

# Graduate Students' Manual for the M.A. in English

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Program Web Site:

<https://www.csuchico.edu/engl/programs/graduate.shtml>

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## **1.0 Purpose of This Manual**

The purpose of this manual is to help students seeking a master's degree in English to understand the process and procedures used by the Department of English in its graduate program. However, this manual does not supersede the *University Catalog* and students should familiarize themselves with the sections on Graduate Education and the M.A. in English in that publication. In addition, students should also obtain and read a copy of *A Guide to Graduate Studies: Policies, Procedures, and Format*. This detailed and helpful guide is available as a PDF download from the Office of Graduate Studies web page. Finally, it must be emphasized that this manual is not a substitute for graduate students consulting regularly with the Department's Graduate Coordinator. Students should meet with the Graduate Coordinator at least once each semester and more frequently if questions arise.

## **2.0 Nature of Graduate Education**

Graduate education is advanced study in a specific program which goes substantially beyond upper-division undergraduate coursework. Graduate study requires greater independence on the part of students. It is intended to develop in-depth knowledge and introduce students to research techniques so that they can later make significant and independent contributions to their fields of study.

## **3.0 Master of Arts in English Program**

The program consists of 30 units of advanced lecture coursework, seminars, and directed individual study leading to the writing of a thesis or creative project, followed by its oral defense. Students must take at least 24 units of 600-level courses in the discipline of English. Students may take up to 6 units of 400/500 level courses.

Students intending to apply 400-level courses to their M.A. degree programs are expected to make special arrangements with their instructors in order to satisfy the higher workload and standards expected of a graduate student taking an undergraduate course (see *University Catalog* section on Master's Degree Courses).

For a detailed list of the requirements for the M.A. Degree in English, see the current *University Catalog*.

## **4.0 Student Advancement in the Program**

Initially, all students admitted into the program are either Conditionally Classified or Classified status. In order to advance in the program, students admitted as Conditionally Classified must first work to attain Classified status. (Since the reasons for being admitted as Conditionally Classified vary, students should consult with the Graduate Coordinator concerning any issues that need to be addressed.) Classified students work toward attaining Candidate status, which allows them to enroll in English 699T/P (thesis or creative project) and file for graduation.

### **4.1 Prerequisites for Admission to Conditionally Classified Status**

1. Satisfactory grade point average as specified in “Admission to Master’s Degree Programs” in the *University Catalog*.
2. An acceptable baccalaureate from an accredited institution, or an equivalent approved by the Office of Graduate Studies.
3. Completion of the Graduate Record Examination with a minimum score of 153 on the verbal portion of the General Test (native English speakers only).
4. For all applicants who have not completed a baccalaureate degree (or three years of full-time academic study at the post-secondary level) in Australia, Great Britain, Anglophone Canada, Ireland, New Zealand, or the United States, completion of one of the following:
  - a. Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) with a minimum paper-based score of 580 or internet-based score of 92; or
  - b. International English Language Testing System (IELTS) with a minimum score of 7.0; or
  - c. Pearson Test of English Academic (PTE) with a minimum score of 65.

Further, a significantly low score on any part of these required exams will require that a student enroll in remedial courses appropriate to the area of weakness as specified by the Graduate Advisor.

5. Submission, with the application, of a writing sample demonstrating critical and analytical skills.
6. The Graduate Committee will make assessments of the applicant’s complete record, balancing GPA, letters of recommendation, GRE score, writing samples, and any other material in the application package.
7. Approval by the department and the Office of Graduate Studies.

### **4.2 Prerequisites for Admission to Classified Status**

In addition to any requirements listed above:

1. Completion of a departmentally administered essay assignment, by those required to take TOEFL, during registration week of the first semester.

Remedial work in composition will be required for those whose writing is judged inadequate by essay readers, and a student may not be advanced to classified status until an acceptable level of proficiency is reached.

2. Two letters of recommendation, preferably from English department faculty who know the student's work, to the departmental Graduate Coordinator.
3. Completion of ENGL 276 and ENGL 277, Survey of British Literature, or its equivalent. Students coming to Chico from undergraduate institutions that offer an undergraduate comprehensive examination in literature or a course of the same kind as the Survey of British Literature are requested to submit, when possible, as one of their letters of recommendation, a statement from a faculty member directly involved with that examination or course.
4. A post baccalaureate grade point average of at least 3.0 in a minimum of 12 departmentally specified units of letter-graded, graduate-level course work.
5. Completion of departmental literacy requirement.

### **4.3 Advancement to Candidate Status**

Classified students work toward attaining Candidate status, which allows them to enroll in English 699T/P (thesis or creative project) and file for graduation.

In addition to any requirements listed above:

1. Classified graduate standing and completion at the University of at least 9 units of the proposed program.
2. Fulfillment of the foreign language requirement (see below).
3. Formation of the graduate advisory (thesis) committee in consultation with the Graduate Coordinator.
4. Development of an approved program in consultation with the Graduate Coordinator. Such a program will include:
  - a. A statement of aims.
  - b. An outline of course units to be earned in pursuit of these aims.
  - c. A description of the nature of the culminating activity.

## **5.0 Forming the Graduate Advisory Committee**

Each student in the English M.A. program will be responsible for selecting an individual Graduate Advisory Committee—commonly referred to as the “thesis committee”—in consultation with the Graduate Coordinator. This committee will consist of two members of the English Department whose areas of specialty are related to the thesis topic or the sub-fields of English that the student chooses for his or her thesis or creative project. Additional committee members are allowed, but are not required. The Chair of the student’s Graduate Advisory Committee will help design the student’s program of study, will supervise the research and writing of a thesis or project, and have responsibility for granting final approval of that thesis or project.

A student should form his or her Graduate Advisory Committee as soon after entering the English M.A. program as is feasible, and should have a committee formed no later than the end of the second semester of graduate work. This is done by students contacting prospective committee members from among the department faculty and determining their willingness to serve on the student’s committee. The Graduate Coordinator can assist the student in determining which faculty members have expertise in which areas. The Chair of the Graduate Advisory Committee should have a strong background in the appropriate academic area, be able to communicate and work well with other faculty in the program, and have the time to chair the committee. The Chair must be a tenured or tenure-track faculty member who is from the program. This includes faculty members participating in the early retirement program (if they agree to “volunteer” their time during their off-campus semester).

Second readers on the committee must have the same qualifications as the chair. In selected cases, the second reader may be a tenured or tenure-track faculty member associated with a program other than the one granting the degree, or a fully-retired former faculty member willing to “volunteer” his or her time to the committee. The Graduate Coordinator of the English M.A. program must approve second readers who are not tenured or tenure-track faculty from the English program.

Additional members of the committee customarily meet the second-member qualifications. Exceptions may be allowed in certain instances; for details, please see *A Guide to Graduate Studies: Policies, Procedures, and Format*, available from the Office of Graduate Studies.

Once informal approval has been granted by faculty members, the student should contact the Graduate Coordinator to formalize the committee. This is done by completing and submitting to the Graduate Coordinator the “M.A. Thesis/Project Committee” form, available on the English M.A. program web page, or directly from the Graduate Coordinator.<sup>1</sup> This form stays in the student’s graduate file as a record that the committee has been formally constituted.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.csuchico.edu/engl/top-nav/grad-programs/graduate%20resources/helpful-forms.shtml>

## **6.0 The Thesis, Creative Project, or Alternative Terminal Project**

The thesis, creative project, or alternative terminal project is the culminating activity for students in the English M.A. program. Students in the literature and language and literacy patterns write a thesis (English 699T), students in the creative writing pattern write a creative project (English 699P), and students in all three patterns can elect to complete an alternative terminal project (English 699P). The expectations and requirements for a thesis or a project vary.

As a culminating activity, the thesis, project, or alternative terminal project will demonstrate the student's "mastery" of the first three Student Learning Objectives (SLOs) for our program (See Appendix 1).

California State University, Chico maintains a digital collection of all completed Master's Thesis/Projects as part of the Chico Digital Repository (CDR). This is an excellent resource for students and faculty who wish to review examples of completed theses and projects. For more information on the CDR, see section 6.7 of this guide, below.

### **6.1 The Thesis**

The thesis (English 699T) is the culminating activity for students in the sub-disciplines of literature and language and literacy. Title Five under the California Code of Regulations defines a thesis as follows:

A thesis is the written product of a systematic study of a significant problem. It identifies the problem, states the major assumptions, explains the significance of the undertaking, sets forth the sources for and methods of gathering information, analyzes the data, and offers a conclusion or recommendation. The finished product evidences originality, critical and independent thinking, appropriate organization and format, and thorough documentation. Normally, an oral defense of the thesis is required.

Typically, a scholarly thesis in English is a minimum of 60 pages in length, and contains the following:

- An introduction of 10-20 pages. The introduction establishes the research question or claim to be examined in the study; it also surveys or references major theories and critical approaches relevant to the topic.
- A "body" of 2-3 chapters of sustained analysis, usually comprising a minimum of 45-50 pages in length.
- A conclusion (if necessary), any necessary notes, and a Works Cited section (bibliography).

## **6.2 The Creative Project**

The creative project (English 699P) is the culminating activity for students in creative writing. Title Five under the California Code of Regulations defines a project as follows:

A project is a significant undertaking appropriate to the fine and applied arts or to professional fields. It evidences originality and independent thinking, appropriate form and organization, and a rationale. It is described and summarized in a written abstract that includes the project's significance, objectives, methodology and a conclusion or recommendation. An oral defense of the project may be required.

Typically, a creative project in English will consist primarily of a collection of either creative prose (fiction and/or creative non-fiction) and/or poetry. The typical guidelines are:

- A "Critical Introduction" of 15-20 pages. In this introduction, the student: (1) reflects critically on his or her creative work, in terms of process, form and practice; (2) discusses important authors, aesthetic theories, and the like that inform the work and/or the author's sense of his or her own process, development as an artist, and so forth; and (3) discusses his or her work in relation to the contemporary literary landscape.
- For writers of creative prose, a minimum of 45-50 pages of creative prose, followed by any necessary notes and a Works Cited section.
- For poets, a minimum of 30-35 pages of verse, followed by any necessary notes and a Works Cited section.



### **6.3 Alternative Terminal Projects**

Students in all three patterns who are interested in pursuing options other than the thesis or project can choose one of the relevant alternative terminal projects (ENGL699P) detailed below. An oral defense is required for all options.

#### **(1) Teaching Portfolio**

Under this option, the student from any pattern with teaching experience during their time in our program (i.e. completion of ENGL634 and/or ENGL689T and a completed semester teaching a relevant course in the department) will work with their project director to create a portfolio of teaching materials for a specific instructional context. The portfolio will include (a) a 10 - 15 page introduction situating the student's pedagogical approach within relevant research in the field, (b) a statement of teaching philosophy of 500 - 1000 words, (c) sample syllabi from 2-3 courses, (d) sample teaching materials (assignment sheets, lesson plans, etc.), (e) an annotated bibliography, and (f) a reflection essay on SETs, peer and/or supervisor observations, graded student work, and prior experience teaching a course based on a version of one of the syllabi included in the portfolio. The culmination of the project is an oral defense with the project director and second committee member.

#### **(2) Creative Writing Portfolio**

All Creative Writing students will have the choice, made in consultation with the student's Graduate Advisory Committee, of the traditional creative project or the alternative Creative Writing Portfolio.

#### **Creative Writing Portfolio**

##### Part One

A selection of the graduate student's creative work from Engl 620, Engl 420, and/or Engl 421.

- Prose: 25-30 pages of fiction or creative nonfiction, typically 2 stand-alone pieces, or an excerpt from a longer work
- Poems: chapbook length, 20-25 pages

##### Part Two

Please note: work in this category must be rooted in what the student is already studying (i.e. builds on some prior coursework). Pick one (1) of the following:

1. Teaching Materials (Required prerequisite: successful completion of Engl 689T with creative writing faculty)
  - 2-3 page teaching philosophy
  - Engl 220 syllabus with rationale
  - 3 sample assignments: one per genre
  - CV

2. Contemporary Literary Issues or Craft Paper (publishable length, 20-25 pages). Pick one (1) of the following four options:
- Issues in Contemporary Publishing: e.g. Vida count, people of color literary movements, current trends, etc. In addition to the essay itself, student must include an annotated bibliography, & addendum on where student plans to submit the finished product
  - Craft Paper: an extended study of craft issue[s] in a particular author or group of authors, referencing relevant craft essays/books, & addendum on where student plans to submit
  - Literary Analysis: revision & expansion of a literary analysis written in a genre or contemporary lit course (e.g. Engl 451 Modern Poetry, or Engl 461 Modern Novel), referencing relevant literary criticism and/or craft essays/books, & addendum on where student plans to submit
  - Literary Profile/Biography: interview-based study of a single author, with an extensive review of the author's published work, an overview of major responses to date (criticism on the author, reviews, prior interviews, etc.), & addendum on where student plans to submit

An oral defense is required.

### **(3) Professional Portfolio**

Under this option, the Literature or Language & Literacy student will work with their project director to create a portfolio of 3 - 5 pieces of writing undertaken as part of coursework for the program and subsequently revised for the final portfolio. The portfolio will include:

- (a) a 10 - 15 paged essay that reflects on the revision process and analyzes intellectual connections between the pieces of writing,
- (b) copies of the work as they were submitted for coursework, including comments from the original instructor, as available,
- (c) revised versions of each piece of writing. The culmination of the project is an oral defense with the project director and second committee member.

### **(4) Master's Essay**

Under this option, the Literature or Language & Literacy student will work with their project director to revise a seminar paper written as part of coursework for the program into a publishable, article-length research paper and to produce related pieces of professional, academic writing. The project will include:

- (a) the seminar paper originally submitted for coursework, including comments from the original instructor, as available,

- (b) a 25 to 30 paged revision of the seminar paper
- (c) an abstract of the revised, article-length research paper,
- (d) reformulation of the revised essay into the 7 to 8 pages appropriate for presentation at an academic conference,
- (e) a list of appropriate conferences and academic journals to which the paper in its different forms could be submitted.

The culmination of the project is the presentation of the conference-length version of the essay at a conference, whether at Chico State or at an appropriate (and pre-approved by the project director) academic organization.

### **(5) Alternative Assessment**

In special circumstances and after careful consultation with a student's graduate advisory committee, students may propose to fulfill the culminating activity for their degree with a project outside the scope of those listed above, including but not limited to an oral and/or written exam. Students must submit a written proposal, a bibliography, and signatures from their committee, to the Graduate Coordinator and members of the departmental Graduate Committee for written approval before starting the project.

### **6.4 Formatting the Thesis, Project, or Alternative Terminal Project**

All students are required to follow the most recent edition of the *MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers*, a text published and maintained by the Modern Language Association. This is the discipline-specific standard for English studies, and governs all the finer points within the text of the thesis or project (e.g., in-text citations, block quotes, Works Cited/bibliography, and so forth).

The University has a second set of format standards that apply universally to all theses and projects. These guidelines cover things like page layout, placement of chapter headings, and so forth. The complete format guidelines are available in the *Guide to Graduate Studies: Policies, Procedure, and Format*. This guide is available as a PDF download from the Office of Graduate Studies web page.

Correctly formatting the thesis/project is a vital phase of the student's overall learning process as a scholar or artist entering a professional community. It is the goal of the Office of Graduate Studies and the Department of English to make the rules for formatting the thesis/project as clear as possible.

The English Graduate Coordinator urges all students to be proactive and to understand the thesis and project requirements and processes. All students are strongly encouraged to format the thesis or project themselves. All relevant guidelines and procedure are available online, for free, in the *Guide to Graduate Studies: Policies, Procedure, and*

*Format.* Additionally, the Office of Graduate Studies regularly offers a series of workshops to mentor students in this area. Formatting assistance is available before one submits the final copy of the thesis/project by visiting the thesis adviser during her office hours in the Office of Graduate Studies. Please note, however, that there is a fixed deadline for preliminary edits (typically, four weeks before each semester's thesis/project deposit deadline). Consequently, students need to plan ahead. Students should budget extra time—up to a week—for format issues. This is in addition to the time required for drafting and revising the content.

Students who are not inclined to format their own thesis can hire a formatter. The Office of Graduate Studies maintains a list of local formatters on their web page. Please note that students who chose to hire a formatter should contact the formatter early in the process to arrange scheduling. Also, please note that hiring a formatter can be expensive.

### **6.5 Human Subjects**

Students who involve human subjects in their thesis in any way (e.g., referring to student writing, interviews with subjects, and so forth) must seek clearance from Human Subjects office. Students should check with the Office of Graduate Studies early in the process of researching and drafting in order to plan accordingly.

### **6.6 The Oral Defense**

Students completing a thesis or project are required to complete an oral defense related to their work. The oral examination committee is composed of the members of the student's graduate advisory committee. The oral defense is a public meeting and should be held on campus at an open location, such as a faculty office, conference room, or classroom. At the student's request, the department graduate coordinator, additional faculty, and non-university specialists and other guests may be invited to attend the oral defense.

The oral defense itself is a one-hour meeting during which the candidate and the graduate advisory committee discuss the thesis/project in detail, asking critical questions, offering suggestions for final revision, and discussing topics related to the student's work.

Strictly speaking, the deadline for the oral defense is always the same as that for the final submission of the thesis/project. However, orals should be scheduled well in advance of this deadline to allow for last minute content changes that might be required by the committee. The English Graduate Coordinator publishes a set of recommended deadlines for the oral defense each semester; holding the oral defense at least two weeks before the final deposit deadline is standard practice in the English Department.

Scheduling the oral defense is initiated by the candidate. The committee chair should first be contacted to verify that the thesis/project is ready to be defended. In English, the defense should only be held when the student has a complete working draft of the

thesis/project in hand (i.e., introduction, body, conclusion, bibliography). Incomplete drafts are not acceptable for the oral defense.

The student should distribute a complete draft of the thesis/project to all members of the graduate advisory committee at least one week prior to the oral defense.

Prior to the oral defense, the student must request the “Final Progress Sheet” and the “Thesis/Project Verification Sheet” from the Office of Graduate Studies; the form to request this paperwork (the “Final Progress Sheet Request Form”) is available online, via the Office of Graduate Studies web page. Additionally, the student should contact the English Graduate Coordinator when a time, date and location have been established for the oral defense.

The student is responsible for returning the “Final Progress Sheet” to the Office of Graduate Studies immediately after the oral defense; the “Thesis/Project Verification Sheet” is to be included with the completed thesis/project when the student deposits (see below).

### **6.7 Depositing the Thesis/Project**

All master's degree candidates completing a master's thesis or project under English 699 units must submit their materials according to the standards established by the Office of Graduate Studies. Complete instructions are available online:  
[http://www.csuchico.edu/graduatestudies/Thesis\\_or\\_Project.shtml](http://www.csuchico.edu/graduatestudies/Thesis_or_Project.shtml)

## **6.8 Chico Digital Repository (CDR)**

The Chico Digital Repository (CDR) is a digital repository for scholarly work created by the faculty, staff, and students of California State University, Chico. The CDR is a way to preserve documents and make them available to a wider audience. This database is available via the Meriam Library web page.

All completed Master's theses and projects are uploaded to the CDR. The CDR is an excellent resource for students and faculty who wish to review examples of completed theses and projects.

Students should bear in mind that once a thesis/project is uploaded to the CDR, it is available in perpetuity to a wide audience of readers. Be sure that your finished thesis/project is your absolute best work in every regard.

## **7.0 Graduate Teaching Associateship Program**

Consistent with the mission of the English Department, College, and University, we recognize that teaching is an important component of graduate study and of professionalizing in the field of English Studies. Students will pursue proper teaching training and teach certain courses based on their qualifications and the Department's needs. The Mission Statement of our M.A. Program states, "Through internships and seminars in pedagogy, our Teaching Associateship Program provides teacher training and helps our students develop their teaching philosophies and hone their professional skills."

The English Department offers a variety of teaching and employment opportunities for students. As required by university policies on student employment, all available positions will be posted through the Student Employment Office, on University job listings, and online.

For complete information regarding the Teaching Associateship Program, please see the "Hiring Guidelines for Teaching Associates & Student Assistants," available via the Graduate Resources page on the English department web page: <http://www.csuchico.edu/engl/top-nav/grad-programs/graduate%20resources/index.shtml>

## **8.0 Master's Degree Program Time Limit**

Students must complete all requirements for a master's degree no later than five years from the end of the semester of enrollment in the oldest course on the approved program. In special circumstances, an extension of the time limit may be granted to a maximum of

no more than two additional years. The extension may require taking additional coursework and dropping expired courses from the approved program, or validating expired coursework.

The approval for the extension and the duration of the extension are determined by the petitioner's graduate advisory committee, the departmental graduate coordinator, and the Office of Graduate Studies, in that order.

For more information, consult the Graduate Coordinator and the *University Catalog*.

## **Appendix 1: Graduate M.A. Program in English Mission Statement and Program Goals**

### **1.1 Program Mission Statement**

The English Department at California State University, Chico offers the Master of Arts degree in English with patterns in creative writing, language and literacy, and literature. The program is committed to advancing knowledge and creativity by nurturing a community of students, scholars, teachers, and creative writers. We believe that broad reading in historical and contemporary literary, critical, and theoretical texts provides a foundation for more specialized study and research. Through internships and seminars in pedagogy, our Teaching Associateship Program provides teacher training and helps our students develop their teaching philosophies and hone their professional skills.

### **1.2 Goals**

The M.A. in English is a 30-unit program built on a 9-unit core, a set of 12-unit pattern requirements, and 9 units of elective coursework. The program is designed to address the needs of a diverse student population, preparing those who plan to teach at community colleges, those who intend to pursue writing careers, and those who wish to enter MFA programs in creative writing or doctoral programs in English language and literature or in rhetoric and composition. Our student learning objectives are as follows:

1. Student work demonstrates appropriate knowledge in his or her area of concentration: Literature; Language and Literacy; Creative Writing; and/or Pedagogy.
2. Student work demonstrates advanced skills in reading, evaluating, and writing critically on various subjects in the field of English language, literature, and the literary arts.
3. Student work applies and demonstrates, appropriate to the student's area of concentration, comprehensive knowledge in scholarly research and methods, theoretical application, critical analysis, academic writing, and/or creative writing.
4. By means of rigorous training and practice, interested students should be able to independently design and teach college-level courses in writing and literature.

### **1.3 Mission Statement Review Process**

This statement of the Program's Mission and Goals was written and revised in AY 2005-2006. It has been added to the Program's website, recruitment brochures, and other departmental documentation. The Department's Graduate Committee will revisit these statements as part of ongoing programmatic assessment.