



# ENGLISH GRADUATE GUIDELINES

## MFA IN CREATIVE WRITING

2024 - 2025

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# English Graduate Guidelines: MFA in Creative Writing

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# English Graduate Guidelines: MFA in Creative Writing

The MFA in Creative Writing at Oklahoma State University allows students to focus on developing their abilities as poets and/or writers of fiction and nonfiction, through a course of study emphasizing creative writing workshops, literature seminars and electives in other areas in language and culture. In consultation with their advisory committees, students devise an individualized curriculum that reflects their own artistic and intellectual interests and prepares them to publish their creative work, enter a PhD program, or teach at the college level.

The MFA in Creative Writing consists of 42 credit hours, including twelve hours of thesis. In addition to these hours, students must present their creative work at a public reading following the completion of their thesis. Students must complete all requirements for the MFA degree within seven years from their first enrollment in the courses for the MFA program

## Application and Admission

Admission to the MFA program requires a Bachelor of Arts or Bachelor of Science degree from an accredited institution of higher learning. Other qualifications and application materials appear below. Applicants should be mindful that meeting the minimum standards for admission *does not* guarantee admission.

### Application Deadlines

- **Fall** – January 5 priority deadline with March 1 final deadline
- **Spring** – October 15<sup>th</sup>
- **Note:** Deadline for International students applying for Spring Admission is **August 1**.

All students will apply through the Graduate College website: <https://gradcollege.okstate.edu/apply/>. All of the required documents and materials will be uploaded to the electronic application.

### Application Qualifications and Required Materials

- **GPA** Applicants should have an undergraduate grade-point average of 3.0 on a 4.0 scale, particularly in English courses.
- **Undergraduate Major** Applicants for the MFA in Creative Writing usually have an undergraduate major in English, perhaps with an option or specialization in creative writing. Other undergraduate majors may be eligible for admission depending on the quality of the writing sample, but normally all applicants will have taken at least twelve hours of upper-division courses in English.
- **Recommendations** Applicants must submit two letters of recommendation
- **Statement of Purpose** Applicants must submit a written statement of approximately 250 words that identifying the proposed area of study, reasons for undertaking graduate study in this area, relevant work experience, and future career plans.
- **Writing Sample** Applicants must submit a writing sample: either approximately 25 pages of fiction or creative nonfiction, or ten poems (not to exceed 20 pages in combined length).

**The GRE exam is not required but students who have GRE scores are encouraged to submit them.**



## English Proficiency (non-native speakers)

**Please note:** The English Department admission requirements are **HIGHER** than Graduate College admission requirements. **\*We Do Not Accept Duolingo English Proficiency results**

Applicants who are not native speakers of English must submit current scores from one of the following:

- **TOEFL ibt** – minimum overall score of 100, with minimum reading and writing subskill scores of 26
- **IELTS** - minimum overall score of 7.0, with minimum reading and writing band scores of 7.0

Please refer to the English Department website at: <http://english.okstate.edu/graduate-studies/applications-and-admissions> for more information.

## Changing Areas of Specialization

Students are admitted to the MFA in Creative Writing. If a student wishes to move from the MFA program to another program (MA English, MA Option in TESOL, MA Option in Professional Writing) the student must submit an application through the Graduate College.

## Graduate College Rules and Regulations

There are many rules and regulations affecting graduate enrollment, tenure, examinations, theses, and dissertations that are made by the Graduate Faculty of Oklahoma State University rather than the English Department. Among the rules students should familiarize themselves with are those governing academic dishonesty or misconduct, especially those dealing with plagiarism. It is the student's responsibility to become informed about all English Department, Graduate College, and University regulations.

The Oklahoma State University Catalog should be read closely by all those who are considering, or participating in, graduate studies in English at Oklahoma State University. Copies are available online at: <https://registrar.okstate.edu/University-Catalog>.

## MFA Timeline

### First Year

By the end of the second semester of enrollment the student must have:

- Chosen an advisor in Creative Writing area of study
- Chosen the advisory committee and submitted the Departmental Advisory Form: <http://english.okstate.edu/graduate-studies/graduate-forms> to the English Graduate Office
- Met with the committee and discussed plan of study
- Filed plan of study (online at the Graduate College <https://gradcollege.okstate.edu/resources/current-student-resources.html>)

### Second and Third Years

Before being eligible to graduate, students must have:

- Completed all required coursework (see "[Course Requirements](#)").
- Filed a revised Plan of Study (if applicable) at the beginning of the intended semester of graduation. <https://gradcollege.okstate.edu/resources/current-student-resources.html>



- Completed the **Thesis** and **Thesis Defense**.
- Completed the Application for Graduation and Graduation Clearance Form (<https://gradcollege.okstate.edu/resources/current-student-resources.html>). If your graduation is delayed, you must fill out a Diploma Application Extension Form at <http://registrar.okstate.edu/Forms>.
- Met all other Graduate College deadlines and requirements.

## Advisor and Advisory Committee

All graduate students select an individual advisor and an advisory committee to guide them in completing their degrees.

### Departmental Advisory Committee Form

After you have formed an advisory committee, submit the Departmental Advisory Committee Form (<http://english.okstate.edu/graduate-studies/graduate-forms>) to the English Graduate Office.

### Advisor

Students are encouraged to choose an advisor by the end of their first semester of course work, but if that is not possible, students should select an advisor by the end of their first year of graduate study. An advisor of an MFA student may be any member of the creative writing graduate faculty.

### Advisory Committee

The advisory committee will normally consist of the student's major advisor as committee chair and at least two additional members of the English Department's graduate faculty. Most MFA students' committees will include another member of the creative writing faculty in the student's genre besides the advisor.

### Committee Changes

To change an advisor and or advisory committee, go to:

<https://gradcollege.okstate.edu/resources/current-student-resources.html> and then to the Plan of Study link.

## Plan of study

A plan of study is a listing of course work the student intends to take for completion of the degree and as estimated time schedule. The student must develop the plan with his/her advisor and advisory committee. The Graduate College requires MA/MFA students to file a plan of study with the Graduate College before completing the 17<sup>th</sup> hour of graduate credit. A hold is automatically placed on the registration of any student attempting to enroll beyond 17 hours who does not have a plan of study approved by the Graduate College.

### Planning Meeting

***Prior to the end of the second semester of full-time enrollment***, students must schedule a meeting with their advisory committee. During that meeting, the student and their committee will discuss the student's preparation, professional goals, and the plans for graduate study. The student and committee should agree upon:

- A plan of Study
- Tentative plans for the thesis

### Submitting the Plan of Study

Following the plan of study meeting, the student will complete and submit the plan of study online at: <https://gradcollege.okstate.edu/resources/current-student-resources.html> and the advisory committee and the Graduate Director will sign electronically.

### Plan of Study Changes

Changes to the plan of study can be made with the approval of the advisory committee. A revised plan should be submitted to the Graduate College *at the beginning of the intended semester of graduation*.

Changes can be made here: <https://gradcollege.okstate.edu/resources/current-student-resources.html>.

### Ten Year Rule

A final plan of study may not include any course more than ten years old at the time of actual graduation.

### Checklist for Plan of Study

- Minimum of 42 hours , including 12 hours of thesis, beyond baccalaureate degree
- Minimum of 15 hours of Creative Writing and 6 hours of Literature
- At least 30 hours of course work at the 5000/6000 level at OSU
- No more than 9 hours of course work taken as a special student or transferred from another institution
- No course work may be included if it was previously used to complete requirements for another degree
- The plan of study must be signed *electronically* by the advisor, committee members and the Graduate Director
- **DO NOT LIST MORE THAN 12 HOURS OF THESIS.** Even if you have taken more as the Graduate College will reject the Plan of Study if more than 12 hours are listed.

**Students are responsible for resident tuition for all courses taken in excess of this limit and for all fees.**

### Course Requirements

The MFA program consists of 42 credit hours. The following requirements govern MFA course work:

#### MFA in Creative Writing Curriculum:

##### Craft and Forms: (three hours)

- ENGL 5780            Craft and Forms of Poetry
- ENGL 5760            Craft and Forms of Prose

##### Graduate Level Workshops: (twelve hours selected from the following courses)

- ENGL 5730            Seminar in Fiction Writing
- ENGL 5740            Seminar in Poetry Writing
- ENGL 6130            Studies in Fiction Writing
- ENGL 6140            Studies in Poetry Writing
- ENGL 6160            Studies in Creative Nonfiction

##### Graduate Level Literature Courses: (six hours)

##### Electives: (nine hours)

- XXXX xxxx            Creative Writing, Literature, methods course for teaching assistants, or other areas of language and culture

##### Thesis: (twelve hours)

- ENGL 5000            Thesis

### Methods Course for Teaching Assistants

Teaching assistants must take an appropriate pedagogy course or courses in their first semester of teaching at Oklahoma State University. These hours may be counted as part of the total hours of course work.

## Creative Writing Requirements

As the defining focus of work towards the MFA Degree, creative writing course work makes up the majority of the credit hours. In a combination of: **ENGL 5730 Seminar in Fiction Writing**, **ENGL 5740 Seminar in Poetry Writing**, **ENGL 6130 Studies in Fiction Writing**, **ENGL 6140 Studies in Poetry Writing**, **ENGL 6160 Studies in Creative Nonfiction**, **ENGL 5780 Craft and Forms of Poetry**, **ENGL 6753 Crafts and Forms of Fiction Writing**, as well as thesis hours.

## Literature Course Work Requirements

MFA students are required to take six hours of literature course work at the 5000/6000 level.

## Electives

Students choose the remaining hours of course work in consultation with their advisory committees. Course selection should take into account the student's thesis genre, artistic interests, academic and professional goal. For instance, students interested in going on to PhD work at Oklahoma State University upon completion of the MFA would normally include courses to assist in preparing them for their 3<sup>rd</sup> semester reviews.

## Transfer Hours

Students may transfer up to nine graduate hours from another university granting a master's degree in English. A student's advisory committee shall determine the number of hours of transfer credit to be awarded. If a student uses the hours for a degree at the previous institution, the hours are not applicable to the MFA degree at OSU.

## Independent Study

Independent Study courses may be occasionally arranged with an instructor when no regular graduate course on the desired topic is available during the student's expected tenure. Each of the two course numbers (ENGL 5120 and ENGL 6120) may be used for up to six credit hours per semester and no more than nine hours total per course number. All students requesting an Independent Study course must hold a meeting with their advisory committee and receive approval by the members of the committee. Special forms must be used by those who wish to enroll in such courses. ***These forms are available on the forms page of the English Graduate website. This form should be submitted no later than the end of the first week of graduate enrollment period prior to the semester in which the Independent Study course is taken.*** A student who has completed the 17<sup>th</sup> graduate credit hour in a degree program but does not have an approved plan of study on file in the Graduate College may not arrange an Independent Study.

The Graduate Studies Committee will evaluate applications for Independent Study in accordance with the following criteria and procedure:

1. Has the student's advisory committee approved the course?
2. Has the student taken regularly offered courses related to the subject?
3. Is the Independent Study unlikely to have a negative impact on enrollment in concurrent or immediately subsequent course offerings?
4. Does the Independent Study fill a gap in the student's curriculum? Or is the specific course content unlikely to be offered during the student's expected tenure?
5. Are the materials clearly listed?
6. Is the work appropriate for the number of credit hours requested?
7. Is the list of assignments and percentages awarded to each clearly explained?
8. Is the schedule of conferences sufficiently specific?

If all eight questions may be answered affirmatively, the Graduate Director will send a written notice by email to the proposed instructor, who will then inform the student.

If one or more questions cannot be answered affirmatively, the Graduate Director will contact the proposed instructor in an effort to clarify and/or resolve the problem(s). If no resolution can be reached, the Graduate Director will inform the proposed instructor of the denial and the reason(s) for the denial in writing. The proposed instructor will then inform the student.

## End of Semester Evaluations

All graduate students will be evaluated in writing at the end of each semester by the professors with whom they have taken courses. ***These evaluations are kept on file in the English Graduate Office and are available for the students to read.***

## Grade of “Incomplete”

The following regulations apply to students who receive what at OSU is termed the “composite incomplete” grade (“IA”, “IB”, “IC”, “ID”, or “IF”) for any of their course work within the English Department:

- Students must complete course work within one calendar year, after which time the preliminary grade (expressed by the second letter of the composite) becomes permanent in accordance with University policy. Individual faculty members, however, may establish a shorter time limit for completing course work. Faculty will identify the time limits in the “remarks” dropdown of the electronic grade sheet.
- Teaching assistants or associates having more than three incomplete grades on their records will not be recommended for reappointment.
- Teaching assistants or associates having any incomplete grades on their records will not be recommended for summer employment.

Students should familiarize themselves with Section 6.2 of the University Academic Regulations found in the ***University Catalog*** found here: <https://registrar.okstate.edu/University-Catalog> for a full explanation of University policy governing incomplete grades.

## Thesis

The candidate for the MFA degree prepares original work in poetry, prose fiction, or creative nonfiction for the twelve hours of thesis credit. The thesis should be a serious effort of publishable quality.

## Prerequisites

In order to defend an MFA Thesis, students must:

- Have a grade point average of at least 3.0 on all graduate course work taken beyond the baccalaureate degree ( *All courses carrying graduate credit, including transfer hours on the approved plan of study, will be calculated in this grade point average*)
- Have an approved Plan of study on file with the Graduate College
- Submit a completed Intent to Defend form before the end of the second week of classes in the semester in which they intend to defend. (<http://english.okstate.edu/graduate-studies/graduate-forms>)
- Meet all Graduate College deadlines and requirements

## Thesis Committee

Unless a student requests a change, the advisory committee serves as the thesis committee. If it is necessary to change the committee, a new committee form must be completed electronically on the Graduate College website: <https://gradcollege.okstate.edu/resources/current-student-resources.html> and notification provided to the English Graduate Office.

## Reading Procedure

The candidate and the committee members should agree upon a reading procedure to the thesis. Matters to be discussed in reaching this agreement might include whether each member of the committee needs to see individual poems, stories or essays as they are completed or revised by the candidate; whether individual committee members wish to see the sections of the thesis serially or all at once; and how much time committee members will need to finish reading a section or the entire thesis. ***Under no circumstances should a completed thesis be submitted to any committee member for reading***

***fewer than two weeks before the defense.***

## **Deadlines**

Students submitting theses must adhere to the deadlines established by the Graduate College and by the English Department.

## **Style**

The student must write the thesis according to the guidelines in the current Graduate College Manual, available from the Graduate College or at: <https://gradcollege.okstate.edu/resources/current-student-resources.html> (thesis and dissertation guidelines).

## **Defense Copy (Final Draft)**

The defense copy of the thesis should contain ***all*** of the chapters in a completed form with full documentation.

## **Final Copy**

If, as a result of the defense, revisions to the thesis are required, committee members ***will not*** sign the thesis until they are satisfied with the revisions.

## **Thesis Defense**

A thesis defense will consist of a public oral examination by the thesis committee. It will be no fewer than 45 minutes, but may be longer.

## **Intent to Defend Form**

Candidates will file a nonbinding Intent to Defend form (found here: <http://english.okstate.edu/graduate-studies/graduate-forms>) with the Graduate Director before the end of the first two weeks of the semester in which they expect to defend the thesis. Each member of the committee will sign this form before it is filed with the Graduate Director. The date, time and room location must be arranged by the student. If a student does not defend in the semester when the Intent to Defend form is filed, he or she should resubmit the form when he or she is prepared to defend.

## **Defense**

Under no circumstance should a completed thesis be submitted to any committee member for reading fewer than two weeks before the defense. The English Graduate Office must be notified no less than two weeks before the defense of the date, time and location of the defense as well as title of thesis. The English Graduate Office must be informed of any changes in the scheduled defense date, time or location.

**No thesis defense will be held after the beginning of the summer session.**

## **Graduation**

**Before being eligible to graduate student must have:**

- Passed the oral defense of thesis and turned in the signed Results of Final Defense Form via the Graduate College portal here: <https://gradcollege.okstate.edu/resources/current-student-resources.html>
- Filed an Application for Graduation found here: <https://gradcollege.okstate.edu/resources/current-student-resources.html>
- Filed a Graduation Clearance form found here: <https://gradcollege.okstate.edu/resources/current-student-resources.html>
- Updated Plan of Study if needed
- Submitted the final copy of the thesis in accordance with the format guidelines at: <https://gradcollege.okstate.edu/resources/current-student-resources.html>.

## Length of Financial Support for Teaching Assistants

A teaching assistant who has not been placed on strict academic probation and who is making satisfactory progress toward the degree is eligible for financial support for a maximum of three years. A student who obtains an MA or MFA in English at OSU and then enters the PhD program is eligible for an additional five years of support.

If exceptional circumstances warrant, a student in the final year of financial support may petition the Head of the English Department for an additional year's support. Such exceptional cases will be judged on an individual basis and in light of the Departmental policies and staffing needs.

## Ineligibility for the MFA Degree

The Graduate Director may upon proper cause declare a student ineligible for a degree from the English Department at Oklahoma State University. Upon determining that such cause exists, the Graduate Director will immediately notify the student's advisor, who will discuss the matter with the student and respond to the Graduate Director within fifteen working days. Should the Graduate Director still believe that proper cause exists, he or she will write a letter to the student indicating the reasons for the decision. The student may then appeal to the Graduate Studies Committee within ten working days for a hearing.

The Graduate Studies Committee will review the appeal and report its findings to the Graduate Director, who will notify the student. The student may then appeal that decision to the full Graduate Faculty of the English Department. The decision of that group shall end the Departmental appeal process.

## Appeals and Petitions

All appeals involving grades or charges of academic dishonesty, or misconduct must be directed to the OSU Academic Appeals Board. Contact the Provost's Office (101 Whitehurst) for information and forms. Petitions involving teaching assistantships must be directed to the Department Head.

All other petitions or appeals must be directed in writing to the Graduate Director, who will then forward the petition to the appropriate body, usually the Graduate Studies Committee (for special requests as described within the English Graduate Guidelines) or the English Graduate Faculty (for exceptions to English Department policy). The Graduate Director will notify students by mail of the decision reached by the Graduate Studies Committee or Graduate Faculty, with a copy to the student's advisor. For exceptions to university policy, the Graduate Director will forward the petition to the Graduate Council. Students are urged to discuss matters with their advisors and the Graduate Director **before** making a formal petition or appeal.

If the Graduate Director does not act upon a student's written request within a reasonable amount of time, a student and/or advisor may appeal directly to the Department Head. If a student has exhausted all appeals procedures within the Department and is still not able to resolve the problem, he or she may appeal to the Graduate College.

According to OSU policy, appeals pertaining to program requirements, plans of study, research grades, creative components, qualifying and comprehensive exam procedures, thesis and dissertation defenses, and program dismissals may be considered only on grounds that the department has failed to adhere to its own published rules or regulations or to those of the Graduate College or University. Faculty and advisory committee scholarly assessments are not appealable.

Students are first encouraged to seek informal resolution with the involved parties. Next, the formal appeals process has two stages: 1. Consultation with the Graduate Coordinator (or, if the Graduate Coordinator is an involved party, then with the Department Head or Associate Head); and 2. Graduate Faculty Hearing.

## **Consultation with English Department Graduate Coordinator**

Students must consult the Graduate Coordinator within 14 calendar days of the precipitating event to determine whether prima facie grounds for an appeal exist. Here a student needs to demonstrate a) that specific rules or regulations have been violated, and b) that such violations have harmed the student. Following this consultation, if the student wishes to continue with an appeal, the next step is a hearing by the English Department Graduate Faculty.

## **English Department Graduate Faculty Hearing**

The English Department Graduate Coordinator will advise the student on preparation of a statement of appeal to be submitted within seven calendar days of consultation. Said document (no more than two pages, 12 point font, single spaced, 1" margins) should include information on the circumstances of the appeal, specific procedural issues involved, and remedial action sought; all supporting evidence is to be appended. The Graduate Coordinator will furnish the involved parties with the document, providing at minimum seven calendar days for their consideration before the matter is brought to the Graduate Faculty at its next scheduled meeting. The Graduate Faculty will decide the matter by a majority vote. The Graduate Coordinator will inform the student in writing about the outcome of the hearing. Involved faculty will be copied on this correspondence.

If this does not resolve the matter to the student's satisfaction, the student may appeal to the OSU Graduate College, per the OSU Graduate Student Appeals Policy.