Department of English

Degrees Offered

- Master of Arts
- Master of Arts in Professional Writing and Editing
- Master of Fine Arts
- Doctor of Philosophy

Nature of the Program

MASTER OF ARTS

The Master of Arts (M.A.) in English is a two-year program designed for students who have shown an aptitude for sustained literary study and who desire to pursue a more intensive and extensive academic training. The M.A. program has five primary goals: (1) to extend the student's knowledge of the cultural, linguistic, and literary heritage of Great Britain, America, and other English-speaking lands, (2) to introduce students to the critical and professional discourses of academics in literary and linguistic studies, (3) to develop the student's research, writing, and analytical skills, which are necessary for professional success, (4) to provide professional training to prepare students to teach English at the post-secondary level, and (5) to counsel students to craft their program of study to meet their professional and personal needs.

The M.A. program meets these goals by providing a rotation of courses in literature, linguistics, theory, and pedagogy that require extensive reading, writing, research, and oral presentations. With small classes, students receive individual attention from the faculty, which facilitates student progress. M.A. students are eligible for teaching assistantships within the English Department, which provides training in pedagogy.

The knowledge and skills that students acquire in the M.A. program provide the requisite foundation to pursue doctoral work in English, with the ultimate goal of becoming a professional scholar and academic at a post-secondary institution. The academic training provided by the M.A. also is applicable for careers in secondary education, professional writing, and editing.

MASTER OF ARTS IN PROFESSIONAL WRITING AND EDITING

The M.A. in Professional Writing and Editing is a thirty-hour degree that combines theories of writing with practice in real-world writing situations. Students will study professional writing theory, the history of rhetoric, editing, rhetorical analysis, new modes of digital composition, and writing ethics. This degree prepares students for a variety of career options, including technical writing and editing, project management, writing consulting, writing instruction, and advanced graduate study in rhetoric and composition. The degree is designed for both newly-graduated undergraduates and working adults who want more training in writing and editing.

MASTER OF FINE ARTS

The Master of Fine Arts in creative writing is a three-year academic/studio program that combines an apprenticeship to the craft with more traditionally academic elements. This approach seeks to train students in ways that reflect the realities of the writer/artist's evolving role in the academy. Because writers, when hired to teach, are often asked to handle a variety of courses beyond the creative writing workshop, the academic/studio format requires students to take literature and pedagogy courses in addition to writing workshops.

Thus, the M.F.A. is both an academic and a professional degree. As part of WVU's comprehensive Center for Writing Excellence, this degree allows students to prepare for careers in teaching or professional writing/editing. Our objective is to nurture and mentor the many writers in the region seeking professional training. We also intend to attract student writers from all over the country to West Virginia for the opportunity to live and write in this culturally-rich state and to work with our faculty. The ultimate goal is to produce writers who will publish literature and contribute to the culture. A secondary goal is to offer practical skills and opportunities to writers interested in pursuing writing-related professions.

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

The doctoral program in English offers opportunities for specialization in literary studies, cultural studies, or composition and rhetoric. The program has five goals: (1) to build upon the broad foundations of the M.A. degree's focus on the cultural, linguistic, and literary heritage of Britain, America, and other English-speaking lands, (2) to help students to develop fluency in the critical discourses of the profession, (3) to help students to develop professional competency in three fields of research, as dictated by the Examination for Formal Admission to Candidacy, (4) to help students to develop the research, writing, and analytical skills necessary for professional success, and (5) to provide professional training and counseling to prepare graduates to teach English professionally on the post-secondary level.

These goals are met by the various features of our program, which include coursework, examinations, and both formal and informal instruction and advising regarding professional teaching and research responsibilities. Doctoral study culminates in the writing of the dissertation, which is designed to contribute to the critical and/or theoretical discussion in its field and to prepare the doctoral candidate for further research and publication as a professional scholar and teacher.

Publications

Calliope, a publication of WVU student writing, is sponsored by the Department of English and Sigma Tau Delta, the English Honorary Society.

Hellbender Magazine is a literary magazine edited by MFA students and the Council of Writers of the West Virginia University MFA program.

FACULTY

CHAIR

- Brian Ballentine - Ph.D. (Case Western Reserve University)

ASSISTANT CHAIR

- Christine Hoffmann - Ph.D. (University of Arkansas)

M.A. & PH.D. PROGRAM SUPERVISOR

- Adam Komisaruk - Ph.D. (University of California, Los Angeles)

M.F.A. PROGRAM SUPERVISOR

- Mark Brazaitis - M.F.A. (Bowling Green State University)

M.A. P.W.E. PROGRAM SUPERVISOR

- Brian Ballentine - Ph.D. (Case Western Reserve University)

PROFESSORS

- Brian Ballentine - Ph.D. (Case Western Reserve University)
  Technical and professional communication, Rhetoric
- Mark Brazaitis - M.F.A. (Bowling Green State University)
  Creative Writing: Fiction
- Lara Farina - Ph.D. (Fordham University)
  Medieval Literature and Culture, Gender Studies
- Catherine Gouge - Ph.D. (West Virginia University)
  Professional writing, Medical rhetoric
- Adam Komisaruk - Ph.D. (University of California, Los Angeles)
  Romanticism and 18th-century British Literature
- Kathleen O'Hearn Ryan - Ph.D. (University of Massachusetts-Amherst)
  Eberly Family Professor of Outstanding Teaching, 20th-century American Literature
- Mary Ann Samyn - M.F.A. (University of Virginia)
  Creative Writing: Poetry
- Natalie Singh-Corcoran - Ph.D. (University of Arizona)
  Writing Center Theory and Practice, Writing Program Administration, Writing Assessment
- Timothy Sweet - Ph.D. (University of Minnesota)
  Eberly Family Distinguished Professor of American Literature, American Studies (17th-19th Century), Literature and Environment, Native American Literature

ASSOCIATE PROFESSORS

- Erin Brock Carlson - Ph.D. (Purdue University)
  Professional Writing and Editing
- Rose Casey - Ph.D. (Cornell University)
  Modern British Literature
- Anna Shannon Elfenbein - Ph.D. (University of Nebraska)
  American Literature, Women's Studies, Film
- Christine Hoffmann - Ph.D. (University of Arkansas)
  Early Modern British Studies
- Christa Parravani - M.F.A. (Rutgers University)
  Creative Writing: Non-fiction
- Jennifer Sano-Francini - Ph.D. (Michigan State University)
  Rhetoric and Writing

- David Stewart - Ph.D. (Oxford University)
  Associate Vice President for International Outreach. British Romanticism, Literary Theory
- Lisa Weihman - Ph.D. (New York University)
  19th and 20th-century British and Irish Literature and Culture

ASSISTANT PROFESSORS

- Ben Bascom - Ph.D. (University of Illinois - Urbana Champaign
  Early and Nineteenth-Century American Literature and Queer Studies
- Brian Broome - M.F.A. (University of Pittsburgh)
  Creative Writing: Non-fiction
- Jenny Johnson - M.F.A. (Warren Wilson College)
  Creative Writing: Poetry
- Sarah Morris - Ph.D. (University of Maryland)
  human science phenomenology, embodiment, writing process, and student-centered teaching
- Amanda Berardi Tennant - Ph.D. (Carnegie Mellon University)
  Composition and rhetoric
- Mitch Therieau - Ph.D. (Stanford University)
  Contemporary literature, material culture, and aesthetic theory
- Jill Woods - Ph.D. (West Virginia University)
  Business and technical writing
- Omar Yacoub - Ph.D. (Indiana University of Pennsylvania)
  Composition and Applied Linguistics

PROFESSORS EMERITI

- Gail Galloway Adams - M.A. (University of Texas)
- Rudolph Almasy - Ph.D. (University of Minnesota)
- Gwen Bergner - Ph.D. (Princeton University)
- Laura Brady - Ph.D. (University of Minnesota)
- Cari Carpenter
- Patrick Conner - Ph.D. (University of Maryland)
- Marilyn Francus - Ph.D. (Columbia University)
- Michael Germana
- Rosemary Hathaway - Ph.D. (The Ohio State University)
- Kirk Hazen - Ph.D. University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill
- Ellesa High - Ph.D. (University of Ohio)
- Iris M. Jennings
- Elizabeth Juckett - Ph.D. (University of Pennsylvania)
- John Lamb - Ph.D. (New York University)
- Byron Nelson - Ph.D. (University of Wisconsin)
- Carolyn Nelson - Ph.D. (University of Wisconsin)
- Kevin Oderman - Ph.D. (University California, Santa Barbara)
- Ethel Morgan Smith - M.A. (Hollins College)

Admissions for 2027-2028

The Department of English admits students to the M.A. in English, the M.A. in Professional Writing and Editing, the M.F.A. in Creative Writing, and the Ph.D. in English. Admission requirements for each program are described below.

The GRE is not required for admission to any of the programs.

M.A. IN ENGLISH

In addition to the university admission requirements (http://catalog.wvu.edu/graduate/graduateeducationatwestvirginiauniversity/#classificationstext), prospective candidates for the degree of Master of Arts are expected to have completed work comparable to that required for the department's undergraduate degree in English (http://catalog.wvu.edu/undergraduate/eberlycollegeofartsandsciences/englishlanguageandliterature/#majortext). Applicants typically have an undergraduate GPA of 3.5 or above and strong recommendations from instructors.

M.A. IN PROFESSIONAL WRITING AND EDITING (PWE)

In addition to the university admission requirements (http://catalog.wvu.edu/graduate/graduateeducationatwestvirginiauniversity/#classificationstext), prospective candidates for admission are expected to have completed an undergraduate degree in English or an allied field with a record distinctly above average or to have at least two years' work experience in writing and editing. The program recognizes, however, that not all potentially excellent graduate students fit this profile and welcomes applications from individuals who can make a strong case that they will succeed.

M.F.A. IN CREATIVE WRITING

In addition to the university admission requirements (http://catalog.wvu.edu/graduate/graduateeducationatwestvirginiauniversity/#classificationstext), prospective candidates for the degree of master of fine arts are normally expected to have completed a bachelor's degree in English. However, the program welcomes applicants from any field of study. Admission to the program is based primarily on the excellence of a substantial writing sample in fiction, nonfiction, or poetry.

PH.D. IN ENGLISH

In addition to the university admission requirements (http://catalog.wvu.edu/graduate/graduateeducationatwestvirginiauniversity/#classificationstext), applicants for admission to the program are generally expected to have completed an M.A. in English or a related field. Students who have completed only a B.A. in English, however, may apply for direct admission to the Ph.D. program. Direct admission is highly selective and limited to exceptionally qualified students with superior standing in their bachelor's degree. Students of this caliber are generally expected to have a cumulative GPA of 3.75 or higher.

List of Admission Requirements for all programs:

- See the steps to apply for admissions and access the application Admissions How to Apply website (https://graduateadmissions.wvu.edu/how-to-apply/).
- Transcripts from all institutions attended.
- Three letters of recommendation, written by people in a position to evaluate the applicant's academic strengths.
- Statement of purpose (personal statement) appropriate to the program of application, as described below.
    - M.A. in English: The personal statement (2-3 pages) should outline the applicant's academic and professional goals.
    - M.A. in PWE: The statement (2-3 pages) should outline the applicant's interests and motivations for graduate work in PWE which highlights undergraduate achievements and/or prior experience with writing and editing, speaks to interests in writing and composition instruction as well as any prior teaching-related experience, and showcases the promise for success in graduate studies.
    - M.F.A. in Creative Writing: The personal statement (2-5 pages) should outline the applicant's background, literary and other influences, and the reasons for pursuing graduate study.
    - Ph.D.: The personal statement should outline the applicant's academic and professional goals.
- Writing sample appropriate to the program of application, see below.
    - M.A. in English: A 10–15-page essay demonstrating strong skills in literary or cultural analysis is required.
    - M.A. in PWE: A writing sample that consists of a portfolio of written work is required (10-15 pages).
    - M.F.A. in Creative Writing: A substantial writing sample in fiction, nonfiction, or poetry (10-20 pages of poetry; 20-30 pages of prose) is required.
    - Ph.D.: A 15–20 page analytic essay demonstrating research skills in literary/cultural studies or writing studies, awareness of scholarly subfields, and persuasive argument is required.

International Applicants:

- See the steps to apply for admissions and access the application Admissions How to Apply website (https://graduateadmissions.wvu.edu/how-to-apply/).
- International applicants should view additional requirements on the International Student Admission page (http://catalog.wvu.edu/graduate/graduateeducationatwestvirginiauniversity/#internationaltext) and the Admissions for International applicants page (https://graduateadmissions.wvu.edu/information-for/international-students/).
- Language proficiency is required in order to hold a graduate teaching assistantship. More information can be found on the English Proficiency for GTAs (https://elli.wvu.edu/testing-resources/english-proficiency-gtas/) webpage.

Application Deadlines:

- The graduate programs in English only admit for the Fall semester.
- The priority review deadline for the M.A. and Ph.D. is January 5th.
- The priority review deadline for the M.A. in Professional Writing and Editing is January 15th.
- The priority review deadline for the M.F.A. is January 15th.
- Completed applications for admission submitted after the deadline may be reviewed on a space-available basis.
- Exceptional applicants for the Doctoral Program may be nominated by the department of English for competitive University Fellowships. Qualified applicants will be notified if they are nominated. More information on WVU fellowships can be found on the Graduate Education and Life Fellowship page (https://graduateeducation.wvu.edu/finances/fellowships/).

Certain application requirements may be waived based on a preliminary review of an application by the program.

M.A. Major Code: 1442

M.A. in Professional Writing and Editing Major Code: 1481

M.F.A. Major Code: 1486

Ph.D. Major Code: 1442

For specific information on the following program, please see the link to the right:

- English, M.A.

For specific information on the following program, please see the link to the right:

- **Professional Writing and Editing**, M.A.

For specific information on the following program, please see the link to the right:

- **English**, M.F.A.

For specific information on the following program, please see the link to the right:

- **English**, Ph.D.

Degree Progress

The department of English requires the following milestones for all students. According to the graduate catalog, students will receive a yearly evaluation (http://catalog.wvu.edu/graduate/advisingcoursesdegrees/advising_and_evaluation/#Yearly_Evaluation). Students who are either not making adequate degree progress or who are failing to uphold professional standards may receive notice of probation, suspension or dismissal (http://catalog.wvu.edu/graduate/enrollmentandregistration/#probationsuspensiontext). Students may be notified of academic consequences outside of routine evaluation processes if an issue must be addressed immediately.

Each year, no later than the first day of classes of the Fall semester, the department will distribute an updated version of the graduate handbook (https://english.wvu.edu/students/graduate-students/).

M.A.

Timely Progress

- By the end of the Fall semester of year 1, the student should have completed ENGL 609.
- By the end of year 2, the student should have completed all coursework and, if writing a thesis, defended it successfully.

Satisfactory Progress

- All courses must be completed with a grade of "B" or better.
- All university regulations concerning the thesis (http://catalog.wvu.edu/graduate/advisingcoursesdegrees/degree_regulations/#Theses_Dissertations), if the student is writing one, must be followed.

M.A. IN PWE

Graduation Requirement: Students have the option of completing the M.A. in Professional Writing and Editing through either (1) completing a graduate level internship, or (2) researching, writing, and defending a thesis.

Internship (3 hours): Students who choose the internship option will work for a local or regional company, program, or organization for 8-10 hours a week for 12-15 weeks. Students will engage in a variety of supervised writing tasks, including research, editing, proofreading, project management, and

content development. At the end of the internship period, students will submit a portfolio to the Professional Writing Coordinator that documents and reflects on their internship experience.

Critical Thesis (3-6 hours): The M.A. thesis is a work of scholarship in the form of an extended research paper (usually 50-75 pages) on a topic in the field. The thesis is directed by a regular member of the graduate faculty and two additional committee members. Students must satisfactorily defend their completed projects before their committees and anyone else who wishes to attend. All theses must be filed electronically.

M.F.A.

- By the end of year 1, students should have completed ENGL 609 and at least one graduate writing workshop in their genre.
- By the end of year 2, students should have taken at least 3 graduate writing workshops and selected their thesis adviser and committee members.
- By the end of year 3, students should have defended their thesis and completed degree requirements.

PH.D.

Timely Progress

- By the end of year 1, the student should have begun preparations for the portfolio exam.
- By the end of year 2, the student should have passed the portfolio exam and completed all coursework.
- By the end of year 3, the student should have passed the booklist exam.
- By the end of year 4, the student should have had the dissertation prospectus approved and begun the dissertation.
- By the end of year 5, the student should have completed and defended the dissertation.

Satisfactory Progress

- All courses must be completed with a grade of "B" or better.
- Passage of all exams requires the unanimous consent of the respective committees.
- All university regulations concerning the dissertation (http://catalog.wvu.edu/graduate/advisingcoursesdegrees/degree_regulations/#Theses_Dissertations) must be followed.