

**Annual Academic Assessment Report**  
**M.A. and Ph.D. Programs in English**  
**June 1, 2020**

**Introduction of Graduate Programs in English (included in this year's Program Review report)**

*English M.A. Program*

The English M.A. program at the University of Arkansas began in August of 1955. Up until the early 2000's, the M.A. program was structured as a general study of literary historical eras (e.g., Medieval; Renaissance/Early Modern; 18<sup>th</sup>-Century/Restoration; 19<sup>th</sup>-Century British Literature; Modern British Literature; American Literature to 1900; Modern American Literature; Contemporary Literature later replaced by World Literature).

In 2016, the M.A. program structure evolved to offer students two concentrations: Generalist and Specialist. The Generalist structure more closely resembles the previous program structure, focused on breadth of knowledge regarding the historical eras of English and American literature, and their cultural contexts. The Specialist structure, on the other hand, offers the opportunity for in-depth study in one of seven areas: Comparative Literature, Cultural Studies, Ethnic and Regional Literature, Gender Studies, Medieval Literature, Modern American, and Rhetoric and Composition. In 2016, the M.A. program also changed its final project options, available to students for program completion, from thesis or comprehensive exam to thesis or portfolio project/workshop.

From 2012 to 2019, a total of 90 students graduated with an M.A. in English. Since we implemented the two-concentration and portfolio options and started having M.A. students graduate within that new program structure (starting in 2018), our graduation rates have been at their highest levels.

*English Ph.D. Program*

The English Ph.D. program at the University of Arkansas began in August of 1955. Up until the early 2000's, the doctoral program had three distinct program stages: course work, candidacy exams (written and oral), and dissertation defense.

Since the early 2000's, the doctoral program has evolved to streamline the above three stages in a more logical and efficient manner. Doctoral students are now advised from the beginning of their program to plan ahead so that they are taking and organizing notes during course work in preparation for their written candidacy exam. Likewise, they are advised to use their oral

exam to defend a dissertation prospectus so that the completion of their oral candidacy exam launches them directly into the dissertation-writing process.

Our doctoral program has also begun to expand its definition of “dissertation” to allow students to explore other formats for their dissertations that are still rigorous but more closely aligned with students' individual professional interests.

From 2012 to 2019, a total of 61 students graduated with a Ph.D. in English.

Ten years ago our program tended to admit some doctoral students with doctoral fellowships and teaching assistantships, and to admit some doctoral students with only teaching assistantships. For the last several years, however, we have refrained, for the most part, from admitting students unless we can offer them doctoral fellowships as well as teaching assistantships, providing our doctoral students with more funding to support them through the first four years of their program.

And because our English Department has, since 2014, begun offering intersession (intensive 12-day) courses in between the main fall/spring/summer semesters, more of our doctoral fellows have been able to complete course work requirements earlier, allowing more of them to complete their programs within the four years that they are offered fellowship funding. (Two finished within four years this past summer, and another finished within four years plus one semester this past fall.)

### **Results of Analysis of Assessment of Student Learning Outcomes**

Assessment data regarding M.A. and Ph.D. students' comprehensive/candidacy exams, thesis/dissertation defenses, professional presentations and publications, and job placement indicate that the M.A. and Ph.D. Programs in English are achieving all six student learning outcomes and accomplishing all three program goals. (For descriptions of the program goals, student learning outcomes, and means of assessment, see the attached Academic Assessment Plan, originally submitted spring of 2015 and updated May, 2020.)

#### **1. Exams and Defenses**

During the last nine years (from the fall of 2011 through the spring of 2020), 94 M.A. students and 62 Ph.D. students completed their programs and graduated. During this time 55 M.A. students successfully defended a thesis to graduate, 19 M.A. students passed the M.A. comprehensive exam to graduate, and 20 students took a Portfolio Workshop course, taught by Dr. Lisa Hinrichsen, and presented M.A. portfolios as their final degree projects. (The portfolio option has now replaced the comprehensive exam option.) Since 2015, M.A.

students choosing the thesis option also have had their thesis prospectuses reviewed and approved before being allowed to start writing their theses. Ph.D. students have always been required to write and successfully defend dissertations to graduate. Before being allowed to start their dissertations, these students must also pass a written candidacy exam in a broad area of specialization and an oral candidacy exam in a narrower area that anticipates their dissertation topics. Overall, students' successful completion of M.A. comprehensive exams, M.A. prospectuses/theses, M.A. portfolios, Ph.D. candidacy exams, and Ph.D. prospectuses/dissertations indicates that the M.A. and Ph.D. Programs in English are achieving Student Learning Outcomes 1 and 2 and Program Goal 1.

The average time to degree for Ph.D. students who graduated during the last eight years (from the fall of 2011 through the spring of 2019) was approximately 18 semesters (6 years), and the average time to degree for M.A. students who graduated during this time was approximately 9 (9.48) semesters (3 years). It is important to note, however, that the average time to degree for the 64 graduating M.A. students who *started* their M.A. course work in the last nine years (i.e., started Fall 2011 or after) was approximately 6.5 semesters (2 years - 2 years/1 semester). When the directors of the M.A. and Ph.D. programs started coordinating the programs in the fall of 2011, they took steps to reconnect with students who had started the M.A. program prior to 2009 but not yet completed their theses/comprehensive exams, ultimately advising approximately 12 of these students to degree completion and graduation. Although the graduation of previously discontinued students was a positive development for the department as well as the students, their graduation increased the average time to degree for students who completed the M.A. program over the last eight years. Overall, the average time to degree for students completing the Ph.D. program indicates that the Ph.D. program is achieving Student Learning Outcome 5 and Program Goal 3. Now that we have new M.A. degree requirements in place (officially approved in 2016), allowing our M.A. students to complete a portfolio project in lieu of a thesis, we anticipate continuing to see an improvement in the average time to degree for our M.A. students in the coming years.

## **2. Presentations, Publications, Honors, and Job Placement**

During the last seven years (from the spring of 2013 through the spring of 2020), students in the M.A. and Ph.D. programs presented papers (or gave talks) and published scholarship on a diverse group of authors and a wide range of literary, cultural, linguistic, and theoretical areas. During this time current M.A. and Ph.D. students presented conference papers or gave professional talks over 200 times and published (or have forthcoming) 37 articles, book chapters, dictionary entries, or creative writing pieces. Of special note is that four of the papers received outstanding-presentation-at-conference awards from the sponsoring organizations (the American Society for Eighteenth-Century Studies, the Carson McCullers Society, the College English Association, and the Popular Culture Association / American Culture Association). Overall, the students' significant level of scholarly contribution

indicates that the M.A. and Ph.D. programs are achieving Student Learning Outcomes 3 and 4 and Program Goal 1.

Our M.A. and Ph.D. students over the last seven years also have had the high quality of their scholarship and their serious dedication to the discipline acknowledged in a range of ways. Honors that they have received outside of the Department of English include 8 James J. Hudson Doctoral Fellowships (awarded by the Graduate School), 5 Fulbright College Dissertation Research Awards, 1 R.D. Mullen Fellowship through the International Association for the Fantastic in the Arts (to fund archival research at the John Hay Library at Brown University), 1 American Dissertation Fellowship through the American Association of University of Women, 1 National Endowment for the Humanities Summer Institute Fellowship, acceptance to a one-week summer Futures of American Studies Institute at Dartmouth College, 3 African and African American Studies Graduate Fellowships, 1 travel award to attend the 2018 MMLA Conference in Kansas City (Midwest Modern Language Association), 1 travel award for an outstanding conference proposal (Center for the Study of Genders and Sexualities), 1 travel award for the Computers and Writing Graduate Research Network, 2 travel awards to attend the annual College English Association's conference, 1 award from the Delaware Tribe of Indians Education Program, 1 fellowship to the Sweetland Digital Rhetoric Collaborative, 1 Chancellor's Community Service Award (University of Arkansas), 1 Alex Marino Service Award (from the Graduate Student Congress), 1 student selected to participate in the Rhetoric Society of America's Project in Power, Place, and Publics, and 5 elections/appointments to officer/member positions for regional or national organizations (member of the Bedford New Scholars Advisory Board for The English Community, The Macmillan Community (<https://community.macmillan.com/>); secretary and chair of the Nineteenth-Century Literature Committee for the South Central Modern Language Association; Midwest Region's Director of Communications for the National Association of Graduate-Professional Students; Board of Directors for the Vagantes Conference on Medieval Studies; and member of the Graduate Student Committee for the Medieval Academy of America).

Since 2013, we have also had 20 incoming doctoral students awarded Doctoral Academy Fellowships by the Graduate School and 9 incoming doctoral student awarded Distinguished Doctoral Fellowships by the Graduate School. For those doctoral students planning to begin their program this fall (of 2020), 2 have already been awarded Distinguished Doctoral Fellowships and 5 have already been awarded Doctoral Academy Fellowships.

Students completing the M.A. and Ph.D. programs during the last twelve years (since the spring of 2007) have gone on to pursue a range of programs and positions after graduation. At least 48 of our M.A. graduates have been accepted to or gone on to start Ph.D. programs (the University of Arkansas, Michigan State University, Indiana University at Bloomington, the University of North Texas, the University of Tennessee, Purdue University, University of Kentucky, Texas A&M, Vanderbilt University, University of Kansas, Oklahoma State University, Georgia State University, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, and Arizona

State University). One will be starting law school at the University of Arkansas the fall of 2019. One went on to complete a second M.A. at Auburn University. (I believe she was initially planning to pursue her Ph.D. there but stopped after completing her second M.A.) One M.A. graduate has gone on to attend Harvard Law School. At least 7 M.A. graduates have gone on to pursue a master's degree in library science (at Rutgers University, the University of Oklahoma, the University of Alabama, and LSU) or to work/continue working in a library system. Approximately 8-9 M.A. graduates have gone on to work as college English instructors (note that not all are still working in those positions). And at least 20 of them have gone on to pursue an M.A.T., teach abroad (China), and/or work in a public or private school system as a secondary English teacher, a primary teacher, an ESL teacher, a substitute teacher, or a teacher's aide. In addition, our M.A. graduates have secured employment with institutions, organizations, and companies like the following:

- ACGME in Chicago, IL (Accreditation Standards Senior Administrator)
- AICPA in Raleigh-Durham, NC (Communications Manager – Tax)
- Alma School District (English Teacher)
- ArcBest (Director, Customer Solutions)
- Alexandria Library in Alexandria, VA (Children’s Librarian)
- Arkansas Leadership Academy, University of Arkansas (Administrative Support Supervisor)
- Arkansas Teacher Corps (Teacher at Lee County High School in Mariana, AR)
- Arkansas Tech University (Adjunct Faculty)
- Asheville-Buncombe Technical College (English Instructor)
- Barre 3 (Owner)
- B-Unlimited in Fayetteville, AR (Director of People and Culture)
- Berryville Public Library in Berryville, AR (Library Associate)
- Bentonville Brewing Company (Taproom Attendant and Social Media Manager)
- Bentonville High School (English Teacher)
- Bookish, an Independent Bookstore in Fort Smith, AR (Co-Owner)
- Business Services (Vice-Chancellor’s Office) at the University of Arkansas (Travel Analyst)
- California State University Long Beach (Assistant Professor – This M.A. graduate completed his Ph.D. at Texas A&M University.)
- Central Arkansas Christian Schools (Pre-K through 3rd Grade Teacher)
- City of Fayetteville (Sustainability Coordinator)
- Civil + Structural Engineer Media (Editor and Content Specialist)
- Colegio Granadino in Colombia (English Teacher)
- Community Clinic of Northwest Arkansas in Springdale, AR (Communications Manager)
- Dell Medical School at UT-Austin (Associate Director for Strategic Content and Creative Services as well as Editor, *Rethink: New Perspectives on Health*)
- Department of Political Science, University of Arkansas (Administrative Specialist)
- Education Management, Inc. (Financial Aid Advisor)
- English First, China (ESL Teacher)

- Environmental Defense Fund in Bentonville (4-month, full-time, paid technical writing internship)
- Episcopal School of Dallas (Communications Associate)
- Fayetteville High School (English Teacher)
- Graduate School and International Education at the University of Arkansas (Compliance Officer)
- Gravette High School (English Teacher)
- Haas Hall Academy in Bentonville, AR (English Teacher)
- Heifer International (Manager of Donor Engagement)
- Hemingway-Pfeiffer Museum and Educational Center (Director)
- Honors College, University of Arkansas (Director of Retention and Student Advising)
- Howard-Tilton Memorial Library at Tulane University (Scholarly Engagement Librarian for the Humanities)
- J.B. Hunt Transport, Inc. (Corporate HR Business Partner)
- J.B. Hunt Transport, Inc. (Content Marketing Specialist)
- JJ's Beer Garden & Brewing Co. (Trivia Host and Creator)
- Kroger in Nashville, TN (Associate Communications and Engagement Manager)
- KUAF (Membership Director)
- Louisiana School for Math, Science, and the Arts (English Teacher)
- Marian Middle School (English Teacher)
- Marion Military Institute in Marion, AL (English Instructor)
- Millsaps College (Grant Writer/Corporate and Foundation Gift Manager)
- Miss Liang English School in Taiwan (ESL Teacher)
- Mohawk College (Instructor?)
- Mullins Library, University of Arkansas (Professional Assistant I)
- National Writing Project College-Ready Writers Program (Director)
- The New School in Fayetteville, AR (Full-Time Substitute)
- New Leaf Publishing Group (Assistant Editor)
- New Student and Family Programs at the University of Arkansas (Office Manager)
- Northern Oklahoma College (Language Arts Instructor)
- Northport School District (Teacher's Aide)
- Northwest Arkansas Community College (English Instructor)
- Northwest Arkansas Community College (Instructor and Comp 1 Coordinator)
- Office of Student Involvement and Orientation at Rockford University in Rockford, IL (Position?)
- Office of University Development at the University of Arkansas (Administrative Records Analyst – Records and Data Services)
- Program in Rhetoric and Composition, University of Arkansas (Adjunct Teaching Faculty)
- ProviderTrust (Brand Activation Leader)
- Rockford University (IL) (Dir. of First Year Programs and Career Services)
- Rogers Heritage High School in Rogers, AR (Social Studies Teacher)

- Rogers Public Library (full-time position)
- Science and Engineering Magnet High School in Dallas, TX (AP Teacher)
- Shirley Rash Editing (Owner)
- Sims Memorial Library, Southeastern Louisiana University (Reference/Instruction Librarian)
- Southern Arkansas University (Registrar's Assistant/Software Support Technician)
- St. Mark's Episcopal School in Houston, TX (6<sup>th</sup> Grade Language Arts Teacher)
- Startup Junkie Foundation (Consultant)
- SVI (Content Manager and Client Champion)
- Texarkana College (Adjunct English Faculty)
- Thaden School (Executive Assistant to Directors of Finance and Operations and Technology)
- Tyson Foods, Inc., in Springdale, AR (Video Production Manager)
- U.S. Census Bureau (General Office Clerk)
- United States Court of Appeals for the Eighth Circuit in El Dorado, AR (Judicial Law Clerk – This student earned her J.D. at Harvard.)
- University Information Technology Services, University of Arkansas (Blackboard Support Specialist)
- University of Arkansas Career Development Center (Employer Relations Coordinator)
- University of Arkansas New Student & Family Programs (Officer Manager)
- University of Arkansas Press (Editorial Assistant)
- University of Arkansas, Business Services (Travel Administrator)
- University of Arkansas Community College at Hope-Texarkana (Full-Time English Faculty)
- University of Colorado-Colorado Springs (Systems and User Experience Librarian & Assistant Professor, Web Services and Emerging Technologies, Kraemer Family Library)
- University of North Carolina—Greensboro's School of Nursing (Communications and Marketing Specialist)
- Urban Sustainability Directors Network (Research Coordinator)
- Waitr (Delivery Driver)
- Wal-Mart Stores, Inc. (Product Development Specialist)
- Walmart, Contact Center Operations (Resolution Specialist I)
- Walmart (Manager, Digital Strategy and Brand Engagement)
- Walmart eCommerce (Coordinator II)
- Walton Arts Center (Development Coordinator)
- Walton College of Business, Business Communication Lab (Tutor)
- Walton College of Business, Business Communication Lab (Assistant Director)
- Walton College Honors Program (Academic Adviser and Scholarship Coordinator)
- Washington Junior High School (English Teacher)
- Wayne State University (Digital Publishing Librarian)

Note: For a number of our M.A. alumni who have graduated in the last 13 years, including those who just graduated Spring 2020, we have not yet been able to confirm any post-graduation graduate school/job information. In addition, the positions above may reflect multiple positions held by the same M.A. graduate. Finally, not all of the M.A. alumni who have secured positions with the above employers are still working in those offices.

In the last 13 years (since the summer of 2007), over 30 of our Ph.D. graduates have been hired for and/or promoted to assistant professor, associate professor, or other professor/tenure-track positions at the following domestic and international institutions. These alumni, as far as we know, are still/currently working, or will be by fall, in all of these positions.

- Abraham Baldwin Agricultural College (GA) – assistant professor
- Alanya University (Turkey) – assistant professor
- Appalachian State (NC) – assistant chair of department and director of comp/rhet program
- Austin Peay State University - assistant professor of English
- Ball State University (IN) – assistant teaching professor
- Boise State University (ID) – assistant professor
- Butler Community College (KS) – assistant professor
- Cottey College (MO) – writing center director and assistant professor
- Dalton State College (GA) - assistant professor
- East West University (Bangladesh) – associate professor
- Ferum College (VA) - associate professor
- Georgia Military College (GA) – assistant professor
- Howard Payne University (TX) – assistant professor
- Lander University (SC) – assistant professor
- Missouri State University – assistant professor
- Oklahoma Baptist University – 1 assistant professor and 1 associate professor
- San Jacinta College (TX) – English professor
- San Jose State University – assistant professor
- Texas A&M – associate professor
- Texas A&M University-Qatar – instructional assistant professor
- Ulsan University (South Korea) – assistant professor
- University of Arkansas-Fort Smith – 2 associate professors
- University of Central Oklahoma – assistant professor
- University of South Bohemia - assistant professor
- University of South Carolina - tenure-track assistant professor of English and the Program Coordinator for the English with Secondary English Language Arts Licensure Bachelor of Arts
- University of Southern Mississippi-Gulf Park – assistant teaching professor
- University of the Ozarks (AR) – 1 assistant professor and 1 associate professor



- Volunteer State Community College (TN) – assistant professor
- West Virginia University – assistant professor
- Westfield State University (MA) – assistant professor
- Williams Baptist College (AR) – assistant professor
- Yarmouk University (Jordan) – 2 assistant professors

In addition, since 2007, at least 20 of our Ph.D. graduates have been hired for non-tenure-track or secondary education positions with the following institutions and are still/currently working, or will be by fall, with these employers.

- Arkansas High School in Texarkana – 11<sup>th</sup>-grade English teacher
- Arkansas School for Mathematics, Sciences, and the Arts in Hot Springs – humanities instructor
- Auburn University (AL) – lecturer
- Baldwin School (PA) – chair of computer science and dean of academic affairs
- Bilkent University (Turkey) – lecturer
- Combined Middle and High School System (Quebec, Canada) - Substitute Teacher
- Colorado State University – instructor
- Hung Vuong Specialized High School in Binh Duong province (Vietnam) – instructor\*
- King’s High School (WA) – English instructor
- LISA Academy (AR) – English department chair
- Louisiana State University - instructor
- Northeastern State University (OK) – part-time faculty
- Northwest Arkansas Classical Academy - 7th and 8th grade literature teacher
- Ouachita Baptist University (AR) - adjunct faculty
- Richland College (TX) – English faculty member
- Savannah College of Art and Design (GA) - General Education Professor (NTT)
- University of Albany – lecturers (2)
- University of Arkansas, Fayetteville, Department of English – instructor and asst. dir. of graduate program
- University of Arkansas-Fort Smith – adjunct English faculty
- University of Mississippi – instructor
- Western Governors University (online, I believe) – writing center non-tenure-track faculty

Finally, since 2007, at least 8 of our Ph.D. graduate have been hired for nonteaching, administrative, or alternative-academic (alt-ac) positions that they are still/currently holding with the following offices, organizations, and institutions:

- Graduate Record Examinations (GRE) - essay rater
- Harper Collins Christian (TN) – acquisitions editor

- Inhab Real Estate (LA) – broker
- Interrobang (AR) – founder and lead storyteller
- Office of Nationally Competitive Awards (University of Arkansas, Fayetteville) – director of communications
- Ozarks Technical Community College (MO) - dean of academic and student affairs
- Transportation Security Administration (VA) – writer/editor
- University Information Technology Services (University of Arkansas, Fayetteville) – senior virtualization engineer

Note: For a number of our Ph.D. alumni who graduated in the last 13 years, we have not been able to confirm current information.

Overall, the students’ successful level of placement into teaching positions, nonteaching or alt-ac positions, and new degree programs indicates that the M.A. and Ph.D. programs are achieving Student Learning Outcome 6 and Program Goal 2.

### **3. External Committee Review**

In the spring of 2013, an external committee of three faculty members in English from other institutions visited the English Department and reviewed all its programs, including the M.A. and Ph.D. Programs in English. The external committee’s report included two important suggestions about the M.A. program: 1) that its “coverage model at the graduate level, however commendable in principle, may be out of sync with national trends in the discipline and with the current TT faculty size” and 2) that the department should consider (also because of national trends and tenure-track faculty size) “eliminating the M.A. thesis requirement and, perhaps, substituting for this requirement a seminar or workshop in revising seminar papers into journal articles” or “scholarly papers that might be included in applications for doctoral programs.” Our new M.A. program (approved in 2016) responds to both critiques, through 1) offering the option of a specialist or generalist track, and 2) presenting an alternative to the traditional M.A. thesis in the form of a portfolio project and workshop class.

We are presently in the process of preparing for our M.A. and Ph.D. programs to be reviewed by another external committee as part of our department's upcoming overall program review process, which will be happening Fall 2020.

### **Any Changes to Degree/Certificate Planned or Made on the Basis of the Assessment and Analysis**

The English Department routinely folds new assessment results into the administration of its graduate programs and has been using the above results in a variety of ways to continue monitoring and strengthening the M.A. and Ph.D. Programs in English. For example, in

considering our last external committee review, the department formed a Graduate Reform Committee of eight faculty members and one M.A. student, and the committee revised the degree structure of the M.A. program to include a generalist concentration as well as a new specialist concentration, a thesis option as well as a new portfolio option, a portfolio workshop course required for students who choose the portfolio option, and an introduction to graduate studies course required of all incoming M.A. students. These revisions to the M.A. program, approved by the university in 2016, have made the structure of the program more flexible and more in line with current best practices and the size of the faculty in English. In particular, the option to complete a portfolio for the program's final research project and the addition of a portfolio workshop course (offered for the first time in the spring semester of 2018) is already beginning to help more of our M.A. students complete their degrees in a more timely fashion. In the first class of M.A. students offered this option, 8 out of 11 chose the portfolio option and completed the M.A. degree program in 5 semesters, graduating in the spring of 2018. In the second class of M.A. students offered this option, 7 out of 10 chose the portfolio option and completed the M.A. degree in 5 semesters, graduating in the spring of 2019. This past spring of 2020, 5 M.A. students completed the portfolio option (4 of the students completing their degree program in 5 semesters and 1 student completing their degree program in 8 semesters).

Moreover, the department has started offering multiple graduate-level courses focusing heavily, if not primarily, on professionalization and career options (both within and outside the conventional path of teaching/academia):

- **Introduction to Graduate Studies** (taught each fall by Sean Dempsey)
- **Job Market Workshop: Academic, Alt-Ac, Post-Ac** (taught every other year by Lissette Szwydky)

We are also now offering a course (Graduate Internship in English) through which the department can facilitate graduate internships in areas such as grant writing, editing (e.g., with the university press), publishing, helping with special collections work (in the library), and assisting with on-campus writing center services (Business Communication Lab at Walton College of Business). This course also allows graduate students to seek internship opportunities off campus with start-up companies (e.g., Finding NWA), city offices (e.g., the City of Fayetteville's Sustainability Department), or local industry (J.B. Hunt). Two of our M.A. students participated in the graduate internship course during the 2017-2018 school year. Six of our M.A. students participated in the graduate internship course during the 2018-2019 school year. Two of our M.A. students participated in the graduate internship course during the 2019-2020 year.

Furthermore, the English graduate advisors and the Graduate Students in English organization (GSE) have been considering assessment results in planning and implementing extracurricular workshops and other activities for English M.A. and Ph.D. students. For example, the placement of M.A. and Ph.D. graduates into a balance of secondary-level teaching positions and non-teaching or corporate positions (see above) is positive confirmation that this focus upon careers outside, as well as inside, academia is helping students respond productively to the current state

of the academic job market in the humanities. Extracurricular professionalization activities offered to our graduate students just in the past year have included the following:

**Professionalization Events that Took Place Fall 2019:**

- RCO Workshop: The Movie Critic Summary - 2:00 p.m., Mon., Sept. 16th, KIMP 106
- Applying to Ph.D. Programs in English Meeting - 5:30 p.m., Tues., Sept. 17th, KIMP 321
- RCO Workshop: Providing Students Agency in an Inclusive Classroom, 12:30 p.m., Thurs., Sept. 26th, GRAD 146
- RCO Workshop: The Fine Arts & Rhetorical Analysis, 11:00 p.m., Thurs., Oct. 10th, DISC 510
- Internship Speaker Panel Event - 5:00 p.m., Mon., Oct. 14th, KIMP 109
- RCO Workshop: The "Horror" of English Syntax - 12:30 p.m., Thurs., Oct. 31st, WCOB 433
- RCO Workshop: Thesis Statements for Advocacy - 9:45 a.m., Wed., Nov. 6th, WCOB 339
- Pedagogy Lunch Series Event: Teaching Intro to Literature - 1:00 p.m., Thurs., Nov. 7th, KIMP 713
- English Alumni Alt-Ac Speaker Panel Event - 5:00 p.m., Mon., Nov. 18th, KIMP 102

Note: "RCO" = Events hosted by the Rhetoric and Composition Office

**Professionalization Events that Took Place Spring 2020:**

- RCO Workshop on "A Better Way to Grade" by Dylan Henderson - 12:30 p.m., Thurs., Feb. 6th, Kimpel 410
- RCO Workshop on "Incorporating Narrative Voice in Discussions & Assignments" by Katie Powell - 12:00 p.m., Wed., Feb. 19th, Old Main 323
- Portfolio vs. Thesis Meeting for M.A. Students - 1:00 p.m., Friday, Feb. 21st, Kimpel 321
- Candidacy Exam Prep Meeting for Doctoral Students - 1:00 p.m. Friday, March 6th, Kimpel 321
- RCO Workshop on "Grading Contracts: Why They're Worth It" by Kristen Figgins - 9:30 am, Tues., March 10th, Kimpel 321
- Job Market Prep Meeting for Doctoral Students - conducted through Zoom session at 10:00 a.m. on Thurs., April 16th

Note: "RCO" = Events hosted by the Rhetoric and Composition Office

Note: A number of other events were originally planned for the spring semester but had to be cancelled when the campus closed due to COVID-19 restrictions.

The Director and Assistant Director of the M.A. and Ph.D. programs have also been using the assessment results to improve strategies for advising students and disseminating information about the programs. For example, within the last few years, the directors have developed (in consultation with various IT and media specialists on campus) a new platform and new content

for the department's website pages on the M.A. and Ph.D. programs, which will continue to be revised as we continue to balance our emphasis upon academic and alternative-academic professional preparation.

To support graduate students in completing their program on schedule, a new advising web page was added in 2015 that includes information on "M.A. Requirements and Timeline," "Ph.D. Requirements and Timeline," and "Exams, Prospectuses, and Reading Lists." (The last page now also includes information on preparing M.A. portfolios.) To encourage students to continue making significant scholarly contributions in their areas of research, new web pages were also added in 2015 on "Graduate Student Awards, Publications, and Presentations" and "Professionalization Resources." To continue supporting students in their preparation for professional careers inside or outside of academia, a new page on "Career Resources" was added.

To further assist our incoming graduate students as they begin their programs, we have developed a graduate student handbook, which thoroughly covers program requirements, resources, and information about faculty, as well as our programs' process of evaluating graduate student progress. We revise and update this handbook on an annual basis.

To further assist our current and graduating students, as they consider their career options, during the 2018-2019 school year, we published a semi-annual graduate English alumni newsletter which featured alumni professional news, alumni job placement, and interviews with alumni regarding their various work interests and endeavors. Since the Assistant Director of Graduate Studies is now assisting with the semi-annual publication of the department newsletter (which includes updates on M.A. and Ph.D. alumni), the program newsletter, mentioned above, has been discontinued.

To encourage recruitment to our English M.A. and Ph.D. programs, the Assistant Director of Graduate Studies traveled to 9 college/university institutions in the state of Arkansas and 1 institution in the state of Missouri in the fall of 2019. Also to encourage recruitment, the Director of Graduate Studies contacted by phone all graduate students accepted to the M.A. and Ph.D. program in the spring of 2020 to discuss the programs with them. As a result, we feel, the numbers of students we admitted to our graduate programs to begin fall of 2020 were unprecedented: 18 incoming M.A. students, 8 incoming doctoral students, and 1 transfer doctoral student.

To encourage the recruitment of a more diverse population of students to our M.A. and Ph.D. programs, the English graduate advisors have in the past attended meetings hosted by the Office for Diversity and Inclusion, attended the Attracting Intelligent Minds (AIM) Conference (and visited with individual AIM participants), nominated an incoming graduate student for the RISE Bridge Program, and nominated outside faculty to participate in the Graduate Research Opportunities Forum (GROF).

Finally, to encourage more financial support for our incoming doctoral students, and supplement their teaching stipends, we regularly nominate qualified doctoral applicants for doctoral fellowships through the Graduate School. We also seek to locate, in the future, more financial assistance for our M.A. students by cultivating strategic partnerships with nearby industries, unique to the Northwest Arkansas area, that could lead to paid training opportunities or internships for our M.A. students and perhaps also alternative-academic full-time employment opportunities for both our M.A. graduates and our Ph.D. graduates.

### **Any Changes to the Assessment Process Made or Planned**

We plan to continue the assessment process we've been developing over the last several years, which we describe above. The advisors of the graduate English students will continue to collect data on average time to degree for our M.A. and Ph.D. students and job placement (in both academic and nonacademic careers), as well as track their annual numbers of awards, publications, conference presentations. We are also open to increasing our level of communication with personnel in other departments on campus as well as in off-campus offices/businesses within the Northwest Arkansas area to broaden the range of interdisciplinary research and, as mentioned above, increase the number of professional training opportunities our students can pursue to be as competitive as possible when they go on the job market.

---

**Academic Assessment Plan  
M.A. and Ph.D. Programs in English  
Originally Submitted Spring 2015 / Last Updated May 2020**

### **Program Goals**

1. Students in the M.A. and Ph.D. programs should acquire specialized knowledge and develop academic skills in preparation for making scholarly contributions to their fields of research.
2. M.A. and Ph.D. students should also gain professionalization skills and knowledge in preparation for going on the job market or applying to other graduate programs.
3. M.A. and Ph.D. students should be able to complete their degrees in a timely fashion.

### **Student Learning Outcomes**

1. M.A. students should be able to write and defend an original thesis of 50-75 pages or to defend a 50-75 portfolio of professional documents.
2. Ph.D. students should be able to write and defend an original dissertation of 250-350 pages (or an alternative format of dissertation project approved by the student's committee, the Director of Graduate Studies, and the Department Chair) and to pass a written candidacy exam covering a broad area of specialization as well as an oral candidacy exam covering a narrower research area.

3. M.A. and Ph.D. students should be able to develop, submit, and present papers for professional conferences.
4. Ph.D. students should also be able to develop, submit, and publish journal articles.
5. M.A. students should be able to complete their degrees within 2 years, and Ph.D. students should be able to complete their degrees within 5 years.
6. Graduating M.A. and Ph.D. students should be able to secure employment, or to pursue additional education, that will aid them in developing professional careers.

### Process for Assessing Student Learning Outcomes

#### 1. Timeline:

Assessment data regarding M.A. thesis defenses, M.A. portfolio projects, Ph.D. candidacy exams, and Ph.D. dissertation defenses are collected and analyzed throughout the year as the exams, portfolio projects, and defenses are scheduled. Data regarding M.A. and Ph.D. students' conference presentations and journal publications are collected and analyzed at the end of each year, as is information about the placement of graduating students into jobs and new degree programs. At the end of each year, an academic review report is also generated for, and sent to, each student. Additionally, in conjunction with university assessment efforts, an external committee evaluates the M.A. and Ph.D. programs every five years.

#### 2. Means of Assessment:

An advisory committee of three faculty members assesses the portfolio project developed by each M.A. student who chooses the program's portfolio option.

An advisory committee of three faculty members assesses the thesis prospectus of each M.A. student who chooses the program's thesis option, and a thesis committee of three faculty members assesses the student's performance at his or her thesis defense.

An advisory committee of three faculty members assesses each Ph.D. student's knowledge of a broad area of specialization during the student's written candidacy exam.

An advisory committee of three faculty members assesses each Ph.D. student's knowledge of a narrow area of specialization, typically the area to be pursued by the student in his or her dissertation research, during the student's oral candidacy exam.

A dissertation committee of three faculty members assesses each Ph.D. student's performance at the student's dissertation defense.

The Director of Graduate Studies (DGS) and Assistant Director of Graduate Studies (ADGS) collect and analyze assessment data about M.A. and Ph.D. students' conference presentations and journal publications.

The DGS and ADGS collect and analyze assessment data about the placement of graduating M.A. and Ph.D. students into jobs and new degree programs.

In preparing students' academic review reports, the DGS and ADGS assess each student's overall progress in completing program requirements (coursework in English studies, coursework and proficiency exams in foreign languages, portfolio projects and thesis defenses for M.A. students, candidacy exams and dissertation defenses for Ph.D. students). Each academic review report indicates whether a student is making satisfactory progress and, if not, what the student should do to make better progress, and the report is sent to the student as well as to the dean of the Graduate School. Reasons for a graduate student being marked as making unsatisfactory progress include their currently (at the time of the report) having an incomplete ("I") grade on their course work or being past their time to degree (six years for M.A. students and seven years for Ph.D. students).

Every five years, in conjunction with university assessment efforts, an external committee of three faculty members from English departments at other institutions evaluates the M.A. and Ph.D. programs and submits an assessment report to the department chair college dean.

### 3. Using and Reporting Results:

A graduate reform committee considers the assessment results in evaluating and revising the requirements and curricula for the M.A. and Ph.D. programs, and a graduate professionalization committee considers the results in planning and implementing professionalization activities for students in the programs. The department chair takes the results into consideration when scheduling and assigning graduate classes, and the DGS and ADGS use the results to improve their strategies for advising current students and for disseminating information about the M.A. and Ph.D. programs to current and prospective students. The DGS and ADGS are scheduled to submit a report on the program assessment findings and their applications to the department chair, college dean, and university provost by the end of May, 2020.