

**DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH**  
**THE UNIVERSITY OF PENNSYLVANIA**

**Handbook for the Doctor of Philosophy Degree**

## Overview

The Ph.D. in English is a flexible five- or six-year program that combines broad coverage in English, American, and world literatures in translation with concentrations shaped by individual students' interests. Ph.D. students generally study a wide range of literary traditions and theoretical frameworks during their first two years of coursework, and then begin to specialize in their third year. In their fourth, fifth, and sometimes sixth years, students write their dissertations. The Ph.D. in English is often a stepping stone to an academic career, but our alumni also go on to pursue careers in the public and private sectors.

## Degree Requirements

### Coursework:

- Proseminar
- 12 additional graduate seminars that fulfill all distribution requirements (see Policies & Guidelines).
- Pedagogy

### Teaching Requirements:

- 1 semester as a Grader
- 1 semester as a Teaching Assistant (TA)
- 1 semester as an Instructor of Record

### Examinations:

- Qualifying Exam (the “50-Book Exam”)
- Candidacy Exam (the “Field Exam”)
- 2 foreign language exams

### Dissertation Milestones:

- Dissertation proposal (approved by committee with feedback from GEC)
- 1 Work-in-Progress (“WIP”) in 4<sup>th</sup> year
- 1 Work-in-Progress (“WIP”) in 5<sup>th</sup> year in Departmental Colloquium
- Dissertation defense
- Dissertation deposit

# Degree Timeline

## Year 1

Take 4 seminars per semester OR 3 seminars per semester if transferring in credit from a master's degree. All Ph.D. students will take ENGL 6000, Proseminar, as one of their 3 or 4 seminars in the fall.

Prepare in the spring and summer for the Qualifying Exam ("50-Book"). By mid-March, students choose one faculty member to be on their 50-Book Committee. The GEC assigns the other 2 committee members shortly afterwards. 50-Book Exam lists are due to the GEC for approval in mid-April.

(Recommended) Pass at least 1 language exam by the end of the year, or make plans to take one of the Grad Division's Reading for Knowledge courses in the summer.

## Year 2

Take 3 seminars in one semester and 2 seminars + ENGL 8000, Pedagogy, in the other. Pedagogy is a 2-hour weekly class led by the instructor for whom the students are TAing.

Grade 1 semester for a large undergraduate lecture course (assigned by the Graduate Chair & Undergraduate Chair). Graders typically sit in on all class lectures, interface with students about their writing, and learn how to give constructive feedback on assignments. Graders may be asked to hold limited office hours.

TA 1 semester for a large undergraduate lecture course. In each semester, all TAs are in the same course. Each TA runs a weekly recitation section held on Fridays. Additionally, they assist with grading, course organization, and admin, and they hold regular office hours for the students in their recitation section.

Prepare in the spring and summer for the Candidacy Exam ("Field Exam"). By mid-March, students assemble a Fields Committee. Field Exam lists and rationales are due to the GEC in late April. In the summer, students begin reading from their list. They will submit write-ups throughout the reading process and will revise a seminar paper.

## Year 3

Continue preparing for Field Exam. Portfolio and revised seminar paper are due to committee in mid-November. By mid-October, students should have scheduled their oral exam, which will fall in the two weeks after the portfolio due date. Reminders about due dates will go out early in the fall semester.

Take Dissertation Proposal Workshop in the Spring. Dissertation Proposals are due to the GEC by late-April.

Take One-Series Workshop to prepare for 4<sup>th</sup>-year teaching.

Pass second language exam, or equivalent, by the end of the year.

#### **Year 4**

Begin researching and writing the dissertation.

Submit Dissertation Progress Report to Graduate Division in late-summer before Year 4 (instructions will go out beforehand).

Teach 1 semester of the One Series course in either the fall or spring.

Present a portion of a dissertation chapter as a WIP.

Meet with committee in late-Spring to discuss progress and plans.

#### **Year 5**

Submit Dissertation Progress Report.

Research and write the dissertation.

No teaching requirements.

Present part of a dissertation chapter as a WIP in a Departmental Colloquium.

Meet with full committee about dissertation progress and plans.

Apply for fellowships and/or jobs.

#### **Year 6**

Submit Dissertation Progress Report.

Research and write your dissertation.

No teaching requirements.

Meet with full committee about dissertation progress and plans.

Apply for fellowships and/or jobs.

Apply for graduation, defend dissertation, and complete dissertation deposit.

## Policies & Guidelines

### Registration Policies

1. In the first three years, students must be registered for a minimum of 3 course units (CUs) per semester in order to be considered full-time students in good standing and to be eligible for the fellowship stipend. 1 grad seminar = 1 CU. After coursework, students are enrolled in placeholder courses that account for the independent work they are completing.
2. Students in the third year and beyond are allowed to take one additional grad seminar per term.

### Coursework Policies

1. Ph.D. students are required to complete 14 grade-bearing seminars in total, including ENGL 8000, Pedagogy. Most will complete this requirement by the end of their second year, but they must complete it by the end of the fall semester of their third year,
  - a. Graduate-level courses taken in other departments may count toward the requirement.
  - b. Graduate-level courses taken at other universities through the Ivy+ Exchange Program may count towards the requirement.
  - c. A maximum of 2 grade-bearing independent studies may count toward the requirement.
  - d. ENGL 8500, ENGL 8510, and ENGL 9950, all placeholder courses for the independent work done in later years, cannot be counted toward that requirement.
2. Most grad seminars are divided into two levels: 5000 and 7000.
  - a. 5000-level seminars are broader in conception and aimed at coverage of a particular literary period, genre, or author(s). Instructors are encouraged, but not required, to include assignments that venture away from conventional academic writing (public-facing, creative, creative-critical, multimodal, etc.).
  - a. 7000-level seminars will be narrower in conception and will address more circumscribed problems, themes, objects, or methods. Instructors are encouraged to assign a full-length (20- to 25-page) academic essay as their final assignment.
3. While in coursework, Ph.D. students may take up to 1 graduate seminar outside of the English Department per semester. Permission from the instructor or the host department may be required. Please be advised that other schools at Penn, such as the Graduate School of Education and the Law School, have different policies about allowing outside students

into their graduate seminars, so students should plan and communicate with the course's professor as early as possible.

4. Master of Liberal Arts (MLA) courses taught in literature may not be taken as part of your coursework requirements. While these courses are often taught by English faculty members, they are not run through our department and they are M.A. level only.
5. While Independent Studies may be taken as part of your coursework requirement, they are not intended to replace graduate seminars. Students may not take more than 1 independent study in a given year, and no more than 2 independent studies may count toward their coursework requirement. Requests for independent studies should be addressed both to the instructor and the Graduate Chair.
6. All graduate students are allowed to audit a maximum of 2 courses per semester. This includes undergraduate- and graduate-level language courses in other departments.
7. All graduate students are allowed to take up to 1 incomplete per year. See policy below for more information.
8. Students will receive a letter grade for their seminar performance. Ph.D. students must maintain a 3.0 (or B) average to be considered in good standing.

### **Incompletes**

1. All students are allowed 1 incomplete per year, though exceptions may be granted in unusual circumstances.
2. SAS has the following guidelines for short and long incompletes.
  - a. A short Incomplete (I) must be made up by the end of the fourth full week of the next term (summer session included).
  - b. A long Incomplete (II) must be made up by the end of the next regular term in which the student is enrolled (summer session excluded).
3. Short Incompletes will be granted with the permission of the instructor. Long Incompletes or exceptions to the one-per-year rule must be discussed with both the instructor and the Grad Chair. The Grad Chair may ask the student to produce a timeline for completing the work.
4. Ph.D. students should clear all incompletes from their records before taking the 50-Book Exam and Field Exam. Students with incompletes on their records will not be allowed to enroll in the Dissertation Proposal Workshop or to submit Proposals to the GEC for approval. In unusual circumstances, exceptions may be granted with the approval of the student's advisor and a discussion with the Grad Chair.

## Distribution Requirements

1. Each student must take courses that fulfill six distribution requirements:
  - a. One course pre-1700
  - b. One course 1700-1900
  - c. One course post-1900
  - d. One course on literature of the Americas
  - e. One course on literature outside the Americas
  - f. One course in minority literature (racial, ethnic, gender, sexuality)
2. The general expectation is that students will take at least 2 seminars from outside their primary period, national or geographic area, and methodological or theoretical area of study.
3. A single course may be counted toward up to 2 requirements. (Example: A course on “Race and Empire in Eighteenth Century English Literature” would cover up to 2 of any of the following distribution requirements: b, e, or f.)
4. In cases where there is uncertainty about the classification of the course (e.g. a course that extends over a long chronological period or a course that is not exclusively devoted to a single minority literature but includes a substantial portion of that literature), the Graduate Chair must be consulted. In general, a course will count toward a distribution requirement if the student’s final paper or project engage substantially with that requirement’s subject matter.

## Language Requirement

1. Ph.D. students are required to pass 2 foreign language requirements.
  - a. In this case, a “foreign language” is any written language besides English. Students with native fluency in languages other than English may take exams in those languages.
2. To satisfy each language requirement, Ph.D. students must demonstrate intermediate reading comprehension in a foreign language of their choice. The following will count:
  - a. Pass a departmental language exam. These are offered once per semester.
    - i. Examinees receive 2 short passages (usually a scanned page of a book for each) in the language of their choice. They have two hours to produce English translations of each passage. They are allowed to use a physical and/or online language dictionary.
    - ii. There is no oral component of the exam.
    - iii. Exams are graded on a pass/fail basis and examiners don’t generally correct or mark up the exam.
    - iv. Students may choose any language. We will do our best to find someone qualified to administer the exam in the language of their choice, though in rare cases, this may not be possible.

- b. Pass one of the Grad Division's Reading for Knowledge Courses. These are intensive language courses focused solely on reading comprehension. They are offered in the summer, usually running from late May to late June, with two 90-minute sessions per week. The courses have been held online in recent years. French, Spanish, German, and sometimes Latin are usually offered, but any course may be canceled if there aren't enough students enrolled. The courses are funded by the Grad Division and are free of cost to students.
- c. Obtain permission to pass the requirement by passing a language class taken in another department or at another institution. This is permitted on a case-by-case basis and should be proposed to the Grad Chair.

### **First- and Second-Year Student Advising and Progress**

1. First-Year Advisors are assigned by the Graduate Chair. Students should meet with their assigned advisor at least once per semester to discuss course selection, course progress, and learning goals.
2. Students will designate a second-year advisor at the end of their first year. Students should meet with this advisor at least once per semester. This can be their First-Year Faculty Advisor, the faculty member they requested for 50-Book, or someone else.
3. In the spring of their second year, students will assemble a fields committee and designate a committee chair, who will advise them through the exam process.

### **First-Year Qualifying Exam (50-Book Exam)**

1. The 50-Book Exam requires students to demonstrate knowledge of a group of texts that is diverse in terms of historical period; generic and formal categories; national and geographic origin; and racial, gendered, and sexual identifications.
2. Students work with a committee of three faculty members to create a list of 50 texts; at least 30 of these texts should be from outside the student's designated area of specialization.
3. Students will read over the summer to prepare for an oral exam with their committee, to be held the day before classes begin in the fall. Committee chairs and one committee member will be appointed by the GEC; the student may choose the third committee member (usually this will be the first-year advisor or the student's designated second-year advisor).

### **Candidacy Exam (Field Exam)**

1. All students begin preparing for Field Exams in spring of their second year. Field Exam lists focus on one primary and two secondary areas of specialization; all three lists together should include 60-70 texts. Students submit the lists to the GEC for feedback at the end of April of their second year.; final approval of lists is granted by the committee.
2. Students spend the summer and most of the fall reading. During this time, students will submit regular write-ups to their committees in response to prompts that steer them toward

pattern-recognition and field-mapping (e.g., “the state of the field re: X,” “a survey of Y genre”) rather than toward narrow argumentation.

3. By mid-November, students will submit a portfolio to their committee consisting of the write-ups and a revised seminar paper that exemplifies their best and most representative work.
4. The field exam is a two-hour oral exam, which will take place at the end of the fall semester of the student’s 3<sup>rd</sup> year. It consists of questions about the student’s lists, fields, and write-ups. Detailed feedback on the seminar paper will be returned to the student within two weeks of their oral exam.

### **Dissertation Proposal Workshop**

1. All students are required to take a Dissertation Proposal Workshop, led by two faculty members in spring semester of their third year. Workshop Leaders should share one set of comments on the proposal with students’ committees. The goal of such sharing is to be sure that Workshop Leaders and committee members are all aware of the feedback students are receiving.
2. Students must pass the Field Exam and clear all incompletes from their records before beginning the workshop.
3. In April of their 3<sup>rd</sup> year, students will submit their Proposal to the GEC for feedback; final approval will be granted by the student’s committee.

### **Dissertation WIP Presentations and Submission of 1<sup>st</sup> Chapter**

1. All students are required to present a WIP of one chapter from the dissertation by the end of their fourth year. The Graduate Coordinator will ensure that all fourth-years do a (partial) chapter WIP geared to specialists either in a graduate working group or in a session hosted by the GEC.
2. Students should submit a complete first chapter of their dissertation to their committee by the end of the fall semester of their 4<sup>th</sup> year.
3. The GEC will also plan an annual event (e.g., a mini-conference in Dec or Jan) at which fifth-years will present brief talks about their dissertations geared to non-specialists. Feedback at both kinds of events will be informal and oral.

### **Dissertation Progress Meetings**

1. Beginning in the spring of their fourth year, students should meet with their full dissertation committee each spring. The purpose of these meetings is to get the full committee together with the student to go over progress to date, address questions and difficulties the student is having, and to plan a timeline for completion.

2. The Graduate Chair will email all faculty and ABD students each spring to remind them to schedule this meeting. Students are not required to submit an additional report from this meeting, but dissertation chairs should confirm that the meeting has taken place.

## **Time Management and Etiquette**

### **Time Management**

1. Prioritize curricular requirements (coursework and exams) over extracurricular activities (working groups, department social events, etc.). This does not mean that you shouldn't attend the latter, but rather the former needs to be done or scheduled to be done first.
2. Expect delays. Quality research and writing takes longer than we think it will, often because we underestimate how many revisions need to be built into the process of producing a quality draft. Build delays, make-up days, and revision days into your timeline when you're planning out your semester.
3. Your work expands to fill the time you give it. If you give yourself 2 hours to read a theoretical essay or all afternoon to read the same essay, it will take that long. It is not easy to give yourself enough time but not too much time, but it's a balance worth working towards.
4. Make time for administrative tasks. Success in grad school, as in any other working environment, will depend in part on your ability to hand things in on time, communicate promptly and clearly with your colleagues and supervisors, and to follow directions. We highly recommend using a calendar (either web-based or physical versions will do), scheduling short blocks of time per day to read and answer emails, scheduling deadlines as soon as you have them, and utilizing to-do lists (or an equivalent).

### **Writing Guidelines**

1. More isn't better; better is better. Observe word limits for seminar papers.
2. Everyone loves to read clear, elegant, understandable prose. Focus on communicating with your reader, rather than on constructing something that sounds impressive. Remember that many of the foundational or theoretical essays you will be reading in your graduate seminars are written in a style that you do not have to emulate in your own writing. Look to literary-focused essays in popular journals to find inspiration for your own writing style.
3. Ask for help / advice on your writing when you need it. While first and final drafts are often written alone at our desks, the act of producing a piece of academic writing is a fundamentally social act, so don't be afraid to swap and comment on each other's writing. You should also feel free to ask advice on reading and setting timelines to complete papers. Your advisor is a good source of this information.
4. Always follow any formatting guidelines provided by your instructor. If no guidelines are provided, generally include the following on all your papers:

- a. A basic heading (name, course title, assignment title)
  - b. A title (unless it's a shorter assignment, like a response paper, in which case the assignment title will do)
  - c. Page numbers
  - d. A properly-formatted bibliography or works cited (if required)
  - e. An easy-to-find file name, something like: lastname, response paper 2.
5. Proofread. Then proofread again. If you have difficulty spotting errors in your own writing, consider using a third-party proofreading software like Grammarly or swapping drafts with a friend to identify errors.

## **Etiquette**

1. Be kind, patient, and courteous to faculty, administrators, and peers.
2. Strive to be a generous contributor in graduate seminars and at talks. Generous, here, means preparing well and offering sincere questions, but also giving space to others' questions and ideas. It is tempting in our field to always critique and challenge, but you and everyone else will get more out your academic conversations if you lead with genuine curiosity and try to think with the texts you are reading.
3. Respond to emails within 24 hours, even if just to acknowledge receipt.
4. Arrive on time for seminars, meeting, and talks.
5. Thank faculty and peers for comments on seminar papers, exams, chapters, and any work-in-progress. Thank administrators when they help you.
6. Turn in administrative forms and applications on time. Give faculty as much lead time as possible for letters, signatures, etc. (generally at least a month for letters, a week for signatures and basic forms). Please do not assume that lack of preparation on your part will translate into an emergency on anyone else's.
7. Err on the side of formality rather than familiarity. Most of our faculty prefer to be addressed by graduate students by their first name, but it helps to address anyone you haven't met yet as "Professor \_\_\_\_." When writing faculty at other institutions for the first time (with a conference invitation or a

## Helpful Acronyms we Use

<b>GEA</b>	Graduate English Association
<b>GEC</b>	Graduate Executive Committee, Department of English
<b>SAS</b>	School of Arts & Sciences
<b>GAS or GSAS</b>	Graduate Division, School of Arts & Sciences
<b>GAPSA</b>	Graduate and Professional Student Assembly
<b>SAS-gov</b>	Student Government of the Graduate Students at the School of Arts & Sciences
<b>SHS</b>	Student Health Services
<b>CAPS</b>	Counseling and Psychological Services
<b>SIS</b>	Student Intervention Services
<b>OSC</b>	Office of Student Conduct
<b>GSC</b>	Graduate Student Center
<b>ISS</b>	International Student Services
<b>OGC</b>	Office of General Council
<b>ABD</b>	All but Dissertation
<b>WIP</b>	Work-in-Progress

## English Department Contact Information

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## **Discrimination Policies and Violence Prevention**

The University of Pennsylvania has strict rules on discrimination and violence prevention. The University values diversity and seeks talented students, faculty, and staff from diverse backgrounds. The University does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, religion, creed, national or ethnic origin, citizenship status, age, disability, veteran status or any other legally protected class status in the administration of its admissions, financial aid, educational or athletic programs, or other University-administered programs or in its employment practices.

Below is a list of useful University websites outlining policies as well as available resources:

Sexual Harassment Policy

<http://provost.upenn.edu/policies/pennbook/2013/02/15/sexual-harassment-policy>

Racial Harassment Policy

<http://www.upenn.edu/affirm-action/policies-handbooks.html>

Office of Student Disabilities Services

<http://www.vpul.upenn.edu/lrc/sds/>

Gender Neutral Restrooms

[http://www.facilities.upenn.edu/sites/default/files/pdfs/gender\\_map\\_5\\_3\\_lr.pdf](http://www.facilities.upenn.edu/sites/default/files/pdfs/gender_map_5_3_lr.pdf)

Penn Violence Prevention

<https://secure.www.upenn.edu/vpul/pvp/definitionsandpolicies>

Reporting Responsibilities for Sexual Violence

<https://secure.www.upenn.edu/vpul/pvp/staffandfaculty.php>

For a Complete List of University Policies and Regulations

<http://www.upenn.edu/services/policies.php>.

## **Confidential Resources**

Special Services, Division of Public Safety (DPS)  
4040 Chestnut Street  
(215) 898-6600

Penn Women's Center (PWC)  
3643 Locust Walk  
(215) 898-8611

Student Health Service (SHS)  
3535 Market Street, Suite 100  
(215) 746-3535

Counseling & Psychological Services (CAPS)  
3624 Market Street  
(215) 898-7021

The Office of the Chaplain  
240 Houston Hall  
(215) 898-8456

Lesbian Gay Bisexual Transgender (LGBT) Center  
3901 Spruce Street  
(215) 898-5044

African American Resource Center  
3643 Locust Walk  
(215) 898-0104

Employee Assistance Program (EAP)  
(888) 321-4433

Office of Sexual Violence Prevention & Education  
VPUL, 3611 Locust Walk  
(215) 898-6081

Office of the Ombudsman  
113 Duhring Wing  
236 S. 34th Street  
(215) 898-8261

## Resources for Graduate Student Life

Graduate Student Center  
<https://gsc.upenn.edu>  
3615 Locust Walk  
(215) 746-6868

Lounge & study space w/ free coffee!  
Hosts social & cultural events (including off-site trips)  
Hosts informative programming on meeting academic goals, navigating academia, student finances, and better work/life balance.

Career Services  
<https://careerservices.upenn.edu>  
3718 Locust Walk #20  
(215) 898-7531

Runs 1:1 career counseling meetings and mock-interviews.  
Provides extensive resources for every aspect of career development.  
Provides access to career-exploration tools (most are web-based).  
Available to current students and alumni.

CAPS (Counseling and Psychological Services)  
<https://caps.wellness.upenn.edu>  
3624 Market Street, 1<sup>st</sup> Floor West  
(215) 898-7021

Your first stop for addressing mental and emotional health needs.  
Provides short- and long-term counseling and referrals to external practitioners.  
Walk-ins are welcome during business hours and a clinician can be reached by phone 24/7.

Penn Women's Center  
<https://pwc.vpul.upenn.edu>  
3642 Locust Walk  
(215) 898-8611

Lounge, meeting & study space with eco-friendly kitchen.  
Runs support services with confidential crisis / options counseling with referrals.  
Hosts social and academic events centered around gender justice.

African-American Resource Center  
<https://aarc.upenn.edu>  
3643 Locust Walk  
(215) 898-0104

Provides advocacy and information to all members of Penn community, with special focus on members of African descent.  
Runs support activities for men and women of color at Penn, including monthly Women of Color Networking Lunch.

LGBT Center  
<https://lgbtc.vpul.upenn.edu>  
3907 Spruce Street  
(215) 898-5044

Runs the annual Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Symposium.

Provides resources, advising, and advocacy for LGBT members of the Penn community.  
Runs QPenn, a week-long LGBTQ cultural celebration usually taking place in March.  
Runs workshops and programming for all Penn community members to learn more about LGBTQ issues.

Makuu: The Black Cultural Center  
<https://makuu.vpul.upenn.edu>  
The Arch, 3602 Locust Walk, Suite G17  
(215) 573-0823

Provides student resource advising and program support for Black-identifying students at Penn.  
Hosts Kwanzaa celebrations and Graduation celebrations.

Pan-Asian American Community House  
<https://paach.vpul.upenn.edu>  
The Arch, 3601 Locust Walk, Suite G22  
(215) 746-6046

Network of several organizations that provide community, advocacy, and resources for Asian and Asian-American students.

La Casa Latina  
<https://lacasa.vpul.upenn.edu>  
The Arch, 3601 Locust Walk, Suite G12  
(215) 746-6043

Network of several organizations that provide community, advocacy, and resources for Latinx students.