

**THE PhD PROGRAM IN ENGLISH**  
**UNIVERSITY OF NEBRASKA-LINCOLN**  
**(Revised, July 2019)**

The PhD program consists of 90 hours beyond the bachelor's degree. The department accepts up to 36 hours of MA credits as part of the PhD degree. The usual program of studies for the PhD is 24-34 hours of course work beyond the MA, plus 12-30 hours of dissertation credit. The UNL PhD offers an individualized degree in which students develop their programs in consultation with a faculty Supervisory Committee. The Supervisory Committee advises the student on courses to be taken, reading lists and a choice of how to meet the comprehensive exam requirement, how to meet the foreign language requirement, and a dissertation topic.

**1. Advisers**

The chair of the student's Supervisory Committee serves as a PhD student's main adviser. Prior to the appointment of that Committee, the Graduate Chair or another Graduate Faculty appointed by the Graduate Chair will be the student's adviser.

**2. The Supervisory Committee**

A student's PhD Supervisory Committee advises the student on all aspects of the student's PhD program. The student should begin to get to know faculty members in her or his field of study as soon as possible, by taking courses from those professors, or making appointments with them to talk about their mutual interests. The Graduate Chair can help students identify the faculty members in their fields of interest. The Supervisory Committee must be set up and the program of study approved *before a student has completed 45 hours of coursework, including the MA*. This generally means that students who come in with an MA or MFA must set up their Supervisory Committees *before the end of their first year of full-time PhD work*. A direct admit PhD student (a PhD student admitted with a BA only) should find an adviser in her or his field of intended study as soon as possible; this person may become the Supervisory Committee chair, but this is not necessary.

When a faculty member has agreed to chair a student's Supervisory Committee, he or she should advise the student about other faculty members he or she should ask to be on the Committee. The Supervisory Committee must consist of at least four Fellows of the Graduate Faculty (the Graduate Chair can provide a list of Graduate Fellows), one of whom serves as Chair, and one of whom is from another department. Two members of the Committee officially serve as readers of the dissertation, but all members read and comment on the dissertation. When all members of the Supervisory Committee have verbally agreed to serve, the student fills out the [Appointment of Supervisory Committee](#) form and returns the completed form to the English Graduate office. The Graduate Chair sends it to the Dean of Graduate Studies.

*Once the "Appointment of Supervisory Committee" form is filed, the Supervisory Committee must meet within three weeks.* It is important that all the committee members be at this meeting.

The student is responsible for contacting all the faculty members and setting up the meeting. Before the meeting, the student should obtain the [Program of Studies](#) form, tentatively fill it out in consultation with the chair of the Supervisory Committee, and send it to the other Committee members in ample time for their review. At the meeting, the Committee discusses, revises, and approves the Program of Studies, including 1) the transfer of MA credit hours if appropriate, 2) additional course work, 3) number of dissertation hours, 4) plans for meeting the language requirement, and 5) a dissertation area or topic. After the meeting, the student must *type* the "Program of Studies" as approved by the Committee, have the chair of the Supervisory Committee sign it, and file it with the Graduate Chair. The Graduate Chair forwards it to Graduate Studies.

At the point that the "Program of Studies" is approved, the PhD program 'clock' begins to tick. The student now has **eight years in which to complete the PhD**. The Dean of Graduate Studies approves extensions of the 8-year period only in extraordinary circumstances and only if the dissertation is substantially completed.

### **3. Definition of Satisfactory Progress (Pre-candidacy)**

**For full-time graduate students**, satisfactory progress is defined as the completion of at least 18 hours of coursework or the equivalent during the 12-month period that consists of fall and spring semesters and may include the previous summer. **For part-time students** (such as area secondary or college teachers who are pursuing degrees while they work full-time), satisfactory progress is defined as the completion of at least 12 hours of course work or the equivalent in the 12-month period, which includes the previous summer.

**Note:** Dissertation hours do *not* count toward this requirement.

#### **Equivalents:**

Coursework in approved minor, research tool, or collateral fields is counted on an hour-for-hour basis.

The satisfaction of achieving competency in a language is equivalent to 6 hours of coursework. If a student has satisfied one or more of these requirements prior to beginning his or her program, he or she can use the credits in an academic year of his or her choosing.

The approval of Field, Focus, and Capstone Oral requirements each count as the equivalent of 6 hours of coursework.

For students admitted directly to the Ph.D. program after achieving their undergraduate degree, the successful completion of the M.A. requirement counts as the equivalent of 6 hours of coursework.

The successful completion of the pre-candidacy requirement for an interdepartmental graduate specialization (e.g. Nineteenth-Century Studies, Women's Studies, Digital Humanities) counts as the equivalent of 4 hours of course work.

Approval for continuation as a Teaching Assistant depends on adequate progress in the program and adequate teaching. In April of each year, the Graduate Chair reports to the Chair of the Department on your progress in the program, based on the definitions and equivalents above.

In addition, **you must achieve candidacy for the Ph.D. by the end of the fourth year post-MA in the program.** The four-year candidacy rule also includes any time spent holding a fellowship, any other appointment in the Department of English, or leaves of absence. Petitions of the deadline extension for up to one year may be presented to the Graduate Committee, but approval is by no means automatic.

### **XP Grades**

If a faculty member considers a student to have made insufficient progress in ENGL 899 or 999, they may assign the student an XP grade. These grades are primarily meant for students working on preparing for their comprehensive exams. They will usually be given by a student's advisor.

After a student receives two XP grades in a row, s/he is required to meet with the Graduate Chair to discuss their lack of progress. The Graduate Chair may decide to place the student on academic probation at this time.

Upon the student's request, the Graduate Chair can change all XP grades to P grades prior to graduation, so that there will be no record of the XP grade on their transcripts.

### **4. Coursework**

A direct admit PhD student (a PhD admitted with a BA only) takes 60-70 hours of recommended coursework; a student with an MA or MFA takes 24-34 hours. The coursework is recommended and approved by the Supervisory Committee and/or Graduate Chair in the case of a student without a Committee. The adviser or Supervisory Committee considers the student's chosen area of interest and career goals in advising on or requiring coursework. Direct admit students usually complete their coursework in three to four years; students with an MA or MFA usually complete their coursework in two to three years.

PhD students may take up to 6 hours of independent directed readings beyond the 6 allowed as part of the MA program. To take additional independent directed readings, a student must make a request in writing to the Graduate Committee. This letter should include 1) a listing of the independent reading courses taken so far, with the subjects, instructors, and credit hours, 2) a description of the additional hours requested, with the subject, instructor, and credit hours, 3) a rationale for why the additional hours are important to the student's program, and 4) the signature of the student's adviser, indicating approval of the request.

All PhD students are required to take the following two 1-credit professionalization courses: 1) ENGL 893, which will assist students in navigating the comprehensive exams process and make a successful transition to the dissertation stage; 2) ENGL 993, which will assist students in seeking employment following the completion of their degree. Students wishing to be exempted from either or both of these required courses may discuss the matter with their advisors; advisors may then send a letter to the Graduate Chair requesting exemption, which will be granted upon receipt.

**Students must also follow the residency requirements of Graduate Studies, which are published in the *Graduate Studies Bulletin*. The basic rule requires students to take 27 hours of course work in a consecutive 18-month period. For full details, please consult the [Graduate Studies Bulletin](#).**

## **5. Specializations and Certificates**

Students are not required to declare a specialization in our graduate programs, but we offer English specializations in Creative Writing, Composition and Rhetoric, and Literary and Cultural Studies. We also offer interdisciplinary specializations in Ethnic Studies, Women's and Gender Studies, Great Plains Studies, and Nineteenth Century Studies. We also have certificate programs in Digital Humanities and the Teaching of Writing.

You can find out more about these specializations here:

<https://www.unl.edu/gradstudies/prospective/programs/English>.

## **6. Language Requirement**

Our department believes strongly that our graduate students should *experience* the world through another language, learn what it means to *struggle* with language acquisition (if they haven't already), cultivate a nuanced understanding of what it means to teach students for whom English is not their first language, and, as our Mission Statement suggests, *re-frame how we look at the world* through language. We believe strongly that our capacities for imaginative reasoning and our abilities to create imaginative possibilities are developed through our experiences with and through language, which both reflects and shapes our literary, aesthetic, cultural and linguistic realities. In an increasingly global university and world, we believe it is extremely important for scholars and teachers to resist monolingualism and have significant learning experiences with other languages prior to, and/or during their graduate educations.

Because the English Department values both the philosophical principle *and* the practical application of learning other languages, students can meet the language requirement in multiple ways. A student's committee will help them determine which of the following pathways is most appropriate both philosophically *and* practically to their area of study and/or dissertation project.

Students may fulfill the language requirement by doing any *one* of the following:

having lived in a country where the language is used and speaking and reading it there for a substantial period of time

having passed or passing a *graduate* seminar *in* the language with at least a grade of "B"

having taken or taking at least two semesters of undergraduate coursework in the language with at least a grade of "B"

having taken or taking one semester of undergraduate coursework *and* one graduate course in Teaching English as a Second Language with at least a grade of "B", such as TEAC 813P Teaching English as an International Language, 813A Second Language Acquisition, 813J Intercultural Communication, 813M Teaching Multilingual Learners,

and/or 813E Topics in the Teaching of English as Second Language

having completed or completing a major translation project designed in consultation with one's committee and evaluated by an agreed upon scholar with fluency in the language. For example, a translation project might include a successful translation of one or more short stories, a gathering of poems, or a critical essay.

completing a language exam, the conditions of which are decided by your committee (and a qualified expert in the language if the student does not have such an expert serving on their committee already).

having taken or taking one graduate level or two undergraduate level courses in translation with at least a grade of "B." These courses can be arranged through CourseShare and may have uneven or limited availability (<http://www.btaa.org/resources-for/faculty/courseshare/department-resources>). Students should contact the Department of Modern Languages to find out if there is a translation course available through CourseShare.

In the case that a student wants to take on work that they and their committee believe *should* meet the language requirement but does not appear on this list, the student would need to submit a formal proposal, signed by all the members of their committee to the Graduate Chair. This proposal would then be evaluated by the Graduate Committee on an individual basis. For example, counting a digital language for this requirement would require formal approval from a student's committee and the Graduate Committee. Proposals should be one-page and address: how the work described should be interpreted as fulfilling the spirit and intention of the language requirement—and how the work is equivalent to one or more of the options described above.

Students for whom English is a second language and not their native language (e.g., international students) can use English to fulfill the language requirement. The student's Supervisory Committee has the responsibility and authority to determine what constitutes fulfillment of the language requirement within the guidelines listed above, and for informing the English Graduate Office in writing when the student has met the language requirements or when the graduate student plans to submit a proposal for work that does *not* appear in the guidelines.

## 7. Comprehensive Exams

**General Description:** Students take comprehensive exams after they have completed all coursework and generally after they have completed the language requirement. The comprehensive exams are normally taken in the student's third or fourth year and consist of three parts: two written exercises based on Field and Focus Reading Lists, and one Capstone Oral given by the Supervisory Committee. The comprehensive exams are supposed to feed into the dissertation and prepare the student to begin work on it, while insuring that the student will be able to teach survey and specialized courses at a number of educational institutions. The Field Reading List should, therefore, reflect a general knowledge of the area in which the student will likely be seeking employment and contain primary texts that she or he is likely to be expected to know, as well as critical material central to the Field. The Focus Reading List should be based on the student's

special interests and contain texts, both primary and critical, relevant to that focus.

### **Field and Focus Reading Lists**

The student's Supervisory Committee should advise the student on identifying Field and Focus areas and discuss options before the student plans the comprehensive exams. The areas should be related to the kind of job the student wants to obtain after graduation. The Field is generally broader and may be a category that is used in the MLA Job List or one that is of general familiarity to the profession (for example, "20th Century American and Canadian Literature," "Renaissance Literature," or "Composition and Rhetoric"). The Focus area should be a more specialized area leaning toward the subject of the student's dissertation (for example, "20<sup>th</sup> Century Canadian Women's Literature," "Shakespeare," or "Literacy Studies"). Creative Writing students design lists in literature, composition and rhetoric, and/or literary theory that complement the creative work they do in their dissertations.

After a student has identified Field and Focus areas, she or he constructs a **reading list for each area** comprised of 30-40 *substantial* items, including both primary and critical works. The student works with two faculty members on each list, who also agrees to assess the written exam or portfolio. The faculty members will probably, but not necessarily, be members of the student's Supervisory Committee. The student can work with different faculty members for each of the reading lists. Once the faculty readers have approved each list, **both lists** are submitted to the Graduate Committee for approval. The student should send: 1) a cover letter explaining the intellectual rationale for the "Field" and "Focus" designations; 2) both reading lists, with "Field" and "Focus" areas clearly specified and complete bibliographic information (use MLA formatting style) on each item; 3) how and when the student plans to meet the comprehensive exam requirement for each list (Written Exam or Portfolio Option); and 4) the names of the readers with place for the readers to sign indicating approval of the lists and agreement to assess the comprehensive. If the Supervisory Committee Chair is not a reader for either of the exams, she or he should sign as well, showing agreement with the student's plans. **Once approved by the Graduate Committee, these lists will be archived on the department's online space; that way, the lists will be viewable by members of the department and can serve as models for future students.**

**For comprehensives to be taken in the fall, the reading lists and accompanying material must be handed in to the Graduate Chair by April 1 of the preceding spring. For comprehensives to be taken in the spring or summer, the reading lists and accompanying material must be handed in to the Graduate Chair by November 15 of the preceding fall.** [Reading Lists can always be submitted to the Graduate Chair earlier than these dates!]

When planning to take the exams, students should consider the fact that faculty members are not on duty in the summer and are thus not obligated to be available for exams during that time period. Please check with your committee members well in advance for their availability and willingness to administer exams during the summer months.

### **Format:**

Students may choose to be assessed on their Field and Focus Reading Lists by any of the following formats, *as long as the readers approve the format*. **Unless the student is completing a Combined Portfolio over both lists, one exam or portfolio over each list**

**is required.**

**Written Exam:** The student is responsible for setting up a testing time with the Graduate Secretary. The Graduate Office schedules summer exams on a case-by-case basis (but see remark regarding summer above). Students sign up to take the exam in the English Graduate Office approximately six weeks before they plan to take it; they also resubmit names of readers and their reading lists at that time. This can be done by stopping in the Graduate Secretary office or sending an email with the date of the exam, readers names, and a copy of the reading list to be tested. Students will take the exam by computer. The two faculty readers will construct the 3 1/2 hour exam based on the student's approved reading list, but the student may submit study questions to the faculty as soon as the list is approved; the faculty can use these questions or variations of them if they feel it is appropriate to do so. Readers assess the exam and judge it a "pass," "no pass," or "revise and resubmit." In the case of an unresolvable disagreement between the readers, the Graduate Chair will select a third reader. If a reader or readers judges that the student fails or should be asked to revise, she or he will do so with specific comments from the reader(s) as to what needs to be done to meet PhD comprehensive exam standards. If a student fails twice, he or she must petition the Graduate Committee in writing for permission to revise and submit it a third time or to take the exam in a different format. Approval is not guaranteed.

**Portfolio Option :** Students sign up for the Portfolio Option in the Graduate Office *at least six weeks* before they plan to hand in the Portfolio. Students should get the agreement of the faculty readers to ensure that they can meet the student's elected portfolio submission date. The student compiles the Portfolio with the guidance of the two faculty readers, based on the student's approved reading list. The Portfolio should be 50-60 pages in length, maximum. The Portfolio must include: 1) a cover letter describing the major ideas, themes, and issues represented in the portfolio and giving an overview of its contents; 2) a 20-page scholarly essay, which is a focused essay with a thesis that brings together major texts from the reading list, both critical and primary; 3) an annotated bibliography of all items on the reading list not covered by the essay; 4) a statement of teaching goals; 5) sample course syllabi based on the reading list, with assignments and class activities; and 6) professional writing that is informed by material on the reading list but that has not been used to satisfy course requirements (this might include conference papers; published, accepted, or circulating articles or creative writing; grant proposals, and other materials demonstrating a knowledge of the area). The readers of the Portfolio guide the student in writing and revising the essay and other parts of the Portfolio; the student should consult with them early and often. **On the agreed-upon date, the student submits the Portfolio in triplicate to the English Graduate Office.** The Graduate Office distributes the Portfolio to the faculty readers.

The two faculty readers assess the Portfolio and judge it a "pass," "no pass," or "revise and resubmit." In the case of an unresolvable disagreement between the readers, the Graduate Chair will select a third reader. The English Graduate Office gives the faculty members' assessment and comments to the student. If the student fails or is asked to revise, she or he will do so with specific comments from the reader(s) as to what needs to be done to meet the PhD comprehensive examination standards. If a student fails a Portfolio twice, he or she must petition the Graduate Committee in writing for permission to revise and submit it a third time or to take the exam in a different format. Approval is not guaranteed.

**Combined Portfolio:** In some cases, the Supervisory Committee and faculty readers may decide that one large portfolio covering the two reading lists is appropriate, should the Field and Focus lists dovetail to a manageable extent. In that case, the student writes a 40-60 page Scholarly Paper over both lists, and submits all other materials required for Portfolio Option. As with the Portfolio Option, the student must get the agreement of two faculty members to be readers for the Combined Portfolio.

### **The Capstone Oral Exam:**

**Whatever format is selected for the comprehensive exams (written exam or portfolio) a capstone oral follows completion.**

The Supervisory Committee minus the member from another department administers the Capstone Oral, but the Committee can add other examiners with the student's approval. If other faculty were involved in compiling the student's reading lists and reading the comprehensives, the Supervisory Committee and student may want them to take part in the Capstone Oral as well.

The Capstone Oral should take place as soon as possible after the student completes the written exam requirements. The student contacts all the faculty members involved and arranges a meeting time and place (but see remark about summer above). Then the student informs the Graduate Office about who is on the examining committee, as well as the time and place of the Capstone Oral. The Graduate Office sends the faculty members copies of the reading lists, as well as formal notification of the meeting. If faculty members wish to review the student's written comprehensives, they can obtain copies from the Graduate Office.

The Capstone Oral normally lasts 1 hour. Its purpose is to give students the opportunity to articulate connections between texts and issues central to their written field and focus exams or portfolios. As the examining committee explores topics from the written examinations via critical and interpretative questions, the student can articulate and expand on aspects of his or her thinking on the Field and Focus areas. This helps orient the student's work on the comprehensives toward his or her dissertation, teaching goals, and research projects. The Capstone Oral can also serve as an opportunity for the Committee and student to discuss the student's dissertation plans.

After the Capstone Oral, the chair of the Supervisory Committee completes a consensus report, the "Capstone Oral Examination Report," which deems the examination results as "pass," "no pass," or "conditional pass," and submits it to the Graduate Chair. Students who receive a "conditional pass" must do further work to pass the Capstone Oral, the nature and extent of which will be clearly delineated in the "Examination Report." Any examination committee member may write a dissenting report to the Graduate Chair as well. The Graduate Chair will inform the student in writing of the results of the exam, with a copy of the "Capstone Oral Examination Report." "If the comprehensive exams (and/or Capstone Oral) is not passed, written notice the student, copied to the Graduate Dean by the Graduate Committee Chair, will be sent. It will list the options, if any, for retaking of the exam/oral. No comprehensive may be retaken in the same semester as the unsuccessful attempt."

## **8. Candidacy**

Candidacy is awarded on completion of all required coursework, successful completion of all the comprehensive examinations, fulfillment of the language



requirement, and approval of the dissertation topic. A student who comes into the program with an MA normally achieves candidacy by the fourth year of the program. A student who enters with a BA will normally achieve candidacy by the fifth year of the program.

**Procedure:** As soon as the student passes the Capstone Oral, he or she should fill out the [Application for Admission to Candidacy](#) available on the Graduate Studies Forms and Deadlines website and obtain signatures of all members of his or her Supervisory Committee. Then the student returns this form to the Graduate Chair, who sends it to Graduate Studies. The "Application for Admission to Candidacy" must be filed *at least seven months prior to the final oral examination for the dissertation*. Once a student has achieved Candidacy, she or he must register for at least **one credit** during each academic year semester until receiving the degree.

Faculty advisors may choose to assign students XP grades to indicate lack of academic progress during candidacy, as per the process laid out in Section 3 above.

## 9. Dissertation

**Scholarly Dissertation.** A dissertation is a substantial scholarly work. Usually by the time students are putting together their reading lists and taking comprehensive exams or writing portfolios, they have developed an idea or focus for their dissertations. At the time the student is ready to begin research for the dissertation, he or she should meet with his or her chair, and decide on a process. Many Chairs and Supervisory Committees require a formal prospectus, which is a statement of the thesis of the dissertation, a review of the relevant scholarship, a proposed outline of the chapters and what they will contain, and a substantial bibliography. The Graduate Committee recommends that such a prospectus be produced. This is circulated to all members of the Committee for their approval and suggestions; sometimes a committee meeting is helpful at this point. Since a student's focus might have changed substantially from the time when the Committee filed the Program of Studies, it is important that all the Committee members have a written proposal from the student at this point. It is also possible that with a change of topic, the student may want to change Committee members. If the chair of the Supervisory Committee remains but other committee members change, the chair must sign a [Change of Committee form](#), and the Graduate Chair also must sign the form, requesting the change. If the chair of the Committee changes, both the new and old chairs must sign the form in addition to the Graduate Chair. The English Graduate Office forwards the signed form to Graduate Studies.

At the time that all Committee members approve the prospectus or the plan for the dissertation, the student and his or her faculty advisers should also lay out a timeline and process for finishing the dissertation. Some committee chairs like to see and approve drafts of chapters before the student sends them to other committee members. In other cases, the student gives drafts of chapters to all committee members at once for feedback. Some committee members want to see the dissertation chapter by chapter; others want to see a draft of the entire manuscript. In any case, what is essential is that the process by which each Supervisory Committee will work is clear to everyone involved. The student must also write an abstract of the dissertation, not exceeding 350 words in length, which must be approved by the Committee members. The abstract must include the working title of the dissertation.

**Creative Dissertation.** The dissertation is based on the student's own book-length creative work completed while in the graduate program in consultation with a Supervisory Committee. The creative work, when completed, is submitted to the committee but does not serve as the dissertation; the dissertation consists of: 1) a critical introduction that is in response to, and support of, the creative activity; 2) a description of the project overall; and 3) a sample of the creative work.

**For Both Scholarly and Creative Dissertations: Application for Degree.**

Early in the semester in which she or he intends to graduate, the student must file the [Application for Degree](#) at 109 Canfield. If this is not filed, a diploma will not be ordered, and the student's graduation will be postponed. The due date for this form is always posted outside the Graduate Chair's office and is always listed on the [Doctoral Forms and Deadlines](#).

**In every case, the student must give the final draft of the dissertation to all Committee members *at least a month before the deadline for approval of the manuscript*.** In the case of the designated Readers, this means at least 7 weeks before the dissertation is due in Graduate Studies (see below).

**The [Application for Final Oral Exam](#)**

The Application for Degree is found under the Academics tab in MyRED until the deadline for application. The [Application for Final Oral Exam form](#) must be sent to the Office of Graduate Studies at least three weeks before the final oral examination. The English Graduate Office keeps a copy and forwards the original to Graduate Studies. Please email a copy of the draft of the dissertation to the Doctoral Programs Coordinator in Graduate Studies for format review.

**Oral Exam:** Two members of the Supervisory Committee other than the chair who are Graduate Faculty are designated as Readers of the dissertation. They must have seen and approved a draft of the dissertation and the abstract before signing the "Application for Final Oral Examination form." An oral defense cannot be scheduled if neither Reader approves the dissertation. However, if one Reader does not approve, the oral may proceed if the majority of the Supervisory Committee agrees.

The oral is waived only in unusual circumstances and must be approved by the Graduate Dean prior to the time the oral would be held. To request a waiver, the chair of the student's Committee must provide a statement as to why the waiver is needed which is sent to the Graduate Dean for approval or denial.

The [Application for Final Oral Exam](#) must be filed with Graduate Studies at least three weeks before the final date that the dissertation is due in that office. The oral exam is 1-2 hours in length. According to Graduate Studies rules, the chair of the Supervisory Committee and at least two members of the Committee must participate. The Supervisory Committee conducts the oral exam, giving the student the opportunity to talk about his or her dissertation, including the research process, theoretical and academic issues raised by the dissertation, and the way in which the dissertation fits into the student's future plans. The Committee reports the results of the oral by signing the "Report of Completion" (see "Filing the Dissertation" below). If one examiner records a dissenting vote, the student is still approved for the degree. If more than one examiner dissents, the student cannot receive the degree at that time. The Committee must file a report with Graduate Studies and indicate what the student must do before taking another examination.

**Filing the Dissertation**

The [Guidelines for Preparation and Submission of an Electronic Dissertation](#) has complete information on the final preparation of the dissertation. Once the dissertation has been approved and the Oral Exam has taken place, the student should follow the instructions found [here](#). The form "Report of Completion" should be presented to the

examining committee members including the outside member for the required signatures, preferably during the Final Oral. Please note the English Department does not use the Signature Page so that form need not be completed.

**We encourage all students to refer to the [Graduate Catalog](#) available online on the [Doctoral Forms and Deadlines](#) website. Many of the policies described here are explained in more detail in the *Graduate Catalog*.**

**The English Graduate Office is here for you. Please consult the Graduate Chair and the graduate secretary early and often during your time in the program. We can answer your questions, or find out who can.**

## **Financial Aid:**

### **Department Assistantships**

Each year the Department of English awards several teaching assistantships to incoming Ph.D. students. Applications for assistantships are due the first Monday of December each year. The materials required to apply for an assistantship are the same as those for admission to the program; simply check the circle for assistantship on the admissions application.

**Students who are admitted directly into the PhD program with a BA** are eligible for up to 6 years of funding. The funding for the first year will normally be a Research Assistantship, but at the discretion of the Graduate Committee in consultation with the Coordinators of Composition, unusually well-prepared BA students might be given a Teaching Assistantship their first year. The second and succeeding years of funding will be in the form of a Teaching Assistantship.

**Students who enter the PhD program with an MA or MFA** are eligible for up to 5 years of funding as Teaching Assistants. Teaching Assistants normally teach two classes, which is considered half-time university employment (or 20 hours per week).

All new TAs are required to take a weeklong teaching workshop the week before classes begin and a course in Composition Theory and Practice (ENGL 957) during the fall semester: students are required to take ENGL 957 during the fall semester when they start teaching. Students who do not receive department assistantships on admission can compete for Renewable Teaching Assistantships after their first year in the program. Stipends and benefits are the same as for other Teaching Assistants.

**All assistantships include tuition remission, basic health insurance, and a stipend, but they do not include books or student fees.** Students on assistantship must be registered as full-time students (defined as 9 credit hours or, after candidacy, having filed the [Certification of Full-Time Status](#)), and must check with the English Graduate Office about the maximum amount of hours they can take each semester and in the summer.

### **Department Fellowships**

The English Department also awards several fellowships, including the Pulos Fellowship (for students in 19<sup>th</sup> century studies), the Card Fellowship (for students in Composition and Rhetoric), the McPhee Fellowship and the Louise VanSickle Award (for a creative writing student). Contact the Graduate Chair for information about these fellowships.

**Other Assistantships:**

English graduate students have also obtained assistantships that provide tuition remission plus a stipend in Women's Studies, Graduate Studies, Student Involvement, the *Great Plains Quarterly*, and *Great Plains Research*. When the English Graduate Office receives notices of these and other job opportunities, we post and distribute them, but students should be proactive in seeking out assistantships and other employment.

**Other Fellowships:**

Graduate Studies has a variety of fellowships for which graduate students may apply after their first year of graduate study at UNL. These fellowships can be found [here](#) and are typically due sometime in February. The application form can be found online. To apply, you will need letters of recommendation from faculty as well as a thorough description of your graduate program, your progress in it, and the work you intend to undertake the year of the fellowship. We encourage you to start work on your fellowship application early. Each year, English students are successful in winning some of these graduate fellowships. For information, and application forms, contact Graduate Studies at 472-2875, or go to their website: [Graduate Fellowships for Current Students](#).

**Additional Funding Opportunities in the Department**

The department has, or is affiliated with, a number of programs-the Whitman Archive, the Prairie Schooner, the Cather Project, the Center for Digital Research in the Humanities (CDRH), the Nebraska Writing Project-that occasionally are able to offer employment. The decision about which students to hire for these programs is entirely in the hands of the faculty members who are in charge of these programs. Contact the graduate chair for more information.

**RESOURCES FOR GRADUATE STUDENTS  
ENGLISH DEPARTMENT**

**Listserv.** The department regularly communicates with graduate students via its listserv. [ENG-GRAD@unl.edu](mailto:ENG-GRAD@unl.edu)

**English Graduate Student Association.** The English Graduate Student Association (EGSA) includes all graduate students in the English Department. EGSA exists in order to foster a sense of community among all graduate students; to offer representation to the Department through its elected representatives, the EGSA Executive Committee; and to provide a forum for the free exchange of ideas, concerns, and suggestions among graduate students of the Department.

**Placement.** A Placement Chair, appointed by the English Department Chair, assists students in preparing resumes, writing job application letters, and submitting writing samples, along with preparing for MLA and other interviews.

### **Best Practices Policy on Letter of Recommendation**

When there is reason to believe that something is amiss with the Interfolio file (the service through which letters of recommendations for academic jobs are handled), the accepted department practice is that the student send their committee chair or the graduate chair their materials from Interfolio and request advice.

**Departmental Colloquia.** The department is home to a number of discussion groups, reading groups, study groups, and a creative writing reading series. Events are regularly advertised through the Listserv.

### **UNIVERSITY RESOURCES**

**Graduate Studies** is located at 1100 Seaton Hall. Graduate Studies handles all matters related to graduate programs and student status, including international student status. Call 472-2875, or check the website at <http://www.unl.edu/gradstudies/>

**International Student and Scholar Office (ISSO) 201 Seaton Hall.** This office handles matters having to do with international students, including visa problems or questions. Call 472-0324 or email [isso@unl.edu](mailto:isso@unl.edu)

#### **Afrikan People's Union**

A student group that holds regular meetings and sponsors special programs.

#### **Mexican American Student Association**

A student group that holds regular meetings, does programming, and sponsors educational activities.

#### **International Student Organization**

A student group that hosts programs and activities. Email: [unl.x.iso@gmail.com](mailto:unl.x.iso@gmail.com)

**University of Nebraska Inter-Tribal Exchange (U.N.I.T.E.).** A student group that organizes events and activities, including a powwow.

**UNL Committee for GLBT Concerns.** A group of faculty, staff, and students who sponsor programs and discuss issues related to gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender people. For more information, see their website at <http://involved.unl.edu/lgbtqa>

#### **Women's Studies Association**

A feminist undergraduate and graduate student organization for those interested in Women's Studies. The group holds regular meetings and sponsors programs. For more information, see their website at <http://www.unl.edu/womenssp/about/wsa.shtml>.

## **PROCEDURES FOR GRADUATE STUDENT APPEALS**

### **Department of English, University of Nebraska-Lincoln**

#### I. Appeal of course grades.

Appeals must be filed **within six weeks** of the official awarding of the disputed grade. In accord with the general guidelines set down in the [Graduate Studies Catalog-Appeals](#), procedures for graduate student academic appeals are as follows:

- A. First recourse shall always be to the faculty members assigning the grade. If the dispute can be settled informally, no formal appeal is necessary. Students and faculty alike are urged to exercise this option to the fullest.
- B. If a formal appeal becomes necessary, the next recourse is to the student's adviser or Chair of the Supervisory Committee. The student and the adviser decide whether the grounds for appeal are sufficient, and whether the dispute is procedural or substantive in nature, or both. The student should present an appeal in writing to the Graduate Committee, along with materials relevant to the case.
  1. If the appeal is procedural, the Graduate Committee shall decide its validity and report its judgment within two weeks of receiving the appeal.
  2. If the appeal is substantive, the Graduate Committee shall form an ad hoc committee consisting of two senior staff evaluators (who are not members of the Graduate Committee) to review the case and make recommendations within two weeks of receiving the case. Final consideration of such recommendations is the responsibility of the Graduate Committee, which shall sustain or deny the appeal within two weeks of receiving the recommendations.

#### II. Appeal of comprehensive examination decisions.

The same procedures shall apply as in I.A and B above, with the following exceptions:

- A. First recourse shall be to the individual readers of the examination.
- B. Substantive appeals shall be referred to an ad hoc committee consisting of three senior staff members familiar with the materials of the examination, but not the original readers or members of the Graduate Committee. One person shall be appointed by the Graduate Committee, one by the student in consultation with his/her adviser, and one by the EGSA Executive Committee. The ad hoc committee shall evaluate the disputed examination, without access to the original readers' comments or grades, and make appropriate recommendations to the Graduate Committee within two weeks of receiving the case. The final consideration of these recommendations shall be the responsibility of the Graduate Committee, which shall sustain or deny the appeal within two weeks of receiving the recommendation.

### III. Appeal Procedures in Cases of Termination for a Student in the Program.

Probation or termination recommendations may be made under the following conditions:

a) violations of the "[Student Code of Conduct](#)," b) failure to establish or maintain a supervisory committee; c) failure to satisfy "Scholastic Grade Requirements" listed in the Graduate Bulletin, d) failure in comprehensive examinations or final degree examinations, e) failure to master the methodology and content of one's field in a manner that is sufficient to complete a successful dissertation.

- A. Termination proceedings begin with the Graduate Chair. After consultation with the student's advisor, and the Department Chair, the Graduate Chair may decide to initiate termination proceedings. The Graduate Chair requests termination from the Dean of Graduate Studies in a letter that must be copied to the student. Final authority for terminating a graduate student's program rests with the Dean of Graduate Studies. Should the Dean of Graduate Studies grant the department's termination request, the student will be notified in written form, and given 30 days to indicate to initiate the appeal of this decision by submitting a written statement. The appeal process begins in the department.
- B. As per the Graduate Bulletin, appeals must be based on one of the following criteria:
  1. New evidence that might alter the original decision.
  2. Evidence that the original decision was based on inaccurate or inadequate data.
  3. Evidence that the Graduate Chair acted capriciously or in an unfair or discriminatory way in reaching the original decision.
- C. At this point, the chair of the English Department Appeals Committee will be notified. This person will henceforth serve as the student's advocate throughout the appeals process, providing guidance and advice. If they wish, the student may request an alternative advocate. The Department Chair may appoint an alternative instead of the Appeals Committee Chair.
- D. There are two routes for appeal, depending on the grounds for termination:
  1. Route One: This route is followed for terminations based on academic grounds such as academic dishonesty or lack of progress.
    - a. The student, with the support of their advocate, will first appeal the Graduate Chair's decision to their full supervisory committee for reinstatement in their degree program. If the student has not yet established a full advisory committee, the appeals process will go directly to the next level, and begin with the Graduate Committee. Appeals are made in writing. The Graduate Chair and Department Chair will provide the supervisory committee with a full written rationale for the termination decision. The student will also provide the Supervisory Committee with a written statement of appeal, based on one or more of the grounds for appeal listed above in B.
    - b. The Supervisory Committee decision will be determined by the majority opinion. Dissenting members of the committee may submit a minority report.
    - c. A majority decision to reinstate will move the appeals process to the next level, should the Graduate Chair wish to continue the process. Should the Graduate Chair decline to continue the process they will withdraw

the termination request, and notify the Office of Graduate Studies of that decision.

d. A majority decision to uphold the termination will move the appeals process to the next level, should the student wish to continue the process.

e. If the Supervisory Committee decision is deadlocked, the appeal will move to the next level.

f. Once a decision is reached, the Supervisory Committee must provide both the student and the Graduate Chair a written statement with their decision, vote numbers, and rationale. Should the process proceed to the next level, a copy of this document will be provided to the Graduate Committee.

2. Route Two: This route is followed for terminations based on other violations of the Graduate Bulletin and/or Student Code of Conduct.

a. The student, with the support of their advocate, will first appeal the Graduate Chair's decision to the Graduate Committee. That process is detailed in the following section.

3. The second level of appeal is to the full Graduate Committee, including the graduate student representative, but excluding the Graduate Chair. Members who feel unable to make an impartial assessment of the case may recuse themselves, and the Chair of the English Department may appoint (a) temporary replacement(s). As with the previous level of appeal, the student, with the support of their advocate, will appeal in writing on the grounds specified in B. The Graduate Chair will provide the Graduate Committee with a full written rationale for the termination decision.

a. The Graduate Committee decision will be determined by the majority opinion.

b. A decision to reinstate will result in the withdrawal of the Graduate Chair's termination request, and notification of the Office of Graduate Studies of that decision.

c. A decision to uphold the termination will move the appeals process to the next level, should the student wish to continue the process. At this point, the Graduate Chair will notify the Office of Graduate Studies that the departmental appeals process has concluded.

d. In either case, the Graduate Committee must provide both the student and the Graduate Chair a written statement with their decision and rationale. If the committee decides to reinstate, the statement will be placed in the student's file. If the committee decides to uphold the termination, the statement will be forwarded to the Office of Graduate Studies.

4. The final level of appeal is to the Graduate Council for the campus administratively responsible for the student's graduate program. In most cases, this is the final level of appeal. For further details, see the Graduate Catalog/ Graduate Student Program Appeals.

<https://catalog.unl.edu/graduate-professional/graduate/degrees/termination>.

E. In addition to submitting a written statement as specified section D above, the student



and the student's advocate may submit to the Supervisory and/or Graduate Committees additional documentation to support one of the appeals criteria listed in section E.

- F. The appeal will be considered as soon as possible after the written appeal has been submitted, and decisions by all committees will be made in a timely manner.