language requirement.

## ***The Graduate Degree Plan***

Upon completion of 9-15 semester hours of course work, students must file a Graduate Degree Plan with the School of Graduate Studies. Application forms may be obtained online at <http://www.wiu.edu/grad/>. The completed form should be submitted to the Director of Graduate Studies in English. After the Director and two members of the Graduate Committee review and sign this document, the Director or the student will forward it to the School of Graduate Studies.

## ***Capstone Experience Options***

To complete their studies, students are required to write a thesis or take two 600-level seminars related to their focus of study. These options are described below. The Director of Graduate Studies in English and the Graduate Committee strongly encourage students considering further graduate study to choose the thesis option.

### **The Thesis Option**

As a capstone experience, students may decide to write a critical or creative thesis which makes a substantial original contribution to English studies. Most MA theses are between 40 and 80 pages in length.

The Graduate Committee has prepared detailed guidelines about theses which include a suggested timeline: <http://www.wiu.edu/english/graduate/ma-thesis-guidelines.pdf>. Students who plan to write theses should review these requirements carefully and meet with prospective committee members and/or the Director of Graduate Studies in English before the end of their first year of study.

Students are required to participate in a departmental Thesis Colloquium, where all students completing theses read excerpts from their works and take informal questions from faculty and students. Additionally, students may decide to conduct a thesis defense. This is optional, although it is recommended by the Director of Graduate Studies in English and the Graduate Committee.

The School of Graduate Studies maintains sample documents as well as general information regarding the required format and style of thesis on its web site at <http://www.wiu.edu/grad/resources/thesis.php>. Notably, students must prepare an “Approval

Page” to be signed by the thesis committee members, and are required to submit copies of the thesis for the University Archives. Please refer to the School of Graduate Studies web site for more particulars.

### **The Two Seminar Option**

Students who do not write a thesis are required to take at least two graduate seminars related to their focus of study. For example, students exercising the Writing option could take ENG 615, Seminar in Composition, and ENG 610, Seminar in a Theme or Problem, if the topic concerned writing studies.

### ***Application for Graduation***

Candidates for graduation must complete an “Application for Graduation.” This form must be submitted to the School of Graduate Studies at least eight weeks before the end of the student’s final term. This form is available from the School of Graduate Studies or online at <http://www.wiu.edu/grad/> .