



Thesis and Comprehensive Exams  
Master of Arts in English Program  
Department of Literature and Language

The following provides basic information about the thesis and comprehensive exams:

1. Students wishing to complete a thesis as part of the MA in English program will write a formal proposal of 1,250-1,800 words (4-6 pages) early in the semester preceding that in which they intend to enroll for thesis credit. Each student will submit this proposal to a potential committee chair by 1 October for a thesis to be written in spring semester and by 1 March for a thesis to be written in fall semester. The potential committee chair may accept the proposal, decline it, or ask for revisions. If revisions are required, the revised proposal must be approved by 1 November for a thesis to be written in spring semester and by 1 April for a thesis to be written in fall semester. Students with approved proposals will set further deadlines in consultation with their respective committee chairs and in agreement with deadlines preset by the School of Graduate Studies.
2. Students do not have the option to write a creative thesis as part of the Master of Arts in English program.
3. The formal extent of a thesis written for the Master of Arts in English degree in the Department of Literature and Language is normally not less than 12,500 words and not more than 25,000, excluding Works Cited/Bibliography and index (if present). Variations to these word counts are to be determined and approved by the student's thesis committee chair.
4. Comprehensive Exams
  - **Non-thesis students** will be tested in four areas of the comprehensive exams (with graduation contingent upon passing in all four testing areas).
  - **Non-thesis students** must receive "distinction" in three out of four examination areas in order to be designated as passing their exams with "distinction."
  - **Non-thesis students** may petition to take one special topics section as part of their comprehensive exams; this section must be broad in focus and will be approved only when the topic in question does not already fall under the umbrella of an established section of the exam reading list.
  - **Thesis students** are allowed to test in only two areas of the comprehensive exams (with graduation contingent upon passing in both testing areas and successfully completing and defending the thesis).
  - **Thesis students** testing in only two areas must receive a score of "distinction" in both areas in order to be designated as passing their exams with "distinction."
  - **Thesis students** may not select to be examined in an area that includes the subject of their thesis without approval of the Department of Literature and Language's Assistant Chair for Graduate Studies.
  - **Thesis students** do not have the option of sitting a "special topic" section as one of their two examination areas.

*Revised 22 September 2017*