

Table of Contents

I. Requirements for M.A. in English.....3

II. Sample Calendar and Timeline.....4

III. Thesis Overview.....6

IV. Critical Thesis Guidelines.....9

V. Creative Thesis Guidelines.....10

VI. Internship Thesis Guidelines.....12

VII. Forms and Checksheets.....14

Requirements for M.A. in English (30 Credit Hours):

Coursework:

- Introduction to Graduate Studies (English 500, 3 Credits)
- Two (2) Graduate Seminars (English 590, 6 Credits)
- Five (5) Elective Courses (500-level English Courses, 15 Credits)

Thesis:

- Form Thesis Committee (Chair + Two readers)
- Completed Prospectus (Submitted prior to beginning thesis hours)
- Thesis Hours (6-9 credits of English 699 over at least two semesters)
- Successful Oral defense.

Students must have a 3.0 GPA at time of graduation in order to successfully complete the program

Sample Calendar/Timeline

For students entering the fall semester and attempting to finish the degree in 2 years, the following offers a sample timeline for coursework, thesis, and degree milestones. This only is an approximation, as students frequently have different paths through the degree.

Year One

Fall Semester

Coursework: English 500, 2 elective courses¹

Departmental deadlines: none

Advising requirements: course selection

Spring Semester

Coursework: 3 elective courses*

Departmental deadlines: Committee form signed by all committee members (before the completion of 12 credit hours)

Advising requirements: guidance for committee selection, signing off on committee form

Summer

Coursework: none

Departmental deadlines: completion and acceptance of thesis prospectus (approved by thesis director only). The prospectus and prospectus approval form must be in the office and signed by the grad coordinator before thesis hours begin.

Advising requirements: Assistance with reading lists, research scope, and prospectus writing over the summer. This is the time when most of the initial reading/planning should happen, and students will need assistance deciding the direction of their projects. The thesis director should ask for drafts and updates as much as possible. If the prospectus isn't judged to be adequate, thesis hours must be delayed until the project is considered acceptable.

¹ Two of the elective courses must be taken in the Graduate Seminar (ENG 590)

Year Two

Fall Semester

Coursework: 3 hours of thesis hours, 1 elective course*

Departmental deadlines: none

Advising requirements: The director and the committee should ask for drafts of writing as the project progresses. At the end of the semester, the director should meet with the student to ensure that sufficient progress has been made. If not, the director should recommend that the student take an additional semester of outside work and register for the final 3 thesis hours when appropriate.

Spring Semester

Coursework: 3 hours of thesis hours, 1 elective course*

Departmental guidelines:

January: At the beginning of the semester, the student should submit the defense date form, with committee signatures

Mid-March: The student should submit the formatted, complete draft to the entire committee for feedback at least 4 weeks before the defense date

Mid-March/Mid-April: Students will revise the draft based on committee feedback

April: Student will defend completed, revised thesis and give copies to the library for binding

Advising requirements:

January: Discuss with the student possible defense dates and decide on a date/time

Mid-March: Accept the formatted complete draft, read through and recommend revisions

Mid-March/Mid-April: Meet with the student about defense procedures and offer possible questions to think about; read through revised draft in preparation for defense

April: Conduct the defense, sign off on the finished product (if applicable) or recommend further revisions/thesis hours (if necessary). Grade assigned for all 6 thesis hours.

Thesis Overview:

All M.A. students will complete a 6-credit thesis project. The thesis should be completed over the course of two semesters. Each student should coordinate with his/her committee chair to request the creation of a section of English 699 for which the student will register.

Thesis Tracks: Thesis projects will be based on one of the department's three thesis tracks. Please refer to relevant handbook sections for requirements and guidelines, specific to each track

- *Track #1. Critical Thesis:* Students will work with a faculty advisor to develop and refine a scholarly work of literary criticism for publication in a peer reviewed journal and as a writing sample for further graduate work.
- *Track #2. Creative Thesis:* Students will work with a faculty advisor to compose a work of creative writing, as well as a critical introduction offering a contextual framework that situates the writer's work in relation to its genre, influences, and artistic goals. Students will be required to submit their work to a publisher or creative writing journal at the conclusion of the program.
- *Track #3. Internship Thesis:* Students will secure a two-semester internship of at least 10 hours per week while working with a faculty advisor to compose a professional portfolio with a critical introduction.

Forming a thesis committee: Thesis writers are required to form a three-member committee, including a chair who will act as the main advisor. For critical and creative theses, the committee will be composed of English faculty (or, in special cases, two English faculty and a cognate from another department). For the internship thesis, the committee will be composed of at least two English faculty and a contact from the writer's chosen field.

The writer should be prepared to supply a one-page, single spaced description of his or her planned project to all committee members in order to assess the viability of the student's plan. The student should also have taken course work with the chair before approaching him or her for thesis advising. Exceptions may be made at the discretion of the advisor if necessary.

If the project is deemed appropriate and the student well-prepared for work in the area, each faculty member will accept the student for thesis work, indicated by signing the thesis committee form.

Prospectus Acceptance: Before a student can begin his or her thesis hours, the thesis director must sign off on a project prospectus. This should be a substantial document (~6-10 pages, at the director's discretion) that outlines the primary question the thesis will address, the texts and scope the project. The final prospectus draft must be approved and the prospectus approval sheet signed by the thesis director and the graduate director before thesis hours begin.

Thesis Drafting: Directors should meet regularly with their students (a minimum of 4 times during the semester) to assess the progress the student is making. It is advisable for directors to require drafts of the thesis sections as they are completed so as to give the opportunity for feedback and revisions as the work develops. Students should also be encouraged to share these drafts with the rest of the thesis committee for feedback. There are no set deadlines or project markers students need to complete during the semesters of thesis work before the final draft, but advisors are encouraged to set dates for students to aim for, including a final draft of the thesis well before the proposed defense date.

Formatting: The formatting of the thesis will vary, depending on the chosen track. Critical and Creative theses should follow the format of the intended publication. For the internship thesis, the critical introduction should follow MLA style with portfolio entries formatted according to relevant conventions in the professional field.

Advising: Because students have two semesters to complete the project, directors should help students to be realistic about using this time wisely. If a student looks as if he or she will not finish the thesis and/or will not be ready for a defense date, the director should recommend that the student delay the second half of the thesis hours until he or she is certain to be ready. In the event that a student is unexpectedly unable to defend, the thesis draft is deemed unacceptable by the committee, or if the student fails the defense, the thesis director may choose to approve another 3 hours of thesis work to allow the student to complete his or her project. If these additional 3 hours are insufficient and the student remains unable to defend the thesis successfully, the degree will not be awarded. Thesis hours are graded as IP (in progress) until the thesis and defense are completed with the exception of the allowance of additional hours. Additional hours, if needed, will be assessed as pass/fail.

Advising Limits: The department will limit the number of thesis projects an individual may be directing at any one time to four. If a faculty member is approached by a fifth student and would like to work with that student, the faculty member may ask for an override of advising limits from the department chair in order to take on an additional thesis project. This may be the case for an exceptional student or project, or in the event that one of the faculty's current advisees has taken a leave of absence during the thesis process. If this happens, the extra advising load will be taken into account when assigning departmental service responsibilities in other areas.

Thesis Defense: At the beginning of the second semester of thesis work, students should approach the committee with their defense date form. Thesis defenses must be completed before finals week of the proposed semester, and the completed thesis draft should be turned in at least 4 weeks before the defense date. In these 4 weeks, the committee should read the draft, and if revisions are necessary, contact the student and recommend alterations. The student will then return revisions before the defense. Additionally, if the project is not ready for defense, this is something the committee should decide as a group, notifying the student as soon as possible.

On the day of the defense, the committee will meet briefly before the student arrives to discuss the order/scope of questioning. Before questioning begins, the student will give a short (~10 min.) presentation about the goals and development of the project (in the case of a creative thesis, the student will give a reading of a selection of material from the project), and then the floor will be open to general discussion. The thesis director is the point person for the discussion, but the other two committee members should each have time to relate the project to other areas of interest, larger questions in English literature/language, the importance of the scholarly contribution, theoretical backing, etc. As with all oral examinations, the student should be speaking more than the faculty members, and the conversation should focus on the project under consideration.

After the question and answer period, the student and any audience members are asked to leave the room, and the committee discusses the success or failure of the defense and the thesis. Once a consensus has been reached, the student returns to the room and is informed of the committee's decision. In the event of a pass, the committee member will each sign the defense approval form. In the event of a fail, the committee will have clear and direct recommendations for revision.

Assessment and Grades: When the defense is completed, the thesis director will submit a grade for all 6 thesis hours to the registrar based on the student's engagement over the two semesters and the quality

of the final project. As the thesis hours are in progress, they are graded as “IP” until the thesis is complete. Once the thesis has been accepted, the director will assign a grade based on the quality of work, the diligence with which the research was conducted, how pro-active the student was about his or her project, and the contribution the project makes to the student’s field of study.

Extra Thesis Hours: In the event that the student needs 3 more thesis hours in addition to the required 6, additional hours are graded as “pass/fail.” If the final thesis is deemed to be unacceptable, either by virtue of being incomplete or sub-par, all thesis hours will be graded as either an “F” in the case of the regular hours of 699 or as “fail” in the case of the additional thesis hours.

Critical Thesis

Students will work with a faculty advisor to develop and refine a scholarly work of literary criticism for publication in a peer reviewed journal and as a writing sample for further graduate work. Students will participate in a formal oral defense in which they discuss their scholarship with a committee of three faculty members. They will be required to submit their work to a scholarly journal at the conclusion of the program.

Length and Quality: The final article should reflect the length and quality of a typical peer-reviewed article (~20-30 pages of polished scholarly prose). Aside from the usual considerations (such as grammar, formatting, and an elegant writer's voice), the article should offer a scholarly "intervention" in the form of an original contribution to scholarly research.

Given the level of polish required for professional scholarship, writers are strongly advised to have a full rough draft of the article complete by the end of the first semester of their thesis work, with the second semester devoted entirely to revision. Writers should be prepared for the thesis director to ask for major revisions, additional research, or, in rare cases, a complete rewrite during the second semester of work.

Prospectus: This should be a substantial document (~6-10 pages, at the director's discretion) that outlines the primary question the thesis will address, the texts and scope the project will consider, how the project contributes to the scholarly discussion, and the general outline of the project's sections.

The prospectus should include at least one paragraph that discusses the peer-reviewed journal where the student intends to submit his/her work with a description of the type of research that appears in the publication, the interests of its audience, and rationale for why the student's work is a good fit for this publication. Writers should consult with their chairs about which journals might serve as the best forum for their work.

Submission Requirements: For the project to be considered complete, the student must submit the final article to a peer-reviewed journal. This will be done after gathering feedback from the committee during the oral defense. The student should forward the receipt of submission to the committee chair once the article has been sent.

Note that acceptance or publication is not required for graduation. The writer must simply submit his/her work.

Formatting: The thesis should be formatted in the house style of the journal where the article will be submitted. Guidelines are typically listed in each copy of the journal or on the journal's website.

Oral Defense: The writer should prepare a brief (~10 min.) presentation about the article, giving special attention to how the piece makes an original contribution or intervention to current scholarship.

After the presentation, the thesis director will moderate a question and answer session (~1 hour) about the content of the article, as well as necessary revisions prior to submission. The last part of the oral defense will typically shift to conversation of the writer's short-term and long-term goals.

Creative Thesis

Students will work with a faculty advisor to compose a work of creative writing, as well as a critical introduction offering a contextual framework that situates the writer's work in relation to its genre, influences, and artistic goals. Students will participate in an oral defense in which they discuss their work with a committee of three faculty members. Students will be required to submit their work to a publisher or creative writing journal at the conclusion of the program.

Length: Students should expect to write 60-100 pages of fiction or the equivalent of a chapbook (20-25 poems) for poetry. In some cases, advisors may opt to require a different length for a final thesis.

Reading List: The writer and the chair will agree on a list of 10-12 books in the writer's chosen subfield to be read during the composition of the thesis. These works will form the basis for the discussion of the author's influences in the critical introduction. This will be submitted in conjunction with the prospectus.

Prospectus (5-8 pages, 1500-2400 words): The writing of the prospectus should be seen as a preparatory exercise that considers the elements that will contribute to the final product of the thesis. The prospectus should include:

- *General description of the project.* What is the form/structure of the planned work (chapbook, linked short stories, chapters of a novel)? What are the subject and thematic concerns as the writer understands them in the initial stages?
- *Theoretical/conceptual charter.* This is a smaller draft version of the critical introduction that will accompany the thesis (see guidelines below).
- *Publication Plans.* Discuss the publication where the student intends to submit his/her work, including a description of the types of writing that appear in the publication, the interests of its audience, and rationale for why the student's work is a good fit for this publication.
- *Reading list of 10-12 books in the intended subfield.*

Critical Introduction (8-10 pages, 2500-3000 words): The critical introduction precedes the prose or poetry creative thesis, offering a contextual framework that situates the writer's work in relation to its influences, artistic goals, and publication plans. A significant part of the critical introduction should be based on the reading list of 10-12 books that the writer submits when he/she turns in the prospectus. Generally speaking, the critical introduction should include:

- *Relationships between the author's work and the work of other writers.* This discussion should discuss the influence of writers and works and where the student places his or her creative writing within that artistic and historical context (e.g. Is the work in the tradition of *bildungsroman*, Southern Gothic, the historical novel, language poetry, lyric poetry, confessional?).
- *The development of the author's writing process.* This discussion should focus on craft techniques – characterization, point of view/authorial distance, tension, imagery, plotting, setting, etc – on which the writer focused in planning and executing the creative work. This may

include specific discussion of content, such as character types, historical or social context, and the overall theme/purpose/effect of the piece.

Submission Requirements: In order for the thesis to be considered complete, the student must submit a portion of the thesis for consideration by the publication outlined in their critical introduction. For fiction, this will typically be a short story; for poetry, a packet of 3-6 poems. Submission length may also be determined at the advisor's discretion. Note that acceptance or publication is not required for graduation. The writer must simply submit his/her work.

Oral Defense: The oral defense typically consists of a public reading of section from the creative work, followed by an hour-long discussion of the writer's critical introduction and creative work.

Internship Thesis

Students will secure a two-semester internship of at least 10 hours per week while composing a professional portfolio with a critical introduction. The portfolio will feature a variety of writing samples, relevant to the chosen field. Students will participate in an oral defense in which they discuss their writings with a committee of at least two faculty members and at least one contact from the student's chosen professional field.

Prospectus: The prospectus will be a 5-7 page document that lays out the student's plans for the internship and humanities research. In general, this will read like a first draft of the critical introduction (see below). This should include:

- Overview of the anticipated work performed for the internship and a preliminary description of the organization's mission.
- Explanation of proposed humanities-based research with rationale, describing how it can inform anticipated professional work and writing.
- Description of the types of writings that are likely to go into the final portfolio.
- Preliminary bibliography of readings for humanities-based research.

Critical introduction: Students will work with an advisor on an area of literary study (such as rhetorical theory, 19th century environmental writing, young adult fiction, images of public service in literature etc.) and situate their professional writing in the context of that humanities-based research. The critical introduction should be 7-10 pages and include:

- Description of the internship, especially duties performed and overarching mission of the organization.
- Scholarly literature review with overview of major issues and debates within the humanities subfield.
- Critical discussion of how insights within this area of humanities research can inform the student's professional writings and goals. This should include analysis of a combination of primary and secondary sources.
- Bibliography of readings performed.

Portfolio: The writing portfolio will typically be composed of approximately 20 short pieces of writing, performed in conjunction with the internship. Writing may be composed as part of official job duties or independently. For positions involving longer formats such as grant writing and policy work, the student may include fewer pieces in the portfolio at the discretion of the faculty advisor.

Securing an internship: The student is responsible for locating and securing an internship. Students are strongly advised to research internships and reach out to organizations early in the process, typically at least four months before the start date.

Ideally, the student will have an organization or field in mind and pursue opportunities independently. Students are also encouraged to consult the English department internship database where they will find a list of organizations that have expressed interest in working with UM students. Advice on securing internships is generally handled by the graduate program coordinator. The committee chair may offer suggestions; however this is not an official duty.

Internship Duration: The duration of the internship should generally coincide with the time period that the student is registered for thesis hours with the student completing the prospectus prior to beginning the internship.

Internship work should be about 8-10 hours per week over the two-semester period. In some cases, the timeline and hour requirements may be reconfigured at the discretion of the thesis advisor. For example, if the student takes a summer or one-semester internship at 16-20 hours per week, the advisor may choose to waive the internship service in the second semester of thesis hours.

Unexpected Termination of Internship: In the event that an internship ends unexpectedly, the student should continue developing a portfolio through freelance writing or other opportunities. This will be determined at the advisor and graduate coordinator's discretion. Termination of an internship does not constitute grounds for delaying a defense or denying the M.A. degree.

Committee and Oral Defense: The writer should prepare a brief (~10 min.) presentation about the portfolio and critical introduction. This presentation should provide an overview of the work performed during the internship and comment on how the writer's literary research informs his/her approach to writing and professional development.

After the presentation, the thesis director will moderate a question and answer session (~1 hour) about the content of the portfolio and critical introduction, as well as any necessary revisions. The last part of the oral defense will typically shift to conversation of the writer's short-term and long-term professional goals.

University of Montevallo
Master of Arts in English
College of Arts and Sciences
Program of Study

Name: _____ UM#: _____

Date of Entry to Program: _____

Prerequisites: GRE/MAT score: _____ Date: _____

B.A. in English

(or)

B.A. in related field

ENG 305: (3)_____

ENG 306: (3)_____

ENG 307: (3)_____

Required Courses (15 hours):

Elective Hours (15 hours):

ENG 500: Intro to Graduate Studies (3)_____

1) (3)_____

ENG 590: Graduate Seminar (3)_____

2) (3)_____

Topic:

3) (3)_____

ENG 590: Graduate Seminar (3)_____

4) (3)_____

Topic:

ENG 699: Master's Thesis (6)_____

5) (3)_____

Program Milestones:

Thesis Committee Form

Prospectus Approval Form

Defense Date Form

Thesis Defense

Date: _____

Thesis Approval Form

Approved by:

Program Coordinator: _____ Date: _____

Dean: _____ Date: _____

University of Montevallo
M.A. in English
Thesis Advising Form

The following is the advising committee for _____.

1) Director:

Name: _____

Advisor Signature: _____

2) Committee member 2:

Name: _____

Advisor Signature: _____

3) Committee member 3:

Name: _____

Advisor Signature: _____

Student Signature: _____ Date: _____

Grad Director Signature: _____ Date: _____

This form must be completed and submitted by the student to the English Department before completion of the first 12 hours of coursework in the program.

University of Montevallo
M.A. in English
Prospectus Approval Form

The following is to verify that _____ has submitted an acceptable thesis prospectus. *(Student name)*

Proposed Thesis Title: _____

Committee approval:

Director: _____ Date: _____
(signature)

Student Signature: _____ Date: _____
(signature)

Grad Director Signature: _____ Date: _____
(signature)

This form, along with a copy of the prospectus, must be approved and submitted by the student to the English Department before the beginning of the semester the student begins his/her thesis hours.

University of Montevallo
M.A. in English
Defense Date Form

The following is the proposed defense date for _____.
(Student name)

Thesis Title: _____

Proposed defense date: _____

Committee approval:

Director: _____ Date: _____
(signature)

Committee Member: _____ Date: _____
(signature)

Committee Member: _____ Date: _____
(signature)

Student Signature: _____ Date: _____

Grad Director Signature: _____ Date: _____

This form should be completed submitted by the student to the English Department at least 2 months before the proposed thesis defense date.

University of Montevallo
M.A. in English
Thesis Defense Approval Form

The following is to verify that _____ has submitted an acceptable thesis and has successfully defended it before members of his/her committee for the Masters Program in English.

Thesis Title: _____

Defense Date: _____

Proposed Changes Required: Yes ____ No ____

Proposed Changes Accepted: _____
(Approved by thesis director, if necessary)

Committee approval:

Director: _____ Date: _____
(signature)

Committee Member: _____ Date: _____
(signature)

Committee Member: _____ Date: _____
(signature)

Grad Director Signature: _____ Date: _____