

M.A. IN ENGLISH CAPSTONE PROJECTS

Revised and approved by the Graduate Programs Committee on February 12, 2020

Approved by the English Department on May 19, 2020

Please note: students who entered the program *prior to Fall 2020* will have the option to use either the prior document or this updated document for their MA capstone (please consult with your committee chair on that decision); students who enter the program *Fall 2020 and later* will use this updated document.

THESIS

The thesis is designed both to demonstrate students' academic achievements and to prepare them for the next step in their careers: applying for further graduate work (such as MA, MFA, or PhD programs), seeking teaching positions, entering the job market, submitting creative work for publication, or demonstrating proficiency in secondary education and continuing education.

The thesis work needs to support and align with the student's planned next step. To this end, professional documents will be a component of the thesis requirements as listed below, and the specific type/format of the professional documents will be tailored to the student's career plan. Guidance for selecting the type of professional documents to submit is listed below, and, for more information on these types of materials, please see the attached information on Resources for Crafting Professional Documents.

- A student planning to apply to Ph.D. programs should generate a personal statement and a Curriculum Vitae (CV).
- A student planning to seek a higher education teaching position (with the M.A.) should generate a cover letter that includes a teaching philosophy and a CV that respond to a real job advertisement located by the student and included as part of this submission.
- A student planning to enter the job market or demonstrate proficiency in secondary education and continuing education should generate a cover letter and a résumé that respond to a real job advertisement located by the student and included as part of this submission.
- A student planning to submit creative work for publication should generate a submission cover letter and a CV.

Students should understand the contractual nature of the capstone collaboration between the student and the committee. Students may not 1) change from one capstone project to another or 2) change major concepts/ideas/topics or the timeline of the capstone project without expressed permission from all committee members. Additionally, students should understand that making said changes will likely extend the student's time in the program.

When students have earned 12 graduate credits, they decide on and formally propose a topic and assemble a three-member thesis committee (a thesis director and two readers) from the eligible Graduate Faculty. The M.A. Comprehensive Assessment Form signed by all three members of the committee must be submitted by the student to the Graduate Director no later than the semester during which the student will complete 18 credit hours of coursework. The 6-hour capstone associated with thesis is fulfilled through ENG 681 (which the student must enroll in

under the faculty member chairing the committee after submitting the signed Comprehensive Assessment Form). The thesis director, in consultation with the readers, assigns a credit or no credit grade for 681. If a student takes more than one semester to complete the capstone project, the director should assign a PR (progress) grade to a student who is making progress towards the completion of the project but who has not completed all of the requirements. PR grades from previous semesters must be changed to CR or NC (using the official University course change form) once the student has completed his or her capstone project.

The thesis has six requirements. Each requirement is intended to help students produce a capstone experience exemplifying the knowledge and abilities learned through their coursework and professionalize in their chosen area of study (Literary Studies, Composition/Rhetoric, Creative Writing, or TESOL—please note that no new students will be admitted to the TESOL area of emphasis after Fall 2017). While all M.A. students submitting theses must meet these requirements, the details will necessarily vary within each area of study.

The six requirements are:

- Preliminary project description (prospectus)
- Request for IRB approval
- Professional Documents*
- Thesis
- Public presentation (defense)
- Submission of electronic thesis to the Marshall University Digital Scholar site

The suggested length is 50-75 pages for scholarly theses and 50-75 pages of genre content, including a 15-20 page critical introduction, for creative theses. Ultimately, the final decision on page count and scope of the project rests with the committee chair and student. *Note: the suggested length of the thesis DOES NOT include the Professional Documents. Those are separate from the thesis and are submitted to the Director of Graduate Studies after being submitted to the committee for final approval.

1. PRELIMINARY PROJECT DESCRIPTION (PROSPECTUS)

The student must submit to prospective committee members and the Graduate Director a preliminary project description (prospectus) no later than the end of the first year of coursework. As relevant, this description should include a proposed general overview of the project, a working hypothesis, and a bibliography of 10-12 pertinent critical or creative texts. The prospectus might also contain information about how the student envisions the project meeting the learning outcomes of the English M.A. program. Sample prospectuses are available through the Graduate Director.

Each committee may determine some flexibility in roles, but the chair will typically be the contact person between the student and other committee members and together with the student will schedule a communication and submission calendar. A committee should usually plan to communicate at least once each semester until the project has been completed.

2. REQUEST FOR IRB APPROVAL

Before beginning work on the thesis, whether the project will involve human/animal subject research or not, the student must send the abstract to Bruce Day <day50@marshall.edu>, MU Director of the Office of Research Integrity. If the thesis requires Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval, then the student will be directed to the appropriate IRB coordinator for assistance. If the thesis is deemed by Mr. Day not to be human/animal subject research, then the student will be provided a letter stating that determination. Every thesis must include a letter from the IRB indicating that the project is not human/animal subject research or indicating that it is and that the project are approved to proceed with the research. The student must include a copy of one or the other IRB letters as an appendix item in their work when submitting the electronic thesis (see number 5 below).

3. THESIS

3a. Writing, Revising, and Conferencing Prior to the Thesis Defense

The student should expect to meet with the thesis director throughout the writing process. Students and directors should work together to determine the frequency of meetings, which may range from once or twice before the defense to weekly meetings over the course of one or two semesters. Regardless of the frequency of meetings, the student should expect to submit work to the director and readers regularly. Once a student completes a section/chapter of the thesis, the chair should circulate that work to other members of the committee so that all committee members have the opportunity to review and comment on the work before the defense.

3b. Submitting a “Preliminary Full” Draft to the Committee and Scheduling the Defense

All committee members should expect to receive a “preliminary full” draft of a thesis at least two weeks prior to the date listed on the graduate calendar for submitting a “complete” draft. A defense should not be scheduled until this first full draft has been reviewed. The Director of Graduate Studies will circulate a document (which will also be posted to the English Department’s Graduate Resources page) each semester with the updated deadlines for graduation and the department’s suggested timeline for submitting drafts.

3c. Submitting the “Complete” Draft to the Committee

A “complete” draft reflecting the student’s revisions made according to the committee’s initial suggestions should then be made available to the committee chair as specified on the graduate calendar and in the department’s graduation and capstone deadline document, and the chair will further advise the student whether to forward this as a final draft to the rest of the committee at the time.

4. PROFESSIONAL DOCUMENTS

The student should expect to meet with the thesis director throughout the process of generating the professional documents. Drafts of the documents should be submitted to the committee members for feedback, and revision should be made based on that feedback. Final versions of

these documents should be submitted separately to the committee and along with the final complete draft of the thesis.

5. PUBLIC PRESENTATION (DEFENSE)

Once all committee members agree on the completion of the final draft, the student must orally defend the thesis at a scheduled thesis defense. The student is responsible for coordinating a time with the committee members and for working with administrative staff to reserve the department library for the defense. The defense will include a prepared presentation, similar in style to a conference presentation, that offers an overview of the student's thesis. Following the presentation, committee members will ask various questions pertaining to the subject, writing, and scope of the thesis. The defense is open to interested members of the department and to the university community.

At the thesis defense, the committee may still advise minor revisions before the thesis is submitted to the graduate school.

After committees have determined overall exam grades, they should submit to the Graduate Director the Comprehensive Assessment Evaluation Report Form and Report of the Committee on the Oral Defense of the Thesis Form.

6. SUBMISSION OF ELECTRONIC THESIS TO THE MARSHALL UNIVERSITY DIGITAL SCHOLAR SITE

Theses must be submitted electronically, and it is the student's responsibility to attend any required training session and submit the thesis to the Marshall website. Refer to the Graduate College website for information on Electronic Theses and Dissertations (ETD): <http://www.marshall.edu/graduate/current-students/edt/>. Recent student theses are available through this site. Please also see the Graduate College's "Guide for Preparation and Submission of Electronic Theses and Dissertations," which includes a timeline and other instructions specific to defense and graduation: <http://www.marshall.edu/graduate/files/2013/04/etdguide.pdf>.

PORTFOLIO

Like the thesis, the portfolio is designed both to demonstrate students' academic achievements and to prepare them for the next step in their careers: applying for further graduate work (such as MA, MFA, or PhD programs), seeking teaching positions, entering the job market, submitting creative work for publication, or demonstrating proficiency in secondary education and continuing education.

The portfolio work needs to support and align with the student's planned next step. To this end, professional documents will be a component of the portfolio requirements. Suggested options for the professional section are listed below in Section 4; ultimately, the specific type/format of the professional documents will be determined by the student and their capstone chair, and will be developed in reference to the student's career plan. For more information on these types of materials, please see the attached information on Resources for Crafting Professional Documents.

Students should understand the contractual nature of the capstone collaboration between the student and the committee. Students may not 1) change from one capstone project to another or 2) change major concepts/ideas/topics or the timeline of the capstone project without expressed permission from all committee members. Additionally, students should understand that making said changes will likely extend the student's time in the program.

When students have earned 12 graduate credits, they should assemble a three-member portfolio committee from the eligible Graduate Faculty. The M.A. Comprehensive Assessment Form signed by all three members of the committee must be submitted by the student to the Graduate Director no later than the semester during which the student will complete 18 credit hours of coursework. The 6-hour capstone associated with portfolio is fulfilled through ENG 682 (which the student must enroll in under the faculty member chairing the committee after submitting the signed Comprehensive Assessment Form) plus a 600-level course of the student's choosing. The committee chair, in consultation with the readers, assigns a credit or no credit grade for 682 and submits to the Graduate Director the Comprehensive Assessment Evaluation Report Form. If a student takes more than one semester to complete the capstone project, the chair should assign a PR (progress) grade to a student who is making progress towards the completion of the project but who has not completed all of the requirements. PR grades from previous semesters must be changed to CR or NC (using the official University course change form) once the student has completed his or her capstone project.

The portfolio has five broad requirements. Each requirement is intended to help students produce a capstone experience exemplifying the knowledge and abilities learned through their coursework and professionalize in their chosen area of study (Literary Studies, Composition/Rhetoric, Creative Writing, or TESOL—please note that no new students will be admitted to the TESOL area of emphasis after Fall 2017). While all M.A. students submitting portfolios must meet these requirements, the details will necessarily vary within each area of study. Sample portfolios are available from the Director of Graduate Programs.

The five requirements are:

- Preliminary project description (prospectus)
- Critical introduction
- Scholarly section that includes examples of critical or creative writing
- Professional component that illustrates the application of scholarship and learning to professional activities (e.g., teaching or publishing)
- Public presentation (defense)

Together, the written materials included in the portfolio should include at minimum 40-50 pages.

1. PRELIMINARY PROJECT DESCRIPTION (PROSPECTUS)

The student must submit to prospective committee members and the Graduate Director a preliminary project description (prospectus) no later than the end of the first year of coursework. As relevant, this description should include a proposed general overview of the project, a working hypothesis, and a bibliography of 10-12 pertinent critical or creative texts. The prospectus might also contain information about how the student envisions the project meeting the learning outcomes of the English M.A. program. Sample prospectuses are available through the Graduate Director.

Each committee may determine some flexibility in roles, but the chair will typically be the contact person between the student and other committee members and together with the student will schedule a communication and submission calendar. A committee should usually plan to communicate at least once each semester until the project has been completed.

2. CRITICAL INTRODUCTION

The critical introduction should address the student's primary area of study in the Marshall English M.A. program and any other secondary interests which may have been studied, establishing connections among the parts of the portfolio. It should prepare the reader for the material that is provided by establishing the critical context for the works chosen for the critical/creative and professional components of the portfolio. For a creative portfolio, the critical introduction should establish the critical context for a particular genre, movement, or theoretical approach that the remainder of the portfolio participates in or explores. For a scholarly portfolio, the critical introduction should establish the critical lens(es) the portfolio employs and demonstrate how the portfolio is contributing to the scholarly conversation.

3. CRITICAL OR CREATIVE SUBMISSION

This section of the portfolio demonstrates the best examples of a student's primary area of study in the M.A. program. For a critical capstone, this section should establish an advanced understanding of major concepts in the student's area of study. For a creative capstone, this section should illustrate the student's approach to a particular genre, movement, or form of creative writing. The critical or creative submission must represent the original work of the student, and should be developed over the course of the student's portfolio hours and graduate coursework and in close consultation with the student's capstone chair and committee.

4. PROFESSIONAL SUBMISSION

This section of the portfolio looks forward to the student's future achievements as an M.A., and will necessarily vary from one area of study to another. Its purpose is to allow M.A. candidates the opportunity to develop/revise the kind of materials necessary to professionalize in their area

of study. While the following examples illustrate typical submissions in this section, ultimately the contents of the professional submission will be determined by the student and the capstone chair in consultation with the portfolio committee. All professional submissions should include a narrative introduction that briefly explains the contents of the professional submission.

The student should expect to meet with the portfolio director throughout the process of generating the professional documents. Like the critical/creative submission, drafts of the documents should be submitted to the committee members for feedback, and revision should be made based on that feedback. Final versions of these documents should be submitted to the committee as part of the portfolio.

4a. Literature and Composition/Rhetoric: Scholarly Option

A student may revise a paper written for a previous class into an article submission and develop an action plan to place the article in a suitable scholarly journal. To this end, the student will include the following:

- a carefully annotated list of 7-10 scholarly journals that have either published articles on the topic within the last ten years or would be likely to publish an article on the student's topic;
- a print-out of the submission guidelines for three likely target journals;
- a brief statement identifying the journal to which the student will submit the article;
- a cover letter addressed to the journal's editor(s) to accompany the article
- a CV outlining the scholar's work in the field
- a clean copy of the original paper as it was submitted in the previous class;
- a scholarly article based on the paper revised, taking into consideration readers' comments and the submission guidelines of the target journal.

Alternatively, a student may revise a paper written for a previous class into a conference presentation. To this end, the student will include the following:

- a print-out of the conference website and information about the conference that most appeals to the student (How often is this conference held? When and where will the next conference take place? How does the conference determine which papers are accepted? How are sessions organized for this conference?);
- a reflective statement on how the student's paper fits into this conference;
- a clean copy of the original paper as it was submitted in the previous class;
- a conference presentation based on the paper revised, taking into consideration readers' comments and the scope and purpose of the conference.

4b. Literature and Composition/Rhetoric: Teaching Option/Undergraduate

A student may demonstrate preparedness to teach at the undergraduate level. To this end, the student will include the following:

- a cover letter that includes a teaching philosophy and a CV that respond to a real job advertisement located by the student and included as part of this submission;
- teaching materials appropriate to ENG 101 and ENG 102
 - course policy;
 - syllabus;
 - sample lecture, assignment, or assignment sequence.

4c. Literature and Composition/Rhetoric: Teaching Option/Elementary, Middle, High School (for current teachers)

A student already employed as an elementary, middle, or high school teacher may demonstrate ongoing professional development to meet certification renewal requirements. To this end, the student will include the following:

- a cover letter and résumé that respond to a real job advertisement located by the student and included as part of this submission;
- a 3-5 page statement
 - describing the student's teaching circumstance (grade level, environment, student population);
 - reflecting any teaching experience that the student might have as well as a careful perusal of the WV department of Education's website, <http://wvde.state.wv.us/>;
- a print-out of the WV Content Standards and Objectives for the appropriate subject and grade levels (K-5, 6-8, 9-12)
 - WV CSOs relevant to English M.A.s can be found at <http://wveis.k12.wv.us/Teach21/public/cso/cso.cfm>;
- a reflective statement identifying the CSOs that the student is best prepared to meet as a result of M.A. coursework as well as the CSOs that will require additional preparation;
- 5-10 classroom-ready lesson plans at the appropriate level suitable in the event of a last-minute hire.

4d. Creative Writing

A student may revise a creative work of prose or a collection of poems written for a previous workshop with the intention of submitting the piece for publication. To this end, the student will include the following:

- a carefully annotated list of 7-10 journals, collections, or contests that might be suitable venues for the student's creative work;
- a cover letter to accompany the submission
- a CV outlining the scholar's work in the field
- a clean copy of the original work as it was submitted in the previous workshop;
- a submission based on the work revised, taking into consideration readers' comments and the submission guidelines of the target journal.

4e. TESOL (not available to students entering the English MA program after Fall 2017)

A student must demonstrate preparedness to teach a variety of proficiency levels in ESL or EFL contexts. To this end, the student will include the following:

- a statement of teaching philosophy;
- a CV;
- a weekly lesson plan (five days) revolving around one central theme/skill/function/type of language use;
- teaching materials selected by the student or from a current textbook in conjunction with additional materials provided by the student.

4f. Editing/Professional Writing

A student may revisit a previously written work for a previous class to demonstrate readiness for professional writing. To this end, the student will include the following:

- a cover letter and résumé that respond to a real job advertisement located by the student and included as part of this submission;
- a 3-5 page statement
 - identifying the student's ideal writing job and the student's most likely writing job;
 - reflecting on any professional writing experience as well as a careful perusal, assessment, and reaction to websites for professional writers;
- a detailed rhetorical analysis of five recently published pieces in the student's area of interest or intended career field;
- a clean copy of a paper as it was submitted in the previous class;
- a copyedited version of this original paper to reflect expertise in writing.

N.B. While the above options are those recommended by the Graduate Programs Committee, students will ultimately work in close consultation with the members of their portfolio committees to develop the materials most appropriate for their area of study and future goals.

5. PUBLIC PRESENTATION (DEFENSE)

All students are expected to defend their portfolios to their committees and other interested students, faculty, and community members. The student is responsible for coordinating a time with the committee members and for working with administrative staff to reserve a room for the defense. The defense will resemble a professional conference presentation in which the student will provide a prepared demonstration of the materials included in the portfolio (20 minutes), followed by a question and answer discussion with the student's committee members (30 minutes).

Students who opt for the 4e TESOL portfolio (not available to students entering the English MA program after Fall 2017): TESOL students who choose the 4e portfolio option may present their project through an interactive teaching demonstration. This presentation will include a short introduction to the lesson included in the portfolio (10 minutes), a demonstration of the lesson (30 minutes), followed by question and answer discussions (10 minutes).

WRITING, REVISING, AND CONFERENCING PRIOR TO PUBLIC DEFENSE

The student should expect to meet with and/or correspond with the portfolio committee chair throughout the writing process. Students and chairs should work together to determine the frequency of meetings, which may range from once or twice before the defense to weekly meetings over the course of one or two semesters. Regardless of the frequency of meetings, the student should expect to submit work to the committee chair and other committee members regularly. Once a student completes a section of the portfolio, the chair should circulate that work to other members of the committee so that all committee members have the opportunity to review and comment on the work before the public presentation.

COMPREHENSIVE EXAMINATION

One option for completing the M.A. in English at Marshall University is to pass a comprehensive exam covering three areas of study. The exam is designed to affirm and confirm the student's expertise in his/her fields, his/her ability to apply that expertise to critical questions, as well as his/her ability to communicate that expertise in well-written essays.

Students should understand the contractual nature of the capstone collaboration between the student and the committee. Students may not 1) change from one capstone project to another or 2) change major concepts/ideas/topics or the timeline of the capstone project without expressed permission from all committee members. Additionally, students should understand that making said changes will likely extend the student's time in the program.

The capstone work needs to support and align with the student's planned next step. Since the most common next step for a student opting to take comprehensive exams would be seeking opportunities outside of academia, the comprehensive examination option for capstone work will include preparation and submission of the following professional documents, a cover letter and résumé that respond to a real job advertisement located by the student. These are separate from the exams and are submitted to the Director of Graduate Studies after being submitted to the committee for final approval. For more information on these types of materials, please see the attached information on Resources for Crafting Professional Documents.

Students who choose the comprehensive examination as their capstone project will take a five-hour written examination, consisting of questions in three exam areas.

When students have earned 12 graduate credits, they should assemble a three-member comprehensive exam committee from the eligible Graduate Faculty. The M.A. Comprehensive Assessment Form signed by all three members of the committee must be submitted by the student to the Graduate Director no later than the semester during which the student will complete 18 credit hours of coursework. The 6-hour capstone associated with comprehensive exam is fulfilled through ENG 683 (which the student must enroll in under the faculty member chairing the committee after submitting the signed Comprehensive Assessment Form) plus a 600-level course of the student's choosing. The committee chair, in consultation with the other examiners, assigns a credit or no credit grade for 683. If a student takes more than one semester to complete the capstone project, the chair should assign a PR (progress) grade to a student who is making progress towards the completion of the project but who has not completed all of the requirements. PR grades from previous semesters must be changed to CR or NC (using the official University course change form) once the student has completed his or her capstone project.

The four requirements are:

- Preliminary project description (prospectus)
- Comprehensive exam lists
- Professional Documents: a cover letter and résumé that respond to a real job advertisement located by the student and included as part of this submission
- Comprehensive exam essays

The comprehensive exam consists of one 2-hour examination and two 90-minute examinations. The chair of the committee will write the 2-hour exam, and the other committee members will each write a 90-minute exam. Students should meet with the examining professors before the exams but should not expect to know specific exam questions in advance.

Exams are offered once per semester (fall, spring, and summer). Typically, exams take place the second Thursday/Friday in November, the second Thursday/Friday in April, and the third Thursday/Friday in July.

If a student has not decided the upon committee members or exams areas or submitted the signed Comprehensive Assessment Form to the Graduate Director prior to the scheduled exam period, the student will have to wait until the following semester to take the exam.

EXAM COVERAGE

The three exam areas can be drawn from—but not limited to—the following categories, organized into columns by areas of study:

Composition/ Rhetoric	Creative Writing	TESOL/ Linguistics	Literary Studies
Visual Rhetoric	<i>Form & Theory of a Genre</i> Poetry Fiction Creative Nonfiction Drama	Linguistics	<i>Periods</i> Anglo-Saxon Medieval Middle English Renaissance 18 th century
Feminist Rhetoric	<i>History of the Form in a Genre</i> Short Story Essay Poem Play	Sociolinguistics	Romantic Victorian American before 1865 American since 1865 Modernism
Literacy	<i>Contemporary Aesthetic Movements</i> Beat/Counterculture New York School	Teaching Methods	Postcolonial Anglophone Postmodernism
Composition Theory	Postcolonialism Magical Realism New Formalism Minimalism Confessionalism Meta-Fiction/Meta-Nonfiction Short forms (flash fiction, brief essay, short-short, etc.)	Curriculum Development	
Composition Pedagogy	Hybrid forms (graphic literature, prose poem, video essay, etc.)	Second Language Acquisition	<i>Genres</i> Poetry Novel Short Story Drama Creative Non-Fiction/Essay Film Graphic Novel
		Language Assessment	<i>Major Authors</i> Chaucer Shakespeare Milton <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • However, a student can make a case for any major author approved by his or her committee provided that the

			reading list meets the criteria described below.
		Systemic Functional Grammar	<i>Literary Theory</i> Feminist theory Marxism Modernism New Historicism Postcolonialism Postmodernism Post-structuralism Psychoanalysis Queer theory

The exam lists will contain a wide range of texts, though the number and type of texts will necessarily vary according to the area of study. For literature exams, the reading list should consist of approximately 30 primary works and 10 secondary works of criticism and theory. For composition/rhetoric exams, the reading list should consist of 30-40 secondary sources, mostly scholarly articles and book chapters. For creative writing exams, the reading list should consist of 25-30 texts, including primary and secondary sources. A major author reading list should contain approximately 25 primary works by the chosen author as well as 5-10 primary works by other authors of the major author's period.

Committee members submit exam questions to the Graduate Director prior to the day of the exam. If a committee member submits multiple questions, instructions to the student should clearly indicate if the student is to complete all questions or select one or more questions to answer.

PRELIMINARY PROJECT DESCRIPTION (PROSPECTUS)

The student must submit to prospective committee members and the Graduate Director a preliminary project description (prospectus) no later than the end of the first year of coursework. As relevant, this description should include a proposed general overview of the project, a working hypothesis, and a bibliography of 10-12 pertinent critical or creative texts. The prospectus might also contain information about how the student envisions the project meeting the learning outcomes of the English M.A. program. Sample prospectuses are available through the Graduate Director.

Each committee may determine some flexibility in roles, but the chair will typically be the contact person between the student and other committee members and together with the student will schedule a communication and submission calendar. A committee should usually plan to communicate at least once each semester until the project has been completed.

DEVELOPMENT OF EXAM LISTS

The degree of student involvement in creating the reading list varies widely by faculty member; accordingly, students should consult with the individual members of their exam committees about the process of developing the lists. Some faculty maintain consistency of lists across semesters, whereas other faculty create different reading lists each semester or even for each student taking an exam in a single semester. A committee member may ask the student to do

research—such as the writing of an annotated bibliography—as part of the process of developing an exam list.

EXAM PREPARATION/MEETINGS

Regardless of the student's participation in the creation of the list, the student should expect to meet with exam committee members prior to the exam. Students and committee members should work together to determine the frequency of meetings, which may range from once or twice before the exam to weekly meetings over the course of one or two semesters.

PROFESSIONAL DOCUMENTS: COVER LETTER AND RESUME

The student should expect to meet with the committee chair throughout the process of generating the cover letter and resume. Drafts of the documents should be submitted to the committee members for feedback, and revision should be made based on that feedback. Final versions of these documents should be submitted to the committee on exam day along with the exam responses.

EXAM DAY

The Graduate Director or an exam facilitator typically proctors the exam in a computer classroom. Students receive exam questions from the Graduate Director or exam facilitator at the beginning of the scheduled exam time.

EXAM EVALUATION

Individual committee members will grade the exams they wrote. Possible grades are E (Excellent), P (Pass), or U (Unsatisfactory). Faculty may choose to use the provided the exam scoring rubric (see below) to evaluate the exams. If the rubric is not used by a faculty member, that faculty member should make the student aware of the criteria required for earning each examination score.

The exam committee will decide an overall exam grade. That grade may be E, P, U, or PC (Pass with Contingency). The PC grade is generally reserved for a student who earns a grade of U on one exam but passes the other two. In the case of a PC grade, the committee should decide conditions for the completion of the U exam. Options include a written or oral follow-up exam. A student who earns two or more grades of U should re-take those sections of the exam during the exam period the following semester.

After committees have determined overall exam grades, they should submit to the Graduate Director the Comprehensive Assessment Evaluation Report Form. The Graduate Director will notify students of their overall grades.

COURSE OUTLINE

Prior to registering

As mentioned above, prior to registering for English 683, the graduate student will form an exam committee of three graduate faculty members. The student will then enroll in English 683 under the faculty member chairing the committee.

Weeks 1-2

Meet with individual committee members to finalize reading lists; begin formal preparation for comprehensive exams. However, it is expected that the student will have already spoken with each committee member about his/her exam areas in the course of forming the committee prior to the semester.

Weeks 3-11

Prepare for exams, checking in with the committee chair and meeting individually with the committee members according to a schedule agreed upon by the student and each committee member. Work on drafting professional documents, seeking assistance/guidance from committee members as necessary.

Week 9

By this point, the student and each committee member will have met to narrow down the exam area to a more specific focus. Submit draft of professional documents to committee members for feedback.

Week 12

Meet with committee chair for final check-in before taking the exams. Incorporate feedback on professional documents, revise, and finalize.

Week 13

Take exam. Turn in professional documents.

Week 14

Committee members submit their exam grades to the Graduate Director who, in turn, notifies students of their three grades.

Week 14-15

The student meets with his or her committee to review the strengths and weaknesses of the exam. In the event of three passing grades, the process ends here for the student. In the event that one or more of the exam areas are deemed failing, the committee meets with the student to devise a means for the student to complete this course.

EXAM SCORING RUBRIC

<E> EXCELLENT

- *Cover letter and resume are well-written, persuasive, and appropriate to the professional context.
- *Demonstrates sophisticated knowledge and analysis of the material on the reading list.
- *Clearly defines and supports an understandable, relevant thesis about the assigned material.
- *Supports topic or purpose with effective, concrete details; clarity in explanation; factual commentary; textual information and analyses; and lines of reasoning that develop ideas thoroughly.
- *Avoids obvious generalizations and padding.
- *Develops ideas and descriptions specifically, logically, and fully; has coherent, effective transitions which advance a clear argument.
- *Balances and emphasizes points appropriately.
- *Varies sentence length and form.
- *Has a lively, accurate vocabulary with few or no misused words.
- *Has few or no grammatical or mechanical problems.

<P> PASS

- *Cover letter and resume are appropriate to the professional context and solid in terms of writing quality and persuasiveness.
- *Demonstrates convincing knowledge and analysis of texts on the reading list.
- *Defines an understandable topic, though the thesis may admit generalization.
- *Supports topic or purpose by specific details, but may occasionally lapse in linking topic to details.
- *Includes explanation, factual commentary, textual information and analyses, and/or lines of reasoning that develop ideas well but with possible lapses.
- *May have some generalizations and padding throughout, but generalization does not impede support.
- *Develops ideas and descriptions; has effective transitions, though some of these may be mechanical or underdeveloped in places.
- *Balances and emphasizes points, but may have lapses.
- *Varies sentence length and form, with occasional lapses.
- *Has an accurate vocabulary: may have some lapses in word choice or usage but still achieves clarity.
- *May have some grammatical or mechanical problems, but these do not impede the reader's understanding.

<PC> PASS WITH CONTINGENCY

- *Demonstrates familiarity with texts on the reading list, but may fail to demonstrate other qualities as designated above, impeding the reader's comprehension.

<U> UNSATISFACTORY

Fails to demonstrate convincing knowledge of texts on the reading list. Possible problems may include the following:

- *Cover letter and resume are unprofessional or incomplete and lacking in writing quality and persuasiveness.
- *Has a thesis too obvious or too general to argue; lacks focus, analysis, and/or clear point of view.
- *Fails to present specific evidence, or does not link it to argument through reasoning and explanation.
- *Ideas are undeveloped or random.
- *Paragraphs may appear random; may lack transitions or internal organization.
- *Fails to balance and emphasize points appropriately.
- *Sentences are repetitive and unvaried.
- *Has frequent, substantive errors in word choice and phrasing.
- *Has excessive grammatical or mechanical problems that impede the reader's comprehension.