
MA in English

MA Program Guidebook

Department of English Language
and Literature

1820 Dunton Tower, 1125 Colonel
By Drive, Ottawa, ON, K1S 5B6
Canada

Phone: (613) 520-2309
Email: englishgrad@carleton.ca

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INTRODUCTION

The MA offers students the chance to experience the challenges and expectations of graduate school in a collegial and stimulating environment. The program effectively prepares students for PhD programs in English literature and may serve as a conduit to our own PhD, which is unique in Canada for its commitment to fusing archival investigation into manuscript, print, and digital cultures with theoretical inquiry into literary and social production. For those who do not want to pursue a PhD, the MA degree gives a competitive edge in the job market, whether in business, government, or the non-profit sector—in areas as diverse as publishing, human resources, communications, public relations, and marketing. It also gives an academic advantage to students applying for further professional qualifications and training in teaching, journalism, law, and library science.

Purpose of this Guidebook

This guidebook is designed to be a comprehensive introduction to Carleton's MA program in English. **This handbook is not a substitute** for the [Graduate Calendar](#), which governs Carleton University's graduate programs.

Students are responsible for familiarizing themselves with the general information, rules, and regulations of Carleton University, as outlined in the [Graduate Calendar](#), as well as the specific requirements of their program.

Students should contact the Graduate Administrator with any questions.

DESCRIPTION OF THE MA PROGRAM

The MA in English is typically completed through coursework within three consecutive terms over a period of twelve months. The general goal of the program is twofold: to furnish students with a panoramic overview of the discipline's varied and shifting terrain and to help them develop a research focus in their current studies. Toward that first end, the program's range of courses enables students to grapple with the leading issues and debates centered on literatures in English from all historical periods and many parts of the globe. Courses introduce students to a variety of theoretical and methodological approaches, which challenge assumptions about prevailing ideas, literary texts, and authors to illuminate the political implications of language and to interrogate the racial, gender, and class ideologies underlying representation. ENGL 5005, the required Proseminar that is offered every fall, allows students to step back from their other courses to see the big picture by mapping out the history and contemporary state of English Studies from disciplinary and professional perspectives. ENGL 5005's classes on research methods as well as its workshop on crafting OGS and SSHRC proposals also assist students in sharpening a focus on a particular field or topic in English Studies.

In order to help develop a research focus, the MA encourages students to select a cluster of courses converging on a historical period, geography, or theme. Students may also take up to one full credit of courses in other departments, in consultation with the Graduate Advisor, so that their research can benefit from inter- and multi-disciplinary insights. For this reason, English department courses are regularly cross-listed with other departments including, but not limited to, Canadian Studies, Film Studies, Cultural Mediations, History, and Women's and Gender Studies. Depending on how advanced their research

focus is, with the Graduate Advisor's approval a student can also opt to write a research paper (MRP) or a thesis instead of strictly doing coursework.

REGISTRATION

Conditional Acceptance

Your offer of admission may include one or more conditions. Please review your offer by logging into Carleton Central. Usually, the condition pertains to submission of official transcripts, proof of citizenship, if applicable, and/or other original documents, to Graduate Studies. You must satisfy the condition(s) on your offer before you can register in courses. Please contact the Graduate Administrator with any pertinent questions.

Consultation Stage Before Registration

Carleton's English department strives to assist students in selecting the best possible courses to support the development of their individual research programs. All students must consult with the Graduate Advisor before registering for courses as well as adding or dropping them. Moreover, by consulting with the Graduate Advisor, students avoid unforeseeable difficulties related to course registration and program status.

Consultation with the Graduate Advisor must take place before registration. You will receive an email from the Graduate Administrator about course registration with an invitation to schedule a consultation with the Graduate Advisor either by phone, online, or in person.

Continuous Registration

As a graduate student, you must maintain continuous registration in the program (fall, winter, summer). This includes students who are writing a thesis (ENGL 5909) or a research essay (ENGL 5908). Once registered in either ENGL 5909 or ENGL 5908, all students must maintain continuous registration until the thesis or research essay is completed. If you plan to do a thesis and have obtained approval from the Graduate Advisor, then you must register in ENGL 5909 for your first term and each term thereafter. Please refer to regulation 8 of the [Graduate Calendar](#) for more information.

Full-Time and Part-Time Status

According to regulation 7.9 of the [Graduate Calendar](#):

Full- or part-time status is established at the time of admission to a program. Graduate students admitted and registered as full-time students will be required to continue in and complete their program as full-time students. Graduate students admitted and registered as part-time students will be required to continue and complete their program as part-time students.

A part-time graduate student may not register in 1.0 or more credit per term, including audit courses but not including the master's or doctoral thesis.

Students wishing to change their status from full-time to part-time should contact the Graduate Administrator.

Academic Standing

A grade of B- or better must normally be obtained in each course credited towards the master's degree. For more information on academic standing please refer to regulation 11.3 of the [Graduate Calendar](#).

Please consult the [Graduate Calendar](#) for all general regulations and policies governing Carleton's graduate programs.

THE PROGRAM

The Three Streams

The MA program has three different streams: coursework, research essay, or thesis. Most students will enroll in the coursework stream, which offers the widest exposure to the various subfields of the discipline. Students who wish to enroll in the Research Essay (ENGL 5908) or Thesis (ENGL 5909) streams may do so only with the prior approval of the Graduate Advisor.

The Coursework Stream

The coursework stream offers you the broadest exposure not only to the field of English literature, but also to our faculty and your fellow classmates. Most universities, including those with established PhD programs, have already made the coursework MA the standard choice. This option also results in a transcript with more area coverage and more final grades, both factors that will help any future applications to doctoral or professional programs.

The Research Essay Stream

The topic for a research essay typically evolves out of a student's coursework and is designed to be written under the supervision of a faculty member—with both expertise and an interest in the student's topic—and a second reader. It is the student's responsibility to find a faculty member to supervise their chosen topic. All research essay topics and supervisors must be ratified by the Graduate Advisor. Students who are admitted into this stream normally will enter the program with a GPA of 10.5 or higher; they must also demonstrate substantial progress by a predetermined date in the Winter Term. Those students who cannot demonstrate such progress will be automatically transferred to the coursework stream for their remaining credits.

The Thesis Stream

The thesis stream is typically reserved for students who have, prior to entering the program, already completed a substantial amount of background research into their chosen topics and secured a faculty supervisor. Students who are admitted into this stream normally will enter the program with a GPA of 11.0 or higher; they must also demonstrate substantial progress by dates in the Fall and Winter Terms, which are to be determined by the Graduate Advisor. Those students who cannot demonstrate such progress will be automatically transferred to the coursework stream for their remaining credits. All thesis topics and supervisors must be ratified by the Graduate Advisor.

Please review the [Graduate Calendar](#) for program requirements (including the three streams and specializations).

Course Load

Each of the three streams (with specialization, if applicable) totals 4.5 credits, with each course usually equaling .5 credits; the thesis, ENGL 5909, equaling 2.0 credits; and the research essay, ENGL 5908, equaling 1.0 credit. **Students are required to take at least one course (0.5 cr) from the period before 1800 (includes 18th century literature) and one course (0.5 cr) from the period after 1800 to fulfill their requirements for the M.A.**

The recommended registration for the first two streams has the following pattern (coursework and research essay):

- 4 courses in the Fall Term, including ENGL 5005 (M.A. Proseminar) (2.0 credits)
- 3 courses in the Winter Term (1.5 credits)
- 2 courses or a Research Essay in the Summer Term (1.0 credit)

The required MA Seminar (ENGL 5005), offered only in the Fall Term, has been designed to make minimal demands on your reading and writing time, while giving you guidance and the skills necessary for succeeding at the graduate level. This course is graded as Satisfactory/Unsatisfactory.

The following table, which compares the three streams, shows the typical registration for each term (may vary slightly with a specialization):

Stream	Fall	Winter	Summer
Coursework	5005, 5xxx, 5xxx, 5xxx	5xxx, 5xxx, 5xxx	5xxx, 5xxx
Research Essay	5005, 5xxx, 5xxx, 5xxx	5xxx, 5xxx, 5xxx	5908
Thesis	5005, 5909, 5xxx, 5xxx	5909, 5xxx, 5xxx	5909

Course Selection

5000-level courses should form the core of your program. Not all courses listed in the [Graduate Calendar](#) are offered in a given year.

Please consult the departmental [website](#) for course offerings. Your course credits may be supplemented by drawing on courses from the following sources:

1. Where our graduate offerings do not satisfy important needs or interests, you may take up to 1.0 credit (or two half-credit seminars) at the 4000 level, with the Graduate Advisor's approval. These courses are restricted enrolment seminars, open to Honours students in the final year of their program; some are lecture courses, which may also be acceptable in certain instances. Consult the Graduate Advisor on the appropriateness of any course to your long-range ambitions, critical approach, need to fill gaps, or desire for a concentration in a particular period, nationality, or genre. **Carleton graduates may not repeat courses taken at the fourth-year level for graduate credit.**
2. An agreement between Carleton University and the University of Ottawa allows a graduate student registered at Carleton University to take certain courses at University of Ottawa if approved by the student's department. Departmental information and course listings are available at the following site: <https://www.uottawa.ca>. **Carleton students must obtain the Graduate Advisor's prior approval before registering in courses at the University of Ottawa.**

3. With the Graduate Advisor's prior approval, you may take graduate-level courses, up to 1.0 credit, in another department or discipline that complements or enriches your interests and plans.
4. In rare circumstances, the English department may permit tutorial courses in areas not covered by the listed course offerings. Please contact the Graduate Advisor for more information.

ENGL 5005: MA SEMINAR

All MA students are required to take ENGL 5005: MA Seminar in the fall term. This course provides students with a general overview to English Studies in order to facilitate their success at the graduate level. To that end, individual classes will address current debates and practices within both the discipline and profession of English Studies. As a proseminar, the course considers the overarching boundaries of this discipline and elucidates the professional duties carried out by the academic/student. It encourages lively discussion on pragmatic issues affecting students in their studies and their teaching assistantships. It also makes available resources, strategies, and guidance necessary for helping students see their way through and beyond the MA.

Three main categories organize the subject matter of weekly meetings: the discipline, the profession, and research methods. Under the first category, the seminar examines the issues central to English studies today, traces the history and current state of the discipline, and reviews the latest methodologies and interdisciplinary approaches to literature. Under the second, it assists students in navigating professional matters, for example, grading essays, crafting grant proposals, and understanding employment and academic opportunities available to graduates. Finally, under the third category, it points to electronic and print resources and covers strategies integral to conducting research at the graduate level.

ENGL 5908: THE RESEARCH ESSAY

Introduction

The goal of ENGL 5908 is to familiarize the student with the research activity necessary for composing a journal article. ENGL 5908 accordingly results in the production of a scholarly essay of a length commensurable with periodical publication (7,500 to 10,000 words) and concludes with a peer-review process in the form of an oral examination. Two faculty members read the essay and examine the student in the oral. The research essay must present a coherent and intelligent scholarly argument supplemented by appropriate historical, theoretical, and critical contextualization. As part of their grade, students enrolled in ENGL 5908 commit to meeting with their supervisor and submitting essay drafts according to a schedule agreed upon in advance.

Pre-Registration Process

Full-time students who want to register for ENGL 5908 in the summer term must complete a proposal form by March 31, at the latest, to ensure timely registration in the course. The student must identify a faculty member who will be interested in and committed to supervising them. The form is supplemented by the composition of a research proposal (1-2 pages), which both supervisor and examiner must read and discuss with the student. Once the supervisor and examiner have both signed the form and have settled on due dates for the first and final drafts, then the form can be submitted to the Graduate Advisor for approval.

If you are interested in the research essay stream, please contact the Graduate Administrator for the research essay form, no later than January 31.

Format of Essay

The research essay should be between 7,500 and 10,000 words long. Its documentation must conform to the requirements of the *MLA Style Manual*. It must have a bibliography entitled “Works Cited” or, if appropriate, “Works Cited and Consulted.” This bibliography will identify the texts that the student is responsible for in the oral examination.

Oral Examination

The student must submit a copy of the essay to the Graduate Advisor and the Graduate Administrator at least two weeks before the desired date of the oral examination. Students failing to be examined by the last day for course changes in the term following their registration in ENGL 5908—in most cases the Fall Term—will need to re-register.

The oral examination is held in the department on a date arranged by the Graduate Administrator. It is chaired by the Graduate Advisor who oversees the questions asked by the supervisor and the second reader. These two examiners will base their questions on the student’s written text and bibliography. Because the ENGL 5908 grade primarily reflects the evaluation of the essay, the evaluation of the oral examination will not lower the overall grade but can boost it. The research essay is given a letter grade.

ENGL 5909: THESIS

Introduction

The MA thesis constitutes independent work undertaken with the advice and supervision of an experienced scholar. The goal of ENGL 5909 is to familiarize the student with the research activity necessary for composing a short graduate monograph, traditionally a miniature version of a dissertation. As with a dissertation, the thesis will be defended at an oral examination. Upon completion, it will be examined by a board of at least four faculty members. The thesis must communicate the results of successful scholarly research in an organized and systematic manner with a coherent and intelligent argument. The bibliography for the thesis should represent a thorough acquaintance with recent scholarship on the topic. Guidelines for the preparation of graduate theses and information on the procedures for examination of graduate theses are available [here](#). Students and supervisors should read these carefully.

Registration Process and Prospectus

A full-time student interested in writing a thesis normally registers in ENGL 5909 in the first term of the MA program. The student should begin consulting with the supervisor as soon as possible. Before the end of the first term, the student should submit a prospectus of at least five hundred words and a bibliography between two and five pages in length. This prospectus will be the outcome of discussions in regular meetings with the supervisor.

The prospectus will provide a thesis statement, a description of the approach, and an outline of the main arguments. If for any reason either the prospectus or the student’s

performance at meetings is considered unsatisfactory, the student may be required to switch to the coursework stream. **ENGL 5909 is a three-term course.** A student, once enrolled, must maintain continuous registration until they have submitted the final copies of the thesis post oral examination.

Specifications

The main text of the thesis should be between 17,500 and 22,500 words. This word count does *not* include the bibliography. Its documentation must conform to the requirements of the *MLA Style Manual*. Regulations regarding formatting, pagination, grade and size of paper, abstracts, reproduction, microfilming, binding, and the constitution of the examining board are prescribed by Graduate Studies. For more information, visit <https://gradstudents.carleton.ca/resources-page/thesis-requirements/>

Oral Examination and Deadlines

Please consult the [Academic Year](#) page for submission deadlines.

According to Section 12.6 of the [Graduate Calendar](#):

Students are expected to notify their supervisor and the chair of the department at least two weeks in advance of the date on which they intend to submit the completed thesis. The examinable thesis must be submitted to the department at least four weeks in advance of the intended date of examination. The thesis examination and defense will then be scheduled, and the date will be announced at least two weeks in advance.

Students pursuing the thesis stream are responsible for reviewing the [Thesis Examination Policy](#). Please contact the Graduate Administrator with any questions.

SUPERVISION: ENGL 5808 OR ENGL 5909

Finding a Supervisor

It is never too early to begin thinking about a supervisor for your research essay or thesis. First, it is necessary to have a field in place and to have in mind a topic, if not an argument or guiding principle to your research. Individual faculty members are valuable resources that can help a student explore potential ideas, even if they do not eventually become the student's supervisor. There is no formal process for approaching a potential supervisor. However, it is incumbent upon the student to initiate contact by asking a faculty member in person or by email. The Graduate Advisor can recommend suitable supervisors to the student. For ENGL 5908, all arrangements are "informal" until the Graduate Advisor has received a signed proposal form, accompanied by a research proposal that the essay's supervisor has read and approved.

What a Student Can Expect of a Supervisor

The student can expect scholarly guidance from the supervisor throughout the stages of researching and composing the essay or thesis. The supervisor can assist in selecting and planning a manageable research topic, because they should be either familiar with the specific topic or willing to acquire that familiarity. The student should not hesitate to arrange meetings through email or in person. A supervisor will make himself or herself available for consultation about the project: depending upon the research itself and

particularly on the student's stage of work, meetings may take place once a week or once a month. A supervisor must consult with the Graduate Advisor or student about continuity of supervision before leaving for an extended period of time. Overall, supervisors should respond expeditiously, thoroughly, and constructively to drafts of the student's writing. But in approving the complete paper or thesis examination, the supervisor does not in any way commit the department to accepting the paper. After the examination, the student can expect the supervisor to advise him or her about any compositional changes required by the examiners.

What a Supervisor Can Expect of a Student

The supervisor can expect from the student a commitment to designing and implementing the research project. In order to keep on track, the student should develop a plan for all the stages of the project. It is the student's responsibility to meet with the supervisor when requested and report fully and regularly on the progress of the research. The student should be sensitive to the fact that the supervisor's other teaching, research, and administrative duties may take precedence over immediate consultation on the project.

The student must maintain a reliable and current address, phone number, and email address. It is the student's responsibility to maintain registration in the program and to keep any necessary visas and immigration documents up to date. In the case of ENGL 5909, a thesis student must meet the requirements of the university, Graduate Studies, and the Department, paying close attention to deadlines and thesis style. The supervisor can expect the student to consider thoughtfully and respond energetically to all advice and criticism.

STUDENT EXPERIENCE

Communication and Important Information

Please consult the departmental website for relevant news and events. Graduate Students are responsible for keeping up-to-date on information pertaining to [CUPE 4600](#) and the [GSA](#).

The [Carleton360](#) portal is a one-stop shop for access to important information and multiple services that students, faculty, staff and other members of the University community use frequently. You can access Brightspace, cmail (Carleton student email account), Carleton Central, and more.

The Department will communicate with graduate students through their cmail account. It is the responsibility of each student regularly to check their Carleton360 and cmail accounts and visit the [departmental website](#).

BABEL: Graduate Student Reading Group

Organized by a faculty member from the English department, the graduate student reading group has a number of purposes. First, it is intended to expand the students' theoretical knowledge of literature in directions not covered by coursework. Second, it enables graduate students from all years of the program to get to know one another. Third, it allows students to draw upon the expertise of faculty members who can suggest texts and provide guidance from time to time. During the first few weeks of classes, an assigned faculty member will arrange a meeting with the graduate students to forge a

reading list, a format, and meeting times.

Teaching and Learning Services (TLS)

Teaching and Learning Services (TLS) is dedicated to the support of teaching excellence at Carleton University. TLS “supports Carleton University’s faculty members, contract instructors, teaching assistants and educational support staff in all facets of teaching and learning as we aim to empower students to succeed in the classroom and beyond.” As a TA, you can attend seminars and workshops on both classroom technology (Brightspace, PowerPoint, and web design) and teaching practice (marking essays, teaching critical writing skills, office hours, teaching to a global classroom, discouraging plagiarism, grading, and feedback). For more information, visit <https://carleton.ca/tls/teaching-assistants/>.

INTERNATIONAL STUDENT INFORMATION

Tuition Costs and Financial Assistance for International Students

For the current international student tuition fees, please consult the Student Accounts Receivable website: <https://carleton.ca/studentaccounts/>.

For information on financial assistance, visit <https://graduate.carleton.ca/financial-assistance/>.

Immigration Information and Support

For important information on studying and working in Canada, as an international student, visit <https://carleton.ca/isso/immigration-support/>. You may contact the Global Opportunities & International Student Services Office (GO-ISSO) at isso@carleton.ca.

ADMINISTRATION

Graduate Administrator

The Graduate Administrator, whose office is on the 18th floor of Dunton Tower, administers the MA and PhD programs and liaises with Graduate Studies on behalf of the Department.

Please contact the Graduate Administrator if you have any questions about administrative matters including, but not limited to, our application process, course registration, program requirements, awards applications, thesis defence, and your audit.

Graduate Advisor

The Graduate Advisor, whose office is on the 18th floor of Dunton Tower, chairs the Graduate Committee and, along with the Graduate Administrator, administers the MA and PhD programs. If you have any questions about academic matters including, but not limited to course selection, thesis/research topic, and finding a thesis/research essay supervisor, please contact the Graduate Advisor.

Graduate Committee

The governing body of graduate programs in English is the Graduate Committee, which includes the Graduate Advisor as Chair and at least three other departmental members from the core faculty. This is a standing committee of the Department; the Department ratifies its membership annually. The Graduate Committee is responsible for overseeing the academic integrity of the program, admissions to the program, applications to internal and external awards, recommendations of suspension or withdrawal, and other pertinent matters. With the final approval of the department, this committee will review and amend as necessary the PhD curriculum and program.

FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE

Internal Funding

The university offers a variety of financial assistance, separate from the funding that you may have received upon being admitted into the program; for example, there are awards for academic merit, scholarships for particular areas of research, and bursaries for financial need. Most of these awards require a formal application from students to the Department of English in mid-September.

For more information, visit <https://gradstudents.carleton.ca/awards-and-funding/internal-awards/>.

External Funding

The department is committed to working with students as they apply for scholarships and fellowships, particularly [OGS](#) and [SSHRC](#). Every September, the Graduate Advisor will ask each student to begin to draft an application so that at least one expert in the field can review it. The application process is an important dimension of scholarly life.

Applying for an OGS and SSHRC fellowship should be regarded as an integral academic practice by which a student's research is validated on a provincial and a national level and their career is advanced through the profession.

Graduate Student Travel Grants

Each year graduate students apply for conference travel funding. The application for the Graduate Student Travel Bursary (GSTB) is available in Carleton Central. Applications must be submitted at least a month in advance. Please contact the Graduate Administrator when you have applied and if you have any questions. For information on the Graduate Student Travel Bursary (GSTB), visit <https://gradstudents.carleton.ca/awards-and-funding/internal-awards/>.

Students may also contact the Graduate Students' Association (GSA) for information on their travel grant: <http://gsacarleton.ca/travel-grant/>.

LIBRARY AND COMPUTER RESOURCES

Computer Facilities

All graduate students at Carleton are provided with email accounts (cmail) and access to a variety of online services and licensed software packages (including library databases, Brightspace course management software, web-based course calendars, scheduling

software, class discussion lists, etc.) through the University's [Carleton360](#) portal. Carleton360 also provides the main channel through which students receive departmental, faculty or University-wide announcements.

The Department's e-Lab (DT 1805) was created for the exclusive use of our graduate students. This facility has Apple desktops, internet access, large flat screens, a whiteboard, and comfortable, moveable furniture to facilitate group work.

Ottawa's Libraries

Carleton's main library, the [MacOdrum Library](#), has significant holdings in the major subject areas related to the MA program in English literature. Students also have borrowing privileges at the University of Ottawa's [Morisset Library](#), whose holdings complement those at Carleton's MacOdrum Library. Students have access to the public library system too. Ottawa is also home to various public and private sector research institutes, media outlets, and cultural agencies, including the National Library and the [Jean-Léon Allie Library](#) at St. Paul's University.

MacOdrum Library

MacOdrum Library serves all disciplines at Carleton University. Its services include:

- borrowing physical resources
- electronic access to digital resources
- graduate study area
- printing on each floor
- specialized in-library resource collections such as Archives and Research Resources, Maps, GIS, and Data sources
- resources for students with disabilities in the New Sun Joy Maclaren Adaptive Technology Centre ([JMC](#))
- workstations
- wireless access on all floors
- IT assistance on the fourth floor
- in-person, telephone, chat, or email research help

Not all resources desired by students may be found in Carleton's library. In this case, students may borrow from other local libraries or from other Canadian university libraries. Also, students may request materials via Interlibrary Loan, using RACER. More about these and other services can be found on the library's web site:

<https://library.carleton.ca>.

For more information on Library services visit

<https://library.carleton.ca/services/services-graduate-students>.

The [subject guide](#) for English Language and Literature highlights resources of interest to English students. In particular, consult the section entitled Databases, for subject-specific journal articles search engines and repositories.

Students are encouraged to contact the [subject specialist](#) for an appointment to develop search skills, to request the purchase of materials, or to receive advice on appropriate resources to choose. For the list of subject specialists, visit

<https://library.carleton.ca/services/research-help>.

FACULTY RESEARCH PROFILES

Click [here](#) for our faculty listing and their profiles.