

**Annual Academic Assessment Report  
M.A. and Ph.D. Programs in English  
2024-2025**

**Introduction of Graduate Programs in English**

*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: Cultural Studies; Environmental Literature, Writing, and Culture; Ethnic and Regional Literature; Gender Studies; Medieval Literature; Religion and Literature; and Rhetoric and Composition. (Note: The Environmental and Religion area were added more recently, and around 2022 we cut out two original areas of specialization, Comparative Literature and Modern American Literature due to few students' focusing on those.) 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 2013 through the Spring of 2025, a total of 137 students graduated with an M.A. in English. Since we implemented the two-concentration and portfolio option (in lieu of the comprehensive exam option) and started having M.A. students graduate within the revised program structure (starting in 2018), our graduation rates remain at high 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 their 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 (like podcasts) for their dissertation projects that are still rigorous but more closely aligned with students’ individual professional interests.

From 2013 through the Spring of 2025, a total of 71 students graduated with a Ph.D. in English.

About ten years ago, our program tended to admit some doctoral students with doctoral fellowships (provided through the Graduate School) and teaching assistantships, and to admit some doctoral students with only teaching assistantships. Now, we do not admit full-time Ph.D. students unless we can arrange for each of them to receive both a doctoral fellowship and a teaching assistantship, providing all of our English doctoral students with significant 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 while they are still receiving some form of funding.

### **Results of Analysis of Assessment of Student Learning Outcomes for the 2023-2024 Academic Year**

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 of 2025.)

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

During the last eleven years (2013 through Spring 2025), 137 M.A. students and 71 Ph.D. students completed their programs and graduated. Since 2018, when students could begin completing their programs with the portfolio option, 87 M.A. students have graduated, with 71 students completing their programs through the portfolio option (requiring them to take a Portfolio Workshop course) and 16 students completing their programs through the thesis 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. 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 from 2018 through Summer 2024 (25 students) was 5 years + 2 semesters (17 semesters total), and the average time to degree for M.A. students who graduated during this same time (76 students) was between 2 years and 2 years + one semester (6.13 semesters total). Overall, the average times to degree for students completing the M.A. and Ph.D. programs indicate that both programs are achieving Program Goal 3 and are also close to achieving Student Learning Outcome 5.

## **2. Graduate Student Honors and Alumni Placement**

For the past decade, students in the English M.A. and Ph.D. programs have regularly given talks and published scholarship on a diverse group of authors and diverse literary, cultural, linguistic, and theoretical areas. To review these particular accomplishments, please visit this page: <https://english.uark.edu/graduate/ma-phd-english/awards-publications-and-presentations.php>. 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 decade of 2014-2024 also have had the high quality of their scholarship and their serious dedication to the discipline honored in the following ways. Honors that they have received outside of the Department of English include

- 10 James J. Hudson Doctoral Fellowships (awarded by the Graduate School)
- 6 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
- 1 student was accepted 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 was selected to participate in the Rhetoric Society of America's Project in Power, Place, and Publics
- 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; member of the Graduate Student Committee for the Medieval Academy of America), and Assistant Program Chair of the 2022 Arkansas Philological Association Conference.
- 1 Leading with Brilliance Award by the University of Arkansas's Academic Advising Council (This student held a full-time position as an academic advisor.)
- 1 Excellence in Research Award from the Graduate-Professional Student Congress (University of Arkansas)
- 1 Humanities without Walls Pre-Doctoral Workshop Fellow
- 1 student's middle-grade novel (written and published before student began graduate study at the U of A) named one of NPR's "Best Books of 2020" (during the student's first year of graduate study at the U of A)
- Bridge Fellowship awarded 2 different times to the same student by the Gender Studies Program at the University of Arkansas
- 1 SEC Emerging Scholars Career Preparation Workshop Participant (workshop Hosted by LSU)
- 1 student awarded the Tiffany Marcantonio Research Grant, Graduate Professional Student Congress, University of Arkansas
- 1 student selected to be a guest speaker at the 2022 McGraw Hill Composition Course Leaders Symposium, Phoenix, AZ (unable to attend due to COVID)
- 2 students were accepted into the University of New Mexico's Summer Seminar on Paleography (Institute for Medieval Studies), supported by an outside fellowship (CARA) from [The Medieval Academy of America](#)
- 1 student was appointed to be the Assistant Program Chair of the 2022 Arkansas Philological Association Conference
- 1 student was accepted to the [PCA Summer Research Institute at Bowling Green State University](#)
- 1 student (in their role as graduate recruitment coordinator at another institution) received the Rising Star Award from the Arkansas Council for Women in Higher Education

- 1 student received the Linda K. Overstreet Scholarship through the Division of Student Affairs at the University of Arkansas
- 1 student received the Margaret J. Hoffman Scholarship through the Division of Student Affairs at the University of Arkansas

From 2013 to 2024, we also have had 39 incoming doctoral students awarded Doctoral Academy Fellowships by the Graduate School and 14 incoming doctoral students awarded Distinguished Doctoral Fellowships by the Graduate School.

**Students completing the M.A. program** during the between the spring of 2007 and 2024 have gone on to pursue a range of programs and positions after graduation.

- At least 60 of our M.A. graduates have been accepted to or gone on to start Ph.D. programs (the University of Arkansas, Brandeis University, 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, Arizona State University, University of Arizona (Tucson), and the University of Utah).
- One started law school at the University of Arkansas the fall of 2019. One started law school at the University of Michigan Law School in 2023, and another started law school at S.J. Quinney College of Law in Salt Lake City in 2023.
- One completed a second M.A. at Auburn University.
- One M.A. graduate attended 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 23 of them have gone on or are about 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:

- Abilene Christian University (Tenure-Track Position)
- ACGME in Chicago, IL (Accreditation Standards Senior Administrator)
- AcreTrader (Vice President of Human Resources)
- 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)
- Dove Science Academy High School in Oklahoma City, OK (English teacher)
- Drew Central High School in Monticello, AR (English teacher)
- 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)
- ERS Corp. (Proposal Coordinator)
- Fayetteville High School (English Teacher)
- Graduate School and International Education at the University of Arkansas (Compliance Officer)
- Gravette High School (English Teacher)
- Greystone Communities (Corporate Communications Director)
- Haas Hall Academy in Bentonville, AR (English Teacher)
- Heifer International (Manager of Donor Engagement)
- Helpful (Assigning Editor)
- Hellstern Middle School (7th Grade English Language Arts Teacher)
- Hemingway-Pfeiffer Museum and Educational Center (Director)

- Hirsh Precision Products Inc. in CO (Full-Time Marketing Position)
- 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)
- J.B. Hunt Transport, Inc. (Associate Inclusion Partner)
- J.B. Hunt Transport, Inc. (Inclusion Business Partner)
- J.B. Hunt Transport, Inc. (Director of Inclusion Strategy)
- JJ's Beer Garden & Brewing Co. (Trivia Host and Creator)
- KFSM 5News in Fayetteville, AR
- Kroger in Nashville, TN (Associate Communications and Engagement Manager)
- KUAF (Membership Director)
- Legacy Academy in Branson, MO (Teacher)
- Legal Aid of Arkansas (Communications Specialist)
- 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)
- Planstin (Benefits Administration Co. in UT) (Communications Specialist)
- Planstin (Benefits Administration Co. in UT) (Brand Management Lead)
- 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 (Permanent Registrar)
- 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 - Arkansas Archeological Survey Office (Chief Financial Officer)
- University of Arkansas Career Development Center (Employer Relations Coordinator)
- University of Arkansas College of Education and Health Professions (Career Counselor)
- University of Arkansas Division of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion / IDEALS Institute (Project/Program Specialist)
- University of Arkansas New Student & Family Programs (Officer Manager)
- University of Arkansas Office of the Provost (HEI Coordinator)
- University of Arkansas Press (Editorial Assistant)
- University of Arkansas Press (Editorial Assistant to the Editor-in-Chief)
- University of Arkansas, Business Services (Travel Administrator)
- University of Arkansas Writing Studio (Coordinator)
- University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences (Research Assistant)
- 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 (Senior Manager II, 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 - 2 of our M.A. alumni have held this position)
- Walton College Honors Program (Academic Adviser and Scholarship Coordinator)
- Washington Junior High School (English Teacher)
- Wayne State University (Digital Publishing Librarian)
- WhyteSpyder (Strategic Initiatives Associate)

Note: For a number of our M.A. alumni who graduated between 2007 and 2024, we have not 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.

Between 2007 and 2024, **30 of our Ph.D. alumni** have been hired for and/or promoted to assistant professor, associate professor, or professor 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) – associate professor
- Appalachian State (NC) – associate professor, assistant chair of department and director of comp/rhet program
- Austin Peay State University - assistant professor of English
- Boise State University (ID) – associate professor
- Butler Community College (KS) – professor, OER coordinator
- Cottey College (MO) – writing center director and assistant professor
- East West University (Bangladesh) – associate professor and Dean, Faculty of Liberal Arts and Social Sciences
- Ferum College (VA) - associate professor
- Georgia Military College (GA) – professor
- Howard Payne University (TX) – assistant professor
- Indiana Wesleyan University in Marion, Indiana - assistant professor
- Lander University (SC) – associate professor
- Missouri State University – associate professor, Assistant Director of Composition
- Oklahoma Baptist University - associate professor
- San Jose State University – assistant professor
- Selcuk University (Turkey) – assistant professor
- Texas A&M – associate professor
- University of Arkansas-Fort Smith – 2 professors
- University of Central Oklahoma – assistant professor
- University of Cincinnati in the Professional Writing Track, Dept. of English – Assistant Professor – Educator

- 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) – 2 associate professors
- University of Texas at Arlington - assistant professor
- Volunteer State Community College (TN) – assistant professor
- Wayne State College - assistant professor
- West Virginia University – associate professor
- Westfield State University (MA) – associate professor
- Williams Baptist College (AR) – assistant professor
- Yarmouk University (Jordan) – 1 associate professor and 1 assistant professor

In addition, our Ph.D. alumni have been hired for non-tenure-track or secondary education positions like the following (note that alumni may not be still holding these positions and one alum may have held more than one position):

- 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
- Kamehameha Schools, Hawai'i – secondary school teacher
- LISA Academy (AR) – English department chair
- Louisiana State University - senior 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
- Shawnee State University (OH) - full-time instructor of English
- University of Albany – lecturers (2)
- University of Arkansas, Fayetteville, Department of English – multiple instructors, a teaching assistant professor, an asst. dir. of graduate program
- University of Arkansas-Fort Smith – adjunct English faculty
- University of New York in Prague
- University of Oklahoma in the First-Year Composition Department – Assistant Teaching Professor (starting Fall of 2024)

- Western Governors University (online, I believe) – writing center non-tenure-track faculty

Finally, between 2007 and 2024, our Ph.D. alumni have been hired for nonteaching, administrative, or other positions such as the following (note that alumni may not be still holding these positions and one alum may have held more than one position):

- Educational Testing Service - essay rater
- Georgia State University – Director of Advising
- Harper Collins Christian – acquisitions editor
- Reese & Co. Real Estate – broker
- Interrobang (AR) – founder and lead storyteller
- Ozarks Technical Community College (MO) - campus president - Table Rock / Vice Chancellor
- Southern New Hampshire University - academic advisor
- Transportation Security Administration (VA) – writer/editor
- University Information Technology Services (University of Arkansas, Fayetteville) – senior virtualization engineer
- University of Arkansas, Enrollment Services - Associate Dean of Communications and Information
- University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences - Research Writer

Note: For a number of our Ph.D. alumni who graduated in the last between 2007 and 2024, 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 2013**

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.

### **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 2013 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 timely fashion.

- In the first graduating 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 graduating 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.
- In the third graduating class of M.A. students offered this option, **5 out of 6** chose the portfolio option, graduating in the spring of 2020 (note that 4 of those students completed their degree program in 5 semesters, graduating in the spring of 2020, and 1 student completed their degree program in 8 semesters).
- In the fourth graduating class of M.A. students offered this option, **6 out of 7** chose the portfolio option and completed the M.A. degree in 5 semesters, graduating in 2021.
- In the fifth class of M.A. students offered this option, **14 out of 15** chose the portfolio option and completed the M.A. degree in 5 semesters, graduating in 2022.
- In the sixth class of M.A. students offered this option, **9 out of 10** chose the portfolio option and completed the M.A. degree in 5 semesters, graduating in 2023.
- In the seventh class of M.A. students offered this option (note that one student transferred in from another program), **12 out of 13** chose the portfolio option and completed the M.A. degree in 5 semesters, graduating in 2024.
- In the eighth class of M.A. students, out of those that have not graduated, **10 out of 11** chose the portfolio option and completed the M.A. degree in 5 semesters, graduating in

2025.

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

- **Introduction to Graduate Studies** (previously taught each fall by Sean Dempsey; it has been taught by Lisa Hinrichsen since the fall of 2022)
- **Job Market Workshop: Academic, Alt-Ac, Post-Ac** (taught every other year by Lissette Szwydky)

We are also now offering a course (ENGL 5193: Graduate Internship in English) through which the department can facilitate graduate internships in a wide range of areas both on and off campus. Internship providers have so far included:

- start-up companies (e.g., Finding NWA, Prose Creative)
- city offices (e.g., the City of Fayetteville's Sustainability Department)
- local industry (e.g., J.B. Hunt)
- non-profits (e.g., Ozark Natural Science Center, Writer's Colony at Dairy Hollow, Magdalene Serenity House, Marshallese Educational Initiative, Friends Congregational Church)
- local schools—esp. those that do not require certified teachers (e.g., Arkansas Arts Academy)
- local independent bookstores (e.g., Two Friends)
- other offices on campus (e.g., Spring International Language Center, Special Collections in the library, Fulbright College Communications Team, Business Communication Lab, Writing Studio at the Student Success Center, Indigenous Food and Agriculture Initiative)
- faculty (e.g., support of faculty in developing Cherokee Language course on the U of A campus)
- publishers (UA Press, Sley House Publishing)

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 school year.

Four of our M.A. students participated in the graduate internship course in the 2020-2021 school year.

Five of our M.A. students and two of our Ph.D. students participated in the graduate internship course in the 2021-2022 school year.

Two of our M.A. students participated in the graduate internship course in the 2022-2023 school year.

Four of our M.A. students and one of our Ph.D. students participated in the graduate internship course in the 2023-2024 school year.

Three of our M.A. students participated in the graduate internship course in the 2024-2025 school year (through Spring 2025)

Furthermore, the English graduate advisors and others have considered 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 and advising activities offered to our graduate students in the 2024-2025 academic year included the following:

**Extracurricular Professionalization and Advising Events that Took Place Fall 2024:**

- **Meeting with Incoming Ph.D. Students to Go Over Program Requirements and Timeline** - Fri., Sept. 13, 2024 @ 4 p.m.
- **Meeting with Incoming M.A. Students to Go Over Program Requirements and Timeline** - Fri., Sept. 20, 2024 @ 4 p.m.
- **Speaker Panel: "Inclusive Excellence and Pedagogy" (overlapping with Composition Pedagogy)** - Tues., Sept. 17, 2024 @ 2 p.m.
- **Speaker Panel: "English Internship" (overlapping with Intro to Graduate Studies)** - Tues., Oct. 8, 2024 @ 11:00 a.m.
- **Meeting with Ph.D. Students to Discuss Professor Szwydky's Job Market Course** - Thurs., Oct. 3, 2024 @ 5 p.m.
- **Speaker Panel (with alumni): "Career Diversity" (overlapping with Intro to Graduate Studies)** - Tues., Nov. 12, 2024 @ 11:00 a.m.

**Extracurricular Professionalization and Advising Events that Took Place Spring 2025:**

- Meeting with Dr. Hinrichsen, Dr. McIntyre, and Dr. Marren to Discuss Academic Article Publication Process (March 12, 2025)
- Meeting with M.A. Students re: Thesis vs. Portfolio Option (March 13, 2025)

- Meeting with 1st- and 2nd-Year Ph.D. Students to Discuss Candidacy Exam Preparation (March 20, 2025)
- Virtual Meeting with M.A. Students to Discuss Preparing to Apply to Doctoral Programs (April 29, 2025)

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, 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 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 a fairly regular basis (approximately every 2 years).

To encourage recruitment to our English M.A. and Ph.D. programs, the Director and Assistant Director of Graduate Studies regularly conduct virtual or face-to-face recruitment talks, visits, and events. Also to encourage recruitment, the Director of Graduate Studies contacts admitted English M.A. and English Ph.D. students in the spring to discuss the programs with them. As a result, we feel, the numbers of students we have admitted and who are planning to attend our graduate programs to begin fall of 2025 continue to be strong: 14 incoming M.A. students and 4 incoming doctoral students.

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. Two Distinguished Doctoral Fellows and two Doctoral Academy Fellows will be starting our program in Fall 2025. We also seek to cultivate strategic partnerships with on-campus offices and nearby industries, unique to the Northwest Arkansas area, that could lead to further internship opportunities 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 awards, publications, internships, and 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.

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**Academic Assessment Plan**  
**M.A. and Ph.D. Programs in English**  
**Originally Submitted Spring 2015 / Updated May 2025**

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-page portfolio of professional documents.
2. Ph.D. students should be able to write and defend an original dissertation of 150-250 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 (the latter usually involving the student's defense of their dissertation prospectus).
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 regularly, 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 seven 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. (In other words, the oral candidacy exam usually takes the form of a dissertation prospectus defense.)

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, having a GPA that has dropped below the program's minimum, or being past their time to degree (six years for M.A. students and seven years for Ph.D. students).

Every seven 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, as well as other department programs, and submits an assessment report to the department chair college dean. One review took place in 2013, and another review took place 2020-2021.

### 3. Using and Reporting Results:

In the past, a graduate reform committee has considered program review results in evaluating and revising the requirements and curricula for the English M.A. and Ph.D. programs, and a graduate professionalization committee as well as the Director and Assistant Director of the Graduate Program in English have considered the results in planning and implementing professionalization activities for students in those programs. More recently, the department's associate chair has taken the results (along with the specific research needs and interests of current graduate students) into consideration when scheduling and assigning graduate classes, and the DGS and ADGS have also used 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.