

**THE DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH BOSTON UNIVERSITY  
GRADUATE HANDBOOK  
2019-2020**



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## **THE GRADUATE PROGRAM IN ENGLISH**

The Graduate Program in English and American Literature at Boston University provides comprehensive training in all areas of English studies. The English Department offers programs leading to the Master of Arts and the Doctor of Philosophy degrees. Course work is offered in historical periods, individual authors, important literary movements, literary theory and the history of criticism, and philology and linguistics. All students develop a broad competence in all literary periods while moving to a more specialized knowledge of a single area or topic.

The faculty in the Department of English is large and diverse in its teaching and research interests, but the Graduate Program is nonetheless relatively small and intimate. About five students enter the Ph.D. program every year, while the number of M.A. students varies. Graduate seminars usually have seven to fifteen students. Individually designed tutorials are available for doctoral students.

### **MASTER OF ARTS PROGRAM**

The M.A. degree is ordinarily completed in one academic year. It is a time-intensive, full-time program. It is also a terminal degree. M.A. students often apply for Ph.D. programs, and they may apply to the doctoral program at BU; but they are given no advantages over external applicants. M.A. requirements include:

- Eight graduate-level courses. Of these eight semester-courses, at least six must be 700-level graduate seminars, and two may be 500- or 600-level courses that include undergraduate students.
- Demonstration of a reading knowledge of one foreign language at an intermediate level. (See details, below.)
- Students are required to take at least one course that focuses primarily on critical theory, critical method, or the history of criticism (courses that fulfill this requirement are so identified in their course descriptions).

#### **Selection of Courses**

Eight semester-courses are required for the degree, of which not more than four may be taken in one semester. All courses are chosen in consultation with the candidate's adviser. Candidates must demonstrate by their proposed program of courses, together with their completed undergraduate degree program of courses, a reasonably comprehensive coverage of English and American literature from the Middle Ages through the nineteenth century. Candidates are not permitted to take Directed Study courses as part of their M.A. program.

#### **Foreign Language Requirement**

Intermediate proficiency in a foreign language can be demonstrated in one of the following ways: 1) scoring a minimum 530 on the SAT II test; 2) passing a translation test (offered every

semester by the English department); 3) passing a noncredit graduate reading course in an appropriate foreign language (such courses are currently numbered 621); or 4) receiving a B or better in a graduate level literature course taught in a foreign language (4 credits, numbered 500 or higher; one of these courses can count toward the eight courses required for the degree). Note that courses taken for credit cannot be taken as a fifth course in any semester. The foreign language requirement may also be satisfied by receiving at least a B in a graduate-level course in Old English, if and when it is offered (Old English courses count toward the eight courses required for the degree).

### **Course Credit in Related Fields**

As part of the total program of eight semester-courses required for the degree, candidates may, with the adviser's approval, elect a single one-semester course at the graduate level outside the English Department in a related area.

### **Academic Standards**

To be awarded the M.A. degree, the candidate must maintain a grade point average of 3.0 in both semesters. Students cannot receive credit for a course for which they received a grade lower than a B-. The Department reserves the right to discontinue at any time the registration of students whose work or progress is judged unsatisfactory.

### **Residence Requirement**

M.A. students must be in residence during the academic year.

### **Financial Aid**

Some M.A. students are eligible for partial scholarships through the Graduate School.

### **Research Assistantships**

For U.S. citizens and permanent residents: if an English faculty member wishes to engage a M.A. student as a Research Assistant, the student may not work more than 5 hours per week during the semester and may not be compensated more than \$1,500 per semester.

### **Further Information**

For more information pertaining to M.A. students, see "General Policies for All Graduate Students" (below).

## DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY PROGRAM

In the Ph.D. program, students move toward specialization in a particular area of English studies. Students ideally complete the Ph.D. in five or six years, combining their study with Teaching Fellowships and duty-free dissertation fellowships. The requirements include:

- Sixteen graduate-level courses, including eight courses required in the first year.
- A successful review by the Graduate Committee upon completion of the first year.
- Demonstration of a reading knowledge of one foreign language at an advanced level or two foreign languages at an intermediate level – including one language completed as part of the first year (See details, below.)
- Two 2-credit pedagogy courses, through the BU Writing Program (these credits do not count toward the degree)
- Completion of a Qualifying Oral Examination
- Submission and approval of a Dissertation Prospectus
- Completion and defense of a Ph.D. dissertation

Please note that successful completion of requirements in the first year earns each Ph.D. student an M.A. degree as a matter of course.

### **Satisfactory Progress to Degree**

- Year 1: Eight courses / first foreign language requirement – for the M.A. degree  
Year 2: Course work and study toward the completion of the language requirement.  
Year 3: Completion of course work and language requirements. In the fall of the third year, students take the pro-seminar (EN794), in which they develop their Qualifying Oral Examination rationale and reading list, and form an oral exam committee.  
Year 4: Fall: Students should take the Qualifying Exam early in the Fall semester.  
Spring: Prospectus submitted and dissertation writing begins.  
Years 5+: Dissertation.

### **Financial Aid / Fellowship Support**

All students officially entering the Ph.D. program receive five years of guaranteed funding, including a mix of teaching and duty-free fellowships, which cover the full cost of tuition and basic health insurance, and also pay a living stipend. Teaching Fellows are required to teach one course each semester, under faculty supervision. Ph.D. students making good progress to degree may also qualify for summer fellowships and additional funding beyond the fifth year; however, such support is not guaranteed. The Director of Graduate Studies (DGS) may, after consultation

with a student's major advisor or first reader, determine that it is necessary to withhold a student's summer funding or impose certain deadlines to encourage timely progress to degree.

For more information on fellowships and prizes, see the "Financial Aid" section of the departmental website: <http://www.bu.edu/english/graduate/phd-in-english-and-american-literature/financial-aid/>

### **First-Year Review**

First-year students are permitted to continue the program if they are successfully reviewed and recommended by the Graduate Committee. Reviews usually take place within a month of the student's completion of the first year. The department expects that all Ph.D. students will be successfully reviewed, but reserves the right to deny continuing academic status if in the committee's judgment the student should not continue. Assuming all M.A. requirements are fulfilled, students who do not pass the First-Year Review will leave the program with an M.A.

### **Annual Reviews / Academic Standards**

After the first year, each Ph.D. student is reviewed annually by the Graduate Committee. For the second-year, Grad Committee reviews a student's grades (including the status of incompletes), course evaluations, and teaching observations reports. Beginning in their third year, students must complete a report about their progress toward the degree, signed and approved by the student's major advisor. As with the first-year reviews, we expect all Ph.D. students to pass their annual reviews. The DGS will contact a particular student only if there are significant problems or concerns with their progress to degree. **The Department reserves the right to discontinue at any time the registration of students whose work or progress is judged unsatisfactory.**

### **Graduate School Guidelines for Satisfactory Academic Progress:**

The Graduate School of Arts and Sciences rules that in order to maintain satisfactory academic progress in the pursuit of your degree, you must meet the following expectations:

- Maintain a GPA of 3.0 or higher
- Have no more than two failing grades and/or W grades
- Meet all milestones of the degree, such as comprehensive exams, qualifying exams and dissertation prospectus, on the schedule specified by the program
- Meet all milestones of the degree with sufficient quality of work as specified by the program (i.e. dissertation)
- Satisfactorily fulfill all service fellowship obligations, as specified by the program
- Time limit: Master's – 3 years; PhD – 7 years

### **Teaching**

Boston University graduates entering the academic job market benefit from their pedagogical experience, including teaching self-designed courses in both literature and composition for which they have served as the official instructor. New Teaching Fellows sometimes assist faculty in

large lecture courses by leading discussion sections, grading, and giving guest lectures. Advanced Ph.D. students design and teach their own introductory literature courses for non-majors and design and teach topic-based courses in the Boston University Writing Program. Some senior doctoral students may occasionally teach other courses as well. Each semester, every Teaching Fellow is assigned a faculty supervisor who meets with the student and visits the class, offering feedback and advice on such matters as syllabus design, course materials, teaching techniques, and grading. In preparation for teaching in the Writing Program, students take two one-semester preparatory courses with the Program's Director; these courses are 2-credits each and do not count toward the degree. Students teaching in the Writing Program also receive supervision while teaching.

### **Selection of Courses**

Sixteen semester-courses are required for the Ph.D. degree. Students are expected to take four courses each semester in their first year, to complete the requirements for the M.A. After teaching begins in the second year it is common for students to take two courses per semester. Only three courses may be taken at the 500 or 600 level (usually two in the first year).

Doctoral students must take at least one course that focuses primarily on critical theory, critical method, or the history of criticism. All doctoral students are also required to take EN 794 (the professionalization seminar), usually in the fall of their third year. EN 794 counts toward the sixteen required doctoral courses.

Course work must also include at least two courses in each of the following categories:

- 1) Medieval literature – 1660 or History of the language/linguistics
- 2) Literature in English 1660 – 1860
- 3) Literature in English 1860 – present

A student cannot use a single course to satisfy more than one category requirement. For a course with significant content in more than one category (as determined by the DGS), students choose which single category the course will count toward. Since specific courses do not always fit neatly into these categories, consultation with the faculty adviser is essential.

All doctoral students are expected to take EN 698 and EN 699 (supervised teaching of English language and literature) if they hold a Teaching Fellowship.

### **Foreign Language Requirement**

The language requirement must be satisfied in its entirety before students take their Qualifying Oral Exam. Advanced knowledge is demonstrated by scoring a minimum of 650 on the SAT II test. Intermediate knowledge can be demonstrated in one of the following ways: 1) scoring a minimum 530 on the SAT II test; 2) passing a translation test (offered every semester by the English department); 3) passing a noncredit graduate reading course in an appropriate foreign language (such courses are currently numbered 621); or 4) receiving a B or better in a graduate level literature course taught in a foreign language (4 credits, numbered 500 or higher; one of

these courses can count toward the sixteen courses required for the degree). Note that courses taken for credit cannot be taken as a fifth course in any semester. The foreign language requirement may also be satisfied by receiving at least a B in a graduate-level course in Old English, if and when it is offered (Old English courses also count toward the courses required for the degree).

### **Foreign Language Requirement – for Native Speakers:**

Native speakers of a non-English language may place out of their language requirement for the PhD (at advanced proficiency). They must score in the highest category of the available “placement tests,” which BU uses for undergraduates. Those tests are here:

<http://www.bu.edu/rs/undergraduate-languages-literatures-and-linguistics/placement-test-information/>

<https://www.bu.edu/wll/undergraduate/placement-tests-transfer-credit-ap/>

### **Directed Study**

Ph.D. candidates may elect to take one Directed Study course as part of the degree program. A rationale and a reading list composed by both the student and the faculty member who agrees to direct the project should be submitted to the Director of Graduate Studies for approval.

### **Course Credit in Related Fields**

Doctoral students may, with their adviser’s approval, elect three semester-courses at the graduate level in related areas. A literature course elected to fulfill the Foreign Language Requirement (see above) may be counted as a related course.

### **Transfer of Credit**

For students entering the Ph.D. program with an M.A. degree from another institution, the English department can accept up to 16 credits (4 courses) out of the 64 credits (16 courses) required for the PhD. Students must submit an academic transcript and relevant course syllabi to the DGS for consideration.

### **Qualifying Oral Examination**

To be admitted to doctoral candidacy, the student must pass a Qualifying Oral Examination in a major area of literary study defined by the student in consultation with the adviser. The area chosen for examination is normally related to the student's anticipated dissertation topic.

A student’s performance on the Qualifying Exam is judged on a pass/fail basis. Any student who fails any part of the exam and wishes to continue with the PhD program must consult with the Director of Graduate Studies for permission to take the relevant part(s) of the exam a second time. If permission is granted, a full committee must convene for the exam within three months. Any student who fails in the second attempt will be required to leave the PhD program.



## **Guidelines for Qualifying Oral Examinations:**

- 1) **Timing.** The examination may not be taken if any other program requirement remains to be fulfilled—e.g., course requirements, an incomplete grade, or the foreign language requirement. The examination should be taken in the semester following completion of Ph.D. course work, usually early in the fall of the fourth year.
- 2) **Committee.** Qualifying Exam Committees are comprised of four faculty members in a student's areas of interest. To form an examination committee, the following steps are suggested: The student should identify one faculty member to be their Major Advisor for the Qualifying Exam. This can be the student's current academic advisor but more likely will be someone in their desired area of expertise whom they have gotten to know through coursework. At least one other faculty member should be identified as an examiner while the student drafts his or her rationale and reading list, usually in the context of the Professionalization Seminar (EN794). At the end of EN794, the student should submit a Qualifying Oral Examination form for approval by their advisors and the Director of Graduate Studies. This form requires the signatures of the Major Advisor and DGS, and the name of the second primary examiner. The remaining two members of the examination committee can also be included if the student has gotten advice and commitments from them during the drafting of the rationale and reading list. Otherwise, the remaining members of the examination committee will be added after the approval of the list and in consultation with the student's major advisor and the DGS. All examiners may make suggestions and minor changes to the reading list after official approval. Please note that the two secondary advisers need not be specialists in the particular areas under examination; for some areas it will not be possible to gather four specialists because of the pattern of leaves and sabbaticals. Diversity of fields among the examining faculty is both normal and desirable.
- 3) **Reading List.** The examination should be an intense exploration of a concentrated area of study. The examination should therefore demonstrate thorough mastery of the texts and criticism of the area, subject, and/or question under examination. The definition of "coverage" will be the responsibility of the student's primary examiners. Several issues can be thought of as elements in the formation of the reading list: What should one know if the area of interest is defined as problem or question X? What should one know before writing a dissertation on X? More pragmatically, what should one know before embarking on a professional career as a scholar and teacher of X? Students need not have clearly defined dissertation topics in mind at the point of the examination, although the examination often bears directly on the dissertation.
- 4) **Length of the Reading List.** There is no officially recommended length of the oral exam reading list. Previously approved rationales and lists are distributed through the context of EN794 and are available on the department server. Recently approved lists have typically contained 100-150 works / authors, depending on length and genre, and most include a significant portion of secondary criticism (around 20-30%, on average). Many are divided into sections that correspond to the areas of expertise of their exam committee members, although this is not always possible or desirable.

## **Dissertation and Final Oral Examination**

Students are encouraged to identify a dissertation subject while studying for the qualifying oral examination. The dissertation itself must be written under the supervision of two readers (listed as “first” and “second” readers). Shortly after the successful completion of the qualifying examination, a prospectus for the dissertation should be submitted to the Director of Graduate Studies for evaluation by the Graduate Committee and the Chair (forms will be available from the Department office). The prospectus should be developed in consultation with the first and second readers, and may not exceed twenty double-spaced pages (excluding bibliography). Prospectuses that exceed this limit will be returned without review for condensing. Before giving its approval to the prospectus and forwarding it to the Chair, the Graduate Committee may ask for revisions of the version initially submitted to it. Please note that the readers or the Graduate Committee may determine during the prospectus stage that the student is not ready to write a dissertation and should proceed no further. Failure to gain departmental approval for the prospectus by the end of the fourth year of the Ph.D. program can result in loss of departmental financial support.

As part of completing and submitting the dissertation, the candidate provides an abstract approved by the readers for review and approval by the Director of Graduate Studies and the Chair. The candidate then participates in the final oral examination, which is based principally on the dissertation and related problems in the area of the candidate's specialization. The final oral examination provides candidates an opportunity to demonstrate their ability to discuss clearly, objectively, and critically the methods and conclusions of the dissertation, as well as their knowledge of related materials. It can also be an occasion that explores directions the candidate could pursue in refining or extending the dissertation's argument. The final oral examination committee includes the first reader, the second reader, and three additional members selected in consultation with the Director of Graduate Studies.

## **Job Placement**

The Department of English supports its Ph.D.s. in finding suitable employment after graduation, both in academia and in other professions. Two faculty members serve each year as Job Placement Co-Directors to advise students who enter the academic job market, specifically. They hold meetings every May and throughout the fall semester, in the months leading up to the MLA convention; they review all job materials (sample letters, CVs, teaching statements, etc.); and they set up mock interviews and mock job talks. The Department of English normally provides some travel support to the MLA convention for students who are interviewing. Some funds may also be available to defray cost of a subscription to Interfolio.com, the dossier service, or other job market expenses. Since the Graduate Program in English at Boston University is relatively small in size, close personal attention can be given to each job applicant. Recent graduates have been successful in securing tenure-track jobs, post-doctoral fellowships, short-term positions, and jobs outside academia. The Department also supports and encourages students to apply for positions outside academia in humanities-related professions. A list of recent graduate placements can be found on the Department's website under the “Graduate” menu.

## **Research Assistantships and Outside Funding**

For U.S. citizens and permanent residents: if an English faculty member wishes to engage a Ph.D. student as a Research Assistant, the student may not work more than 5 hours per week during the semester and may not be compensated more than \$1,500 per semester. In the summer months, Research Assistants can work up to 20 hours per week.

## **Leave of Absence**

A doctoral student may take up to two one-semester Leaves of Absence (LOA's) at any time during his/her doctoral program; they may be taken either separately or consecutively. A LOA is taken by filling out a single-page form available in the Graduate School. Although the form asks that a reason for the LOA be specified, this request is purely for informational purposes. LOA's are never turned down by the Graduate School. If a doctoral student needs to take more than a total of two semesters off, then the only recourse is officially to Withdraw from the program; after a period of two years (or more), the student may apply for re-admission to the program. The re-application process consists of filing the cover sheet of the GRS application. Any of these actions should be discussed with your adviser and the Director of Graduate Studies.

There are potential drawbacks in taking a LOA: (1) You may lose medical coverage. (2) You may have to start repaying student loans. (3) You will have reduced library privileges—borrowing time of 3 weeks; however, students have been able to retain their study carrels. (4) You will not be able officially to fulfill any degree requirement, such as orals, language, and so forth, since you would not be an enrolled student. (5) You may not be able to take a LOA when you are very close to finishing and defending your dissertation, because the Graduate School requires that a student be officially registered in the two consecutive semesters prior to receiving the degree. In some cases, the English department can petition the Graduate School to cover your continuing registration fees. (6) Your teaching fellowship (if you are still eligible) may not be guaranteed upon your return; check with the Director of Graduate Studies.

For new policies regarding accommodations for the birth or adoption of a child, please see <http://www.bu.edu/cas/current-students/phd-mfa-students/leave-of-absence-and-withdrawal/>

## **Student Offices**

The English department usually assigns shared office space to Ph.D. students. First-years often share two offices on the first floor of the department, and more advanced students are assigned desks in other shared offices throughout the building. Office assignments are made at the discretion of the department administrators.

## **Student Mailboxes**

All Ph.D. students have mailboxes in the fourth floor mailroom. Students should check their department mailboxes and email regularly.



## **GENERAL POLICIES FOR ALL GRADUATE STUDENTS**

### **Advising**

All incoming graduate students are assigned a faculty adviser who meets with them during the registration period just before classes begin, as part of the department's Orientation Program. As their specific interests develop, students may choose a faculty adviser who works in their specific field.

### **Transfer of Credit**

We do not accept the transfer of credit towards the M.A. degree. For students entering the Ph.D. program with an M.A. degree from another institution, the English department can accept up to 16 credits (out of the combined 64 credits for the PhD). Students must submit an academic transcript and relevant course syllabi to the DGS for consideration.

### **Cross Registration**

Boston University is part of a cross-registration consortium of local graduate programs, along with Boston College, Brandeis University, and Tufts University. Students may cross-register for graduate-level courses at any of these institutions as part of their Boston University program. See the Director of Graduate Studies for more details.

### **Petitions**

Petitions for exemption or alteration of a particular requirement can be submitted to the DGS for consideration. A letter to the Director of Graduate Studies, submitted as an attachment to an email, is sufficient for a petition. On a case by case basis, the DGS may consult the Graduate Committee when considering a petition. Keep in mind that the Department cannot overrule Graduate School requirements.

### **Evaluation of Graduate Students**

In the Graduate School, passing grades for graduate students range from A to B minus. Grades below B minus are considered failing grades. A graduate student who earns less than a B minus in two semester-courses of a degree program is automatically placed on probation; the student may be removed from probation by earning a minimum of a straight B average in the following semester. The student who remains on probation more than one semester may be asked to withdraw from the degree program. Financial aid depends on continuing superior performance in courses and in the student's teaching responsibilities.

Within the English department, grading standards of course differ from professor to professor, though generally speaking A's are awarded for excellent work, A-'s indicate good or adequate work, and grades below that are reserved for subpar work.

## **Incompletes**

Students are advised to avoid Incomplete grades if at all possible; completing work in a timely manner is not only a sign of professional competence, but students often find that trying to finish an Incomplete from one semester during the next term is impossible. Also note:

- 1) No Incomplete will be given unless the student has made prior arrangements with the instructor, including the setting of a definite time by which the Incomplete grade will be made up. The student must also notify the adviser and the Director of Graduate Studies about the Incomplete and must specify the arrangements for its removal from the record. Under no circumstances can an Incomplete remain on the record for over one year.
- 2) M.A. candidates may receive no more than two Incompletes in all. Ph.D. candidates may receive no more than two incompletes in their first year, and two additional Incompletes in subsequent years.
- 3) Teaching fellows or holders of other Graduate School awards will not be reappointed if they have outstanding Incompletes.

## **Computer Accounts**

All graduate students will be provided with a BU email account and password for wireless access. Graduate students also have access to computers in the English Department and limited printing privileges.

## **English Graduate Student Association**

All graduate students are welcome to get involved with the English Graduate Student Association, the primary graduate student organization within the department. The EGSA is an independent body organized by the graduate students themselves, and it advances the interests of all graduate English students to departmental and university administrators, provides valuable resources to members at every phase of the University's program in English, and fosters a vibrant intellectual community among English graduate students. Feel free to get in touch with the officers for 2019-2020:

President: Kristin Lacey ([klacey@bu.edu](mailto:klacey@bu.edu))

Vice President: Noa Saunders ([noars@bu.edu](mailto:noars@bu.edu))

Secretary: Maggie Boyd ([mlboyd@bu.edu](mailto:mlboyd@bu.edu))

Colloquium Coordinators: Eric Bjornson ([ericlb@bu.edu](mailto:ericlb@bu.edu)) and Jasmyn Barringer ([jbarring@bu.edu](mailto:jbarring@bu.edu))

## **Statement about Sexual Misconduct and Title IX policies**

There is no place for sexual misconduct, harassment, or assault, in our department, university, profession, or society. Here is BU's official "Statement of University Values" regarding such offenses (available at <http://www.bu.edu/safety/sexual-misconduct/title-ix-bu-policies/sexual-misconducttitle-ix-policy/#tableofcontents>):

“Boston University is committed to fostering an environment that is free from all forms of sexual misconduct, including sexual assault and sexual harassment. In support of that commitment, BU takes steps to increase awareness of such misconduct, eliminate its occurrence on campus, provide support for survivors, diligently investigate all reports of sexual misconduct, and deal fairly and firmly with offenders. Creating a safe campus environment and a culture of respect is the shared responsibility of all members of the BU community, individually and collectively.”

Please note that all faculty members at Boston University are considered “responsible employees” of the University, and if they receive a report of sexual misconduct are required to inform the Title IX Coordinator about the incident.

A list of resources and support for faculty and graduate students can be found here: <http://www.bu.edu/safety/sexual-misconduct/title-ix-bu-policies/sexual-misconducttitle-ix-policy/#resourcesupport>.