

**GRADUATE STUDIES HANDBOOK  
DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH  
MONTANA STATE UNIVERSITY  
2018-19**

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## I. INTRODUCTION

We welcome all comers to this department: all races, genders, nationalities, we welcome you. We welcome you in any physical or mental condition. We welcome you regardless of sexual or gender orientation. We welcome documented and undocumented Americans, we welcome military veterans, we welcome all political and religious affiliations. We commit to living up to this welcome and expect to be held to a high standard of accessibility and openness.

We abide by the Discrimination Policy set forth by the Office of Institutional Equity: <http://www.montana.edu/policy/discrimination/>. In particular, if you have a documented disability for which you are or may be requesting an accommodation(s), please talk with Disabilities Services, your faculty members, and the Director of Graduate Studies for support. Disability Services and Information: <http://www.montana.edu/aycss/disability/>

Additionally, Title IX makes it clear that violence and harassment based on sex and gender are Civil Rights offenses subject to the same kinds of accountability and the same kinds of support applied to offenses against other protected categories such as race, national origin, etc. If you or someone you know has been harassed or assaulted, you can find the appropriate resources here:

Title IX Officer: <http://www.montana.edu/titleix/>  
 Voice Center: <http://www.montana.edu/oha/voice/>  
 Counseling Services: <http://www.montana.edu/counseling/services/>  
 University Police: <http://www.montana.edu/police/>

**This handbook provides** basic information about the program, including its requirements, expectations, and procedures. Students should familiarize themselves with the information here and keep this handbook for future reference as questions arise. Keep in mind, however, that questions or concerns may arise that are not covered here; students should always speak with the Director of Graduate Studies (DGS) if they encounter a situation not addressed here.

The Graduate Studies Committee is made up of the Director of Graduate Studies and faculty members from the Department of English. The Graduate Studies Committee, chaired by the Director of Graduate Studies, reviews the academic procedures and policies, recommends changes to the faculty, updates the Graduate Student Handbook, plans and directs graduate workshops, reviews and selects candidates for admittance, and awards teaching assistantships. The Director of Graduate Studies oversees the activities of the Graduate Studies Committee and organizes the graduate program as a whole.

There are a number of rules, regulations, and deadlines with which students must become familiar. All regulations in this handbook must be followed to maintain good

standing in the program. There may be extenuating circumstances that justify modification of these regulations. If a student feels that special consideration should be given to their situation, the student should see the Director of Graduate Studies, who will recommend the appropriate procedure. In most cases, a student will petition the Graduate Studies Committee, whose members will review the petition and inform the student of their decision.

## II. DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF GRADUATE STUDENTS AND FACULTY

### Graduate Students

**Requirements:** Every graduate student is expected to meet all the requirements set forth in the current Montana State University catalog and all other requirements specified by the Department of English. These requirements are subject to change; graduate students will be notified of modifications in departmental rules and procedures. Because MA students must meet the requirements of The Graduate School as well as the English Department, they should familiarize themselves with the [English Department](#) web site and the [Graduate School's](#) web site.

**Contact information:** Each graduate student will be assigned a mailbox, located in the main office of the department, 2-176 Wilson Hall. Students should provide Teresa Klusmann, the MA program administrator, with updated contact information, including their preferred e-mail address. Students should regularly check their physical mailbox and email.

**Academic performance:** Graduate students are expected to prepare for and attend their classes, and to participate actively in departmental functions. A student must maintain a minimum 3.0 semester GPA, a minimum 3.0 GPA in the entire program and a cumulative 3.0 GPA overall. Any student whose cumulative or program grade point average is less than 3.0 at the end of any term may be placed on university probation or suspended from the College.

Although it occurs rarely, the department also has an obligation to notify any student who is not performing adequately in their academic work. If that happens, the department will inform the student at the earliest possible time and, when circumstances warrant, will work with the student to correct the problem or improve the situation.

**Graduate teaching assistants (GTAs):** GTAs are expected to complete the obligations of their teaching and tutoring assignments. GTAs work closely with the director of composition throughout the term of their assistantships. GTAs are responsible for applying for a teaching assistantship renewal prior to March 1 of the year the renewal takes effect (see "Teaching Assistantships" for the application and renewal procedure). Also, refer to the GTA Handbook.

## Faculty

The Department of English has important responsibilities to its graduate students. Above all, faculty serve as informal and formal mentors to graduate students. The department encourages graduate students to seek out faculty mentors. Mentors can be invaluable, giving advice and perspective on all aspects of graduate education. These professional connections also benefit faculty members, who are often energized by their work with graduate students. In the belief that the best mentoring relationships are self-selected, the department does not assign specific students to specific faculty members; instead, students should consult the list of faculty and research specialties below and talk with the Director of Graduate Studies to become familiar with department members and their research specialties.

For more information about faculty, including contact information and office hours, please visit the [department's website](#).

The department endeavors to provide students with the best possible training through course work, seminars, travel support when possible, research experience, and other activities. It has an obligation to keep current in professional areas and to give students the best possible guidance in course selection and other professional issues. When the time comes for students to apply for more advanced graduate work or seek employment, the department will assist students in every way it can.

Faculty members serving on graduate student thesis/professional paper committees are responsible for reading and commenting on the student's prospectuses and meeting with the student to discuss the prospectus. The faculty member is also responsible for reading and responding to the final draft of the student's thesis or professional paper and administering the student's thesis/professional paper defense by the university deadline.

### **III. REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE**

The Master of Arts degree is thirty credits. Students will select one of two options, either the professional paper or the thesis.

#### Professional paper option requirements

- 24 hours of course work
- 6 hours of professional paper credits
- Professional paper oral defense

### Thesis option requirements

- 21 hours of course work
- 10 hours of thesis credits
- Thesis oral defense

### Choosing Between the Professional Paper and Thesis Options

As the above listed requirements show, the main difference between the thesis and professional paper option is the number of credits devoted to course work and the thesis or professional paper project. Students are encouraged to do the professional paper option as the culmination of their studies. While neither the English Department nor The Graduate School has a formal page length requirement for the thesis or professional paper, generally a professional paper ranges between 25-40 pages and a thesis ranges between 70-100 pages. Students declare their option during their second semester of course work at MSU when they complete the “Graduate Program of Study and Committee Form.” Even after completing this form, students may decide to change their option if they wish to do so upon consultation with their chair.

### Course Credit Restrictions for Both Options

- 400-level credits: Six credits at the 400 level can be applied to the degree; students confer with the professor to add a graduate component to the course (additional readings and/or writings or teaching).
- ENGL 592 credit limitations: Six credits of Independent Study (ENGL 592) may be included in the professional paper plan. A total of six credits of Independent Study (ENGL 592) courses may be included in the thesis plan.
- Independent Study (ENGL 592) and Internship (ENGL 598) courses may not comprise more than ten credits of the required credits for a graduate degree.
- The following courses may not be used toward graduate degree requirements: 476 (Undergraduate Internship), 489 (Undergraduate Research/Creative Activity Instruction), 490 (Undergraduate Research/Creative Activity), 588 (Professional Development).

### Transfer Credits

With approval from the Director of Graduate Studies, students can transfer up to six credits of previous graduate work from another institution to apply toward their degree.

#### Courses From Other MSU Departments

After enrollment and as a part of their research interests, students may apply up to six credits of graduate work from another MSU department toward their degree. Graduate students wishing to take graduate classes from another department should consult with the Director of Graduate Studies and their committee chair to be sure that the course(s) are appropriate to the professional paper or thesis area.

### **IV. DEGREE TIMETABLE & DEADLINES**

#### First Year

##### **Fall**

Students take coursework and become actively involved in the life of the department by getting to know their advisor (the Director of Graduate Studies), attending the graduate student reception to meet faculty (September), and going to talks and presentations across campus.

##### **January**

Students meet with the DGS to discuss a possible research topic/line of inquiry, potential committee members, and thesis/professional paper options.

##### **End of March**

Students officially form a graduate committee by the end of the month. Students discuss proposed project with each committee member.

*Form Due:* [Graduate Program of Study and Committee Form due to the Administrative Assistant in the English Department and to The Graduate School.](#)

##### **End of April**

In consultation with the chair and the committee members, students create their summer reading list, a list of 20-25 articles and/or books to read over the summer. This list is shared with the committee. Students should also talk with their chair about the genre, aim and expectations of the prospectus.

##### **Summer**

Students work on their reading lists (reading & taking notes within and across texts). Students may read additional materials as their research unfolds. In August, students should write a draft of the prospectus.

#### Second Year: Professional Paper

**Middle of September**

Check in with chair.

**Middle of October**

Students should meet with committee members by October 15 to receive substantive feedback on prospectus. Faculty may suggest new directions, additional texts, honing of argument, etc.

**November to December**

Student works on professional paper, consulting with chair monthly and committee members as needed/determined by the committee.

**Early January**

Students discuss their progress towards completion with chair in relationship to the workability of projected timeline.

**Middle of January**

Students should submit a complete draft of the professional paper to committee chair.

**February 5**

*Form due:* [Last day to file Graduation Application and Application for Advanced Degree Checklist](#) (the checklist is optional yet informative)

**Beginning of March**

Students should submit a revision of professional paper.

**First Week of April**

Students need to schedule an appointment with the formatting advisor in The Graduate School if the professional paper will be submitted to the library.

Students need to schedule their defense to be completed ideally the first week of April. Plan for 90 minutes. Students may be asked by the committee at the defense to complete additional revisions before turning in the final draft to The Graduate School. Check the actual deadlines for final submission on the Graduate School's website.

*Form due:* [Student brings Certificate of Approval Form to defense.](#)

Second Year: Thesis Option**Middle of September**

Prospectus due, including bibliography and projected timeline of thesis.

**End of September**



Students should meet with committee members by September 30 to receive substantive feedback on prospectus. Faculty may suggest new directions, additional texts, honing of argument, etc.

### **Middle of December**

Students should submit a first chapter of thesis to committee chair. The chair provides substantive feedback by the first week of spring semester, but ideally the beginning of January.

### **Early January**

Students discuss their progress towards completion with chair in relationship to the workability of projected timeline.

### **February 5**

*Form due:* [Last day to file Graduation Application and Application for Advanced Degree Checklist](#) (the checklist is optional yet informative)

### **Middle of February**

Students ideally submit a draft of their whole thesis (or a substantial number of chapters) to their chair by this date.

### **March**

Students work on revisions and formatting.

### **First Week of April**

Students need to schedule an appointment with the formatting advisor in The Graduate School regarding the formatting of the thesis.

Students need to schedule their defense to be completed ideally the first week of April. Plan for 90 minutes. Students may be asked by the committee at the defense to complete additional revisions before turning in the final draft to The Graduate School. Check the actual deadline for final submission on The Graduate School's website.

*Form due:* [Student brings Certificate of Approval Form to defense.](#)

### **Coursework**

The MA program is typically a four-semester course of study. Students usually take two or three courses a semester for their first year, depending on their teaching assignment, and begin work on their thesis or professional paper credits in the summer session between their first and second year of study.

### **First Semester**

For most students, the first semester will be an opportunity to begin focusing on possible areas of interest and meeting members of the faculty.

## **Second Semester**

### Graduate Program of Study and Committee Form

By the midpoint of the second semester of graduate work, students are required by The Graduate School to submit a [Graduate Program of Study and Committee Form](#). This form requires students to form their graduate committees and to outline their courses for their degrees. Many students feel that they are too early in their programs to complete the form, but that is exactly one of its purposes, to prepare students for completing their degree requirements in a timely fashion.

Students are responsible for filling out this form, and graduate committee chairs should double-check the program of study to ensure all program requirements will be met. The form may be revised if a student's plan changes after the form has been completed. After filling out the form, students will need to gather signatures from their committee members and chairs. Students should then give the form to Teresa or Mandy; they will obtain the department chair's signature, make a copy of the form for the student's file, and submit the original to The Graduate School.

The department's request for tuition waivers for a GTA's second year is based upon the program form. Students need to plan carefully, both the number of credits they will take and the semesters they plan to take them. Students who do not submit their program forms in a timely fashion will be considered as not working toward a degree by The Graduate School and will become ineligible for financial aid (including teaching assistantships, work-study, and other University employment).

### Choosing the Members of a Graduate Committee

As part of completing the "Graduate Program of Study and Committee Form," each student will form a graduate committee of three members. This committee advises the student on academic matters and is the examining committee. As students think about choosing committee members, they should consider faculty members' areas of expertise and the working relationships that will best help them succeed. At least two of the committee members must be faculty in the Department of English, and the committee chair should be the English faculty member whose area of expertise parallels the topic of the professional paper or thesis, as well as the working relationships that will best help them succeed. Once the student's graduate committee is formed, the committee chairperson will serve as the student's academic advisor.

### Reading List

Working with the chair and committee, students will develop a reading list of 25-30 books or articles to study over the summer between the first and second year. The reading list may be revised into the bibliography for the prospectus, which is due early in

the fall of the second year. Each reading list will vary depending upon the student's topic, but it should include the crucial works of literature, criticism, and theory for the project. Students should confer with the committee chair about the best way to develop the list. Some chairs prefer that the student develop the initial draft with them and then pass it on to other committee members for additional suggestions; other chairs like the committee as a whole to work on the list from the beginning.

Students confer with the committee chair about how progress on the professional paper/thesis credits will be assessed. Every time a student elects 575/590 credits, the student will fill out a copy of the credit contract with the committee chair.

### **Third Semester (or the Semester Prior to Graduation)**

#### Early Thesis/Professional Paper Credits

Students typically begin work on their thesis or professional paper credits in the summer between their first and second years in the program. Early thesis/professional paper credits (ENGL 575/590) are dedicated to a literature review, or survey of the existing scholarship, on their topic (the first two professional paper credits and the first three thesis credits.) This scholarship survey will prepare students to answer the following questions at their professional paper/thesis defense: "How does your project contribute to the ongoing scholarly conversation on your chosen topic?" and "What is at stake in your project as a whole?"

#### Thesis or Professional Paper Prospectus

The Prospectus describes the subject and scope of the project, states the project's contribution to the body of knowledge on the subject and provides a sketch or outline of the project's organization.

The student should also develop a Timeline detailing the schedule for completing the major stages of the thesis or professional paper. This Timeline should accompany the Prospectus.

#### Bibliography

Students include with their prospectus a bibliography of the works they plan to consult and analyze in their thesis/professional paper. This should be a revised version of the reading list. The student must supply a copy of the prospectus, the timeline, and the bibliography to each member of the committee and to the Director of Graduate Studies.

### **Final Semester**

#### Application for Advanced Degree

Early in the semester during which a student expects to graduate, an [Application for Advanced Degree Form](#) must be filed with The Graduate School. When students

complete their applications, they will submit the form to Teresa or Mandy, who will make a copy of the form for the student's file and submit the original to The Graduate School.

The Graduate School charges a non-refundable fee for processing an Application for Advanced Degree Form.

To change graduation dates after filing the application, the student must withdraw their application by filling out the form at The Graduate School's web site and then resubmit a new application for their new semester of graduation.

#### Thesis/Professional Paper Submission

Students must submit their thesis to their graduate committee by mid-February for spring semester graduation, 1 June for summer session graduation, or October 15 if the student is graduating in fall semester. Professional papers should be submitted mid-January for spring semester graduation. While the student will likely continue to revise the thesis or professional paper according to the committee's comments, this version is considered final for the purposes of determining whether the student is ready to proceed to the oral defense. A student's graduate committee will decide at this point whether the student is ready to schedule his or her defense.

#### Scheduling the Oral Defense

Once students gain approval from their graduate committee chair to schedule their defense, they should consult with the members of their graduate committees to select a 90-minute time period when everyone is able to meet. Once they've consulted with their chair and committee members about a meeting time, they can ask the office to help them schedule a room.

The English Department must notify The Graduate School of a defense date two weeks in advance. Students must provide the Administrative Assistant with the title of their thesis or professional paper, the date, time, and location of the defense. The Graduate School will post this information on their "What's New" web page.

#### Scope of the Oral Defense

The student's committee conducts the oral exam, which lasts about 90 minutes. Students will prepare opening remarks or a presentation of the thesis or professional paper and confer with the committee chair about how to best use this portion of the defense. This opening section of the defense is open to the public; the question and answer period of the defense is not open to the public. After the oral exam's conclusion, the graduate committee will decide whether the student passed the oral exam and will inform the candidate and the Director of Graduate Studies promptly. The oral exam is graded on a scale of pass, fail, and distinction. In the event that a graduate student does not pass the oral examination, he or she can retake the oral exam once the following semester.

### Formatting & Electronic Submission

The finalized thesis must be submitted in electronic form to The Graduate School. Professional papers may be submitted to The Graduate School if the student wishes.

For a thesis/professional paper to be approved for electronic submission, it must be formatted according to The Graduate School's specifications. Each student must schedule an appointment with a staff member to have the formatting of the thesis approved. The initial formatting check can be done as soon as a student has prepared a draft of the thesis front matter and a sample chapter in accordance with the guidelines available on [The Graduate School's website](#).

As students plan their timetable for submitting the final version of their theses/professional paper, allot a week for formatting the work and gaining approval from The Graduate School to submit it in electronic form.

Professional paper option students who do not wish to submit their work to The Graduate School should consult with the chair of their graduate committee about appropriate formatting choices for the professional paper.

The thesis or professional paper must be submitted in final form to The Graduate School no later than fourteen working days before the end of the term in which graduate work is completed.

Deadlines for submitting the final version of the thesis are listed on [The Graduate School's website](#).

### Passing with Distinction

Graduate students will be awarded a pass with distinction if their thesis or professional paper demonstrates exceptional merit (as decided upon by the majority of the student's collective committee) in three or more of the following categories:

- Demonstrates creative and original thought and argument that extends current scholarship in the student's area of inquiry
- Explores a breadth of theoretical method or scope of inquiry beyond the normal range of a MA project (especially if moving in the direction of the kind of project that one might undertake as a PhD dissertation)
- Develops an impressive detailed, comprehensive, and compelling new interpretation of a significant literary, cultural, or theoretical text
- Demonstrates a mastery of the relevant scholarship in the student's area of inquiry
- Performs an exceptional defense that demonstrates a student's ability to articulate and defend their project with clarity and conviction

- Demonstrates reasonable promise of publication (in whole or in part) by an academic journal in the student's chosen field of study, or
- Produces a thesis/professional paper written in an exceptional manner

## **V. REGISTRATION PROCEDURES**

### New Students

The Graduate School sends students an information sheet about the registration process with their acceptance letters. The English department's Director of Graduate Studies will advise students about course offerings for the first semester.

### New GTA Payroll Logistics & Registration

To assist the department in requesting tuition fee waivers, students need to notify the Administrative Assistant as soon as possible about how many credits they will take the first year. The office will need an I-9 and W-4 form completed by each student.

The Graduate School will not process a student's stipend appointment form until they have registered for classes. The electronic process (e-GAAF) requires students to accept the terms of the appointment each semester; this pertains to both the waiver and stipend and is applicable to both new and continuing students.

Students register for courses through the English Department Office.

### Returning Students

Returning students should meet with their advisor, either the Director of Graduate Studies or their committee chair (if they have formed their graduate committee) in order to select appropriate courses. Students register by contacting the office. The office verifies that second year students are following their Program of Study. If they deviate from that form, the office staff will guide them through the Program Change process.

The Graduate School will not process a student's stipend appointment form until they have registered for classes. The electronic process (e-GAAF) requires students to accept the terms of the appointment each semester; this pertains to both the waiver and stipend and is applicable to both new and continuing students.

### Summer Registration

Due to policy changes in The Graduate School, the English Department can no longer offer tuition waivers for graduate teaching assistants who wish to enroll for summer credits. Students who wish to do work toward their degrees in the summer have two choices available: 1) pay out of pocket for the credits; or 2) perform work in the summer for credits they will officially enroll for in the fall semester.

Please note that even though students will not register for credits until the fall, they should complete the paperwork for 575/590 before they begin working on any courses/projects in the summer.

#### Registering for an Independent Study (ENGL 592)

After students determine the topic they wish to pursue in an independent study, they should ask the department faculty member whose area of expertise matches their topic if they would be willing to oversee their project. Working in consultation with the faculty member, the student will complete “A Request for Independent Study Form” that requires a specific explanation of the independent study’s topic, objectives, readings, and writing assignments. (Hard copies of the form are available in the English department or download the form from The Graduate School’s web site.

Multiple signatures are needed for the completed form. After the faculty member who will serve as the instructor signs the form, the student’s graduate committee chair signs the form. The form is then given to the Director of Graduate Studies for review. Then the DGS gives the form to the department chair for the final signature.

#### Registering for an Internship (ENGL 598)

Proposal forms for ENGL 598 are available in the English office. To qualify for graduate credit, the proposal must include: 1) a description of how the internship fits into the academic program (students cannot earn internship credits for simply serving as a professor’s teaching assistant, nor can they earn internship credits for their work as GTA’s); 2) a list of the academic readings to be conducted as part of the course (one or two books or a series of journal articles); an explanation of the type of writing to be produced (a series of short essays or a long seminar paper). Students will submit copies of the written work produced for the internship to the coordinator of graduate studies.

#### Registering for Thesis (590) and Professional Paper Credits (575)

Students should meet with their graduate committee chairs to determine how many thesis/professional paper credits they should register for and the nature of work to be accomplished for the credits. As students plan how they will register for these credits, keep in mind that The Graduate School requires that students be enrolled for a minimum of three credits during the semester in which they will graduate. Students should also confer with their committee chair about how their progress on the professional paper/thesis credits will be assessed.

#### Leave of Absence Policy

If a student finds that they need to take time away from the program, the student should confer with her or his graduate committee chair and the Director of Graduate Studies. The leave of absence policy varies depending upon the student’s progress in the program. Once students complete the courses outlined on their Program of Study Form (with the exception of thesis or professional paper credits) or take their written exams, they must be “continuously enrolled” to maintain graduate status. However, The

Graduate School allows students to be absent from the university for three semesters, consecutive or individual, and still maintain their “continuously enrolled” graduate status. For more information on MSU’s continuous enrollment policy, please refer to The Graduate School’s website.

Following a semester leave, students must file an “Intent to Register Form” with The Graduate School for reentry to the university and program. Students may pick up a copy of the form from the Registrar’s office or download the form from the Registrar’s website.

## **VI. TEACHING ASSISTANTSHIPS**

The English Department awards Graduate Teaching Assistantships not only in order to defray the costs of a student’s graduate program but to allow them a source of income and tuition remission during their graduate studies while keeping their focus in the department. The department also understands GTAships as important professional preparation and experience for students interested in later teaching work. As such, the department commits to creating a rich, mentored experience.

### Eligibility and Criteria for Award

Any applicant to the English M.A. program may request a GTAship. During the admissions process, the Graduate Committee reviews requests as it considers Fall applications. (GTA appointments begin only in Fall semesters.) The committee considers the following criteria in awarding GTAships:

- The overall quality of the application for graduate studies
- Particular reasoning offered in the applicant’s request for a GTAship
- The fit of the applicant’s stated goals for study with the learning experience the GTAship creates
- An applicant’s previous teaching or tutoring experience
- The applicant’s ranking among those who have requested an assistantship.

GTAships require enrollment in at least 6 credit hours per semester (Fall and Spring).

### Applications by Current Graduate Students

A current graduate student without funding may apply for a GTAship for their second year of study by writing a brief letter of application to the Graduate Committee, due Jan. 31. Their application should be accompanied by a letter of support from a faculty member of one of their 500-level courses, speaking to the student’s abilities as a graduate student and suitability for teaching. These requests for GTAships will be considered along with new-applicant requests during the regular Fall admissions application review.

### Responsibilities



GTAs are instructors of record for three Writing courses per year, usually two courses in Fall creating a nominal workload of 18 hours per week, and one course in Spring with a nominal workload of 9 hours per week. As instructors of record, GTAs are responsible for all aspects of their course: syllabus and assignment design, setting course policies, teaching all class meetings, responding to student writing, grading and classroom management, and assigning students' course grades. GTAs normally teach WRIT 101 but may apply for other opportunities in their second year.

As a condition of the GTAship, GTAs must attend a pre-service orientation before the beginning of the Fall semester the first year of their GTAship. They must also enroll in ENGL 505 Teaching College Composition during their first semester of teaching.

### Preparation and Mentoring

The department understands GTAships as powerful learning and professionalizing experiences for graduate students and does not require previous teaching experience as a qualification for receiving a GTAship. Because most GTAships are awarded to graduate students with limited or no teaching experience, the department offers and requires participation in extensive preparation and mentoring support of graduate students' teaching, including:

- An 8-day pre-service orientation typically held in the middle of August, prior to the beginning of Fall semester. Students are notified in the offer of a GTAship the dates of orientation and must agree to be present for the whole of the orientation in order to be offered a GTAship. In the orientation, students become acquainted with the goals and learning outcomes of WRIT 101, develop their syllabus and assignment sequence for the course, and receive instruction in elements of teaching design and classroom management specific to writing instruction.
- Enrollment in ENGL 505 Teaching College Composition, a required three-credit graduate course. ENGL 505 offers students greater depth of reading and discussion in matters of writing instruction, creates ongoing week-by-week support of GTAs first experiences teaching WRIT 101, and assists GTAs in the ongoing creation of teaching plans for the course. As part of the course, students are required to observe one another's classes and to be observed by the Director of Composition (who teaches the class).

### Renewal of GTAships

The department grants GTAships for up to two years (four non-summer semesters) of graduate study, in one-year appointments. In early spring each year, the Graduate Committee reviews current GTAships and considers second-year appointments. Students are assumed to seek a second-year appointment unless they otherwise notify the Director of Composition and Director of Graduate Studies.

Renewals of GTAships for a second year are contingent on a) satisfactory performance of teaching duties, b) maintenance of an acceptable standard of work in graduate classes and c) progress toward satisfying degree requirements.

### Workload Management

GTAs are expected to balance their teaching time with time spent on their own studies. It is a typical challenge all GTAs, adjuncts, lecturers and faculty navigate. Students who encounter difficulties with time management or other issues related to their studies can consult with the Director of Graduate Studies, the Director of Composition, graduate faculty, or other GTAs.

### Limitations on Campus Employment for GTAs

To encourage success as a student and a teaching assistant, The Graduate School has the following employment policy: “Graduate students may not be employed for more than 19 hours per week cumulatively for all forms of employment on campus.” English Department teaching assistants thus may not take on other forms of campus employment during their appointment.

### Retaining Course Evaluations and Grades

GTAs should keep all student course evaluations for future employment reference. The department retains electronic copies for at least the period of a GTAs appointment.

MSU requires all student grade records to be kept for five years. During this period, GTAs are responsible to be able to produce records showing how each of their students' course grades were computed.

## **VII. GTA ADVANCED ASSIGNMENT**

All Advanced Assignments are contingent on department funding and scheduling needs.

1. Core Writing. This opportunity allows for the option of assigning GTAs to 200-level core writing classes (WRIT 201, WRIT 221) in their second year.

### Requirements

- Student has a 4.0 in graduate work.
- Student is making good progress towards the thesis or professional paper according to their chair.
- Student has a strong record of success as a WRIT 101 instructor as determined by course evaluations, observations, and the assessment of the Director of Composition.
- Student has the support of an English Department faculty member appropriate to the course content who will meet regularly with the student in preparation for

teaching the course and during the semester the course is taught. A 1-credit IS in preparation is recommended in advance of the semester the course is taught.

### Process

Student submits a proposal with the faculty mentor's endorsement in advance of the semester of preparation. This proposal is reviewed by the Director of Graduate Studies and the Department Chair.

## 2. Writing Center

This opportunity allows for the option of assigning a GTA to work as a Writing Center tutor and to assist in the programming and administration of the Writing Center for 10 hours a week in their second year.

### Requirements

- Student declares an interest in Writing Center theory and/or administration.
- Student is in good standing in their graduate work.
- Student is making good progress towards the thesis or professional paper according to their chair.
- Student has the support of their committee chair and of the Writing Center Director.
- Student will participate in ongoing Writing Center Theory and Praxis education, whether through weekly tutor education workshops or Writing Center Theory and Praxis course enrollment.
- A 1-credit IS with the Writing Center Director in preparation is recommended either in advance or during the semester/year the graduate student is assigned to the Writing Center.

### Process

Student submits a proposal with the Writing Center Director's endorsement in advance of the semester of preparation. This proposal is reviewed by the Director of Graduate Studies and the Department Chair.

## **VIII. FINANCIAL SUPPORT**

The primary form of financial support available through the Department of English is teaching assistantships, which are awarded on a competitive basis. We recognize, however, that not all students are awarded teaching assistantships, nor do all students desire to teach. Graduate students should be aware that University regulations prohibit them from being employed by the university more than 19 hours per week.

The Graduate School also awards a limited number of fellowships to eligible graduate students on the basis of information included in their application forms. Students should also check with the Financial Aid Office to determine whether they are eligible for any other forms of financial aid.

## **IX. COMMUNITY SUPPORT & PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

### The Associated English Graduate Students of MSU

Founded in spring 2007, the Associated English Graduate Students of MSU (AEGS) was formed in an effort to promote continued learning outside of the classroom, to enable professional development and to facilitate institutional memory. AEGS aims to create an atmosphere of egalitarian opportunity, inclusiveness, mutual appreciation and encouragement of academic studies and professional engagement.

This organization furthers the mentorship of newer students by both faculty and experienced students, provide leadership opportunities, and create a venue of awards for the recognition of peer excellence. AEGS seminars provide vital information about everything from how to successfully complete the thesis/professional writing process (including both information about deadlines and requirements and helpful suggestions about how to improve student work at every stage in the process) to applying for PhD programs and jobs. It aims to provide comprehensive support in matters both academic and professional. We strongly encourage students to participate in the AEGS program. If students have ideas about how to improve the experience in the MA program, please see the AEGS leadership.

All MSU English graduate students and faculty members are welcome and encouraged to be a part of this experience. There are no membership dues or fees.

### Financial Support for Travel to Professional Conferences

Students who have papers accepted for presentation at professional conferences should contact the Department Chair to see if any funds are available to help defray traveling expenses. If the academic budget for the year does include funding for student travel, the student will be asked to write a letter to the department chair stating the name and dates of the conference, the title of the paper, and projected travel costs. Most years, some funds are also made available by the College of Letters and Science at the very beginning of the academic year. If students are interested in applying for these funds, please see the Department Chair as early in the year as possible, so that the Chair can help with the process of applying for these funds and obtaining letters of support.

## X. AWARDS

### The Michael T. and Sharon A. Beehler Award

This award is a \$1,000 cash award to the top first year graduate student planning to continue in the MSU English graduate program for their second year. All first-year students continuing on to their second year are eligible for the award.

The award will be conferred on the first-year graduate student judged to have performed most highly in graduate (500-level) coursework and contributed most highly to the community of English graduate students and the English department.

The Graduate Committee considers input from faculty and its own experiences with students (e.g. through DGS as advisor) to make final judgment for the award.

### Outstanding Thesis/Professional Paper Award

To be considered for the outstanding graduate thesis/professional paper award, a student must be nominated by a member of his or her thesis/professional paper committee. The Director of Graduate Studies will solicit nominations from the faculty during spring semester (late enough to let students substantially finish their thesis, but early enough to select an award winner before the department awards ceremony), and a list of nominated students will be made.

The Director of Graduate Studies will then be responsible for notifying these students and requesting that they submit a representative writing sample of their thesis or a draft of their entire professional paper. The Graduate Studies Committee will read these writing samples and determine the award. Committee chairs and members will be allowed to vote for students that they are supervising.

Nominations and award-winning project should be based on the project having three or more of the following qualities:

- Demonstrates creative and original thought and argument that extends current scholarship in the student's area of inquiry
- Explores a breadth of theoretical method or scope of inquiry beyond the normal range of a MA project (especially if moving in the direction of the kind of project that one might undertake as a PhD dissertation)
- Develops an impressive detailed, comprehensive, and compelling new interpretation of a significant literary, cultural, or theoretical text
- Demonstrates a mastery of the relevant scholarship in the student's area of inquiry
- Produces a thesis/professional paper written in an exceptional manner

### Outstanding Graduate Teaching Assistant Award

Each spring semester, the Graduate Committee awards an Outstanding Graduate Teaching Assistant Award. GTAs self-nominate. Nominees are invited to be considered for the award by submitting the following materials:

- 1-2 page application statement that summarizes teaching strengths
- Current CV
- Statement of teaching philosophy
- List of classes taught
- Summary of Teaching Evaluations

The winner becomes the department's nominee for the CLS Outstanding Teaching Assistant Award. Selection of Outstanding GTA may consider a GTA's likely appeal to the award committee for the CLS award.

## **XI. ADVISING**

From the time students begin the program until they form their graduate committee, students are advised by the Director of Graduate Studies. After students begin to work with their graduate committee, their committee chairs become their primary advisors, though all graduate students need to communicate with the Director of Graduate Studies throughout their degree to assure that all deadlines are met and paperwork is completed.

Having an assigned advisor, particularly before a student forms a graduate committee, does not preclude seeking advice and support from other members of the department. The entire faculty wants every student to succeed and having several people to go to with questions is a good idea. Students should remember, however, to keep the Director of Graduate Studies informed about any decisions that may affect their progress to the degree.

## **XII. STUDENT CONDUCT**

All graduate students are subject to the student conduct code. Please see Conduct Guidelines and Grievance Procedures for Students:

[http://www.montana.edu/policy/student\\_conduct/](http://www.montana.edu/policy/student_conduct/)

### Course Concerns

If problems related to courses arise, a student's first step toward resolving them is to discuss the matter with the course instructor. If the matter cannot be resolved at the student-teacher level, the student should discuss the matter with the Director of Graduate Studies. If, after discussing the matter with the student and the teacher, the DGS cannot resolve the matter in a way acceptable to both parties, the student should

take their concern to the department chair. In some cases, the DGS and/or the department chair may refer the issue to the Graduate Studies Committee who has the final decision-making power for issues related to graduate study.