

Handbook for Graduate Students



Department of English and Theatre

Acadia University

<https://english.acadiau.ca/programs/ma-in-english.html>

2021-22

Important Dates for 2021-2022

September 1	RA/TA accounts forms are due
September 7	Graduate student registration
September 8	Classes start
October 4	Thesis proposals due
October 11	Thanksgiving Day: no classes
October 25-29	Reading break: no classes
November 11	Remembrance Day: no class
December 6	Last day of first-term classes
December 20	25-30 pages of acceptable thesis copy due
January 10	Classes start
February 21-25	Heritage Day & Winter study break: no classes
February 28	25-30 pages of acceptable thesis copy due
April 8	Last day of classes
By May 18	Full thesis draft to be submitted to supervisor
By June 15	Revised thesis to be submitted to Graduate Coordinator for evaluation by the Internal Examiner.
By July 20	Thesis incorporating changes recommended by Internal Examiner to be submitted to Graduate Coordinator
By August 26	Deadline to apply to graduate in the Fall. Completed "Application to Graduate" form to be submitted to Registrar's Office
By September 24	Final copies of thesis to be submitted to the library and RGS

For RGS thesis deadlines, see

<https://gradstudies.acadiau.ca/PresentationPrepareThesis.html>

Programme Description

The Department of English and Theatre offers a one-year programme leading to the Master's degree in English literature. Students participate in small seminar classes, work closely with a supervisor to complete a thesis that takes a fresh approach to a literary subject or a suitable editing project, and where possible are offered the opportunity to gain teaching experience. The Department welcomes a wide variety of scholarly and critical approaches, and its distinguished faculty have expertise in a broad range of literature in English.

MA candidates must complete the following requirements:

- 4 single-term courses (12 credit hours)
- ENGL 5060 Scholarly Methods (non-credit)
- ENGL 5960 Thesis (6 credit hours)

Early in the Fall term, students submit to the Graduate Committee thesis proposals developed in consultation with departmental supervisors. Once the proposals have been approved, students begin the research and writing process in earnest, again under the guidance of their supervisors. Please note that the Graduate Committee has set firm dates for the submission of proposals and thesis drafts in order to ensure that students are able to complete the programme within one academic year. Upon completion, each thesis is read first by an Internal Examiner from Acadia's Department of English, then by an External Examiner from another university, and is then defended by the candidate at an oral defence arranged by the Division of Research and Graduate Studies.

For more detailed information on University regulations governing graduate studies, please consult information at <https://gradstudies.acadiau.ca/current-students.html> and <https://gradstudies.acadiau.ca/faq.html> available on the RGS website as well as info about fee deadlines at https://gradstudies.acadiau.ca/fees_funding.html

More information about the Department of English and Theatre is available on our homepage at <http://english.acadiau.ca/>.

Specific questions about the MA in English should be directed to:

Dr. Kait Pinder
Graduate Coordinator
Department of English and Theatre
Acadia University
Wolfville, NS B4P 2R6
CANADA
Telephone: (902) 585-1255
Email: kait.pinder@acadiau.ca

Faculty Research Interests

Stephen Ahern, *British literature of the long eighteenth century; history and theory of the novel; cultural theory; affect theory and history of emotions*

Wanda Campbell: *Creative Writing; Writing by Women, particularly Nineteenth-Century Canadian*

Richard Cunningham: *Sixteenth- and Seventeenth-Century; Book History, Print Culture, Digital Humanities*

Lance La Rocque: *Modern Canadian Poetry; The Writer and Nature*

Lisa Narbeshuber: *American Literature; Feminist Theory; Sylvia Plath*

Kait Pinder: *Canadian Literature, modernism, literary theory, literature and philosophy, Canadian Studies*

Anne Quéma: *Experimental Poetry; Theories of Critical Analysis; Law and Literature; Queer Studies; Modern and Contemporary Fiction and Poetry in the UK*

Laura Robinson: *Canadian women's writing, children's literature, feminist and queer theory, L.M. Montgomery*

Jon Saklofske: *Romantic Period literature; William Blake; The Sister Arts; Digital Humanities; Media Studies; Video Game Studies*

Jessica Slights: *Shakespeare; Early Modern Drama and Culture; Digital Humanities; Scholarly Editing*

Nandini Thiyagarajan: *Postcolonial Literature; South Asian; Asian North American; Animal Studies; Environmental Humanities*

Kerry Vincent: *Postcolonial Literature: African and Caribbean; Travel Writing*

Kevin Whetter: *Mediaeval Literature, particularly romance and Thomas Malory; Chaucer; Tolkien; Tragedy and Heroic Literature*

Guidelines for Preparing a Master's Thesis

A Master's thesis may be a literary argument based on research, critical analysis, and coherent thinking, or it may be an editing project. The recommended length is 80 to 100 pages (roughly 21,000-27,000 words). A student will work with their supervisor until the thesis has been completed to their mutual satisfaction and the appropriate level of scholarship. The style manual to be followed with regard to scholarly presentation and citation is the *MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers*. The final thesis must be formatted according to the guidelines published by the Division of Research and Graduate Studies at <https://gradstudies.acadiau.ca/PresentationPrepareThesis.html>

Choice of Subject and Supervisor

If they have not already done so, students should contact a prospective supervisor as soon as they have chosen the general area of study they wish to pursue. Students may ask the Graduate Coordinator for advice on which faculty members might be most appropriate to approach.

Guidelines for the MA Thesis Proposal

Students are expected to have completed some reading pertinent to the proposed thesis during the summer before entering the programme so that they will be ready to write a thesis proposal early in the fall term. The supervisor will help the student to develop a proposal.

The thesis proposal is a formal document of 750-1000 words (3-4 pages) that describes the type of argument the thesis will develop. It should be specific enough to allow the Graduate Committee to make an informed assessment of the proposed project. In particular, the Committee will consider the viability of the proposed topic, its critical scope, and whether the project can likely be completed within the timeframe of the programme.

The thesis proposal should:

1. Include a working title for the thesis.
2. Include a clear statement of intent near the beginning of the proposal outlining what the potential argument of the thesis will be. While students are not expected to articulate a definitive thesis statement at this point, they should be able to identify in fairly specific terms the broad argumentative goals and scope of the project.
3. Indicate the theoretical or critical context within which the thesis will be developed. In describing the projected argument, students should integrate the theoretical and/or critical framework on which they will draw. In particular, they should explain why a particular approach is pertinent to the project. Students should avoid jargon and terminology with which they are not yet familiar.
4. Identify major publications in the field. Although it is not expected that students will already be familiar with all of the relevant criticism, the proposal should identify the most

significant publications directly related to the topic. This will allow the Graduate Committee to establish the extent to which students are engaging with scholarship on the chosen subject.

5. Indicate how the thesis will be divided into chapters. Although specific ideas will undoubtedly evolve during the writing process, the proposal needs to suggest through a brief summary of each chapter the main divisions of the project. In a separate paragraph for each chapter, the proposal should identify the focus of the chapter and then explain how the chapter will contribute to the overall argument.
6. Include a bibliography in the MLA style at the end of the proposal. The bibliography need not be exhaustive, but it should indicate that preliminary research in the field is already underway. Although not always necessary, it can be helpful to subdivide the bibliography into sections for primary and secondary texts. While students are not expected to have read every item listed in the bibliography, the list should indicate an awareness of substantial and pertinent critical work in the area.

Completed thesis proposals are due **by the fourth of October**. *Both an electronic copy and a printed copy* signed by the student and the supervisor must be submitted to the Graduate Coordinator by this date. The Graduate Committee will review the proposal and offer feedback on the project. If it is beneficial to the direction and progress of the thesis, the Committee will request a revised version of the proposal. Should that happen, the Committee will set a new due date for the revised proposal.

Writing the Thesis

To guarantee eligibility to complete the programme in twelve months (and to graduate at Fall convocation), candidates must meet the following deadlines:

1. **By the last day of the Christmas Examination period:** The student must submit 25-30 pages of acceptable thesis copy to the supervisor.

NB. If the above requirement is not met, the student will receive a failing grade for the first term of English 5960. This could affect acceptance into any further post-graduate programmes to which the student is applying.

2. **By the last day of the second term Study Week:** The student must submit a further 25-30 pages of acceptable thesis copy to the supervisor.

NB. If the above requirement is not met, the student may receive a failing grade for the second term of English 5960. This could affect acceptance into any post-graduate programmes to which the student is applying.

3. **By 18 May:** The student submits to the supervisor a complete draft of the thesis. The supervisor reads the thesis and returns it to the student with suggestions for revision. The student should not attempt to contact actual or potential readers of the thesis.

4. **By 15 June:** When the student has completed revisions to the supervisor's satisfaction, a draft of the thesis is submitted to the Graduate Coordinator. The Coordinator then sends the thesis to the Internal Examiner, a departmental member chosen by the Graduate Committee to assess the thesis.
5. **By July 2:** The Internal Examiner submits a report to the supervisor and the Graduate Coordinator. Any required revisions should then be completed as soon as possible. Once the thesis is deemed ready for defence by the supervisor, the Graduate Coordinator, in consultation with the supervisor, selects an appropriate External Examiner (an expert in the field from outside the university), and requests a date for the oral defence.
6. **By July 20** (and at least 4 weeks prior to the defence date): Students must submit:
 - 1 print copy of the thesis to the Graduate Coordinator
 - 1-3 print copies of the thesis (depending on requests of readers) to the Division of Research and Graduate Studies.

NB. Theses should be prepared according to the specifications outlined in the document called "Instructions for the Preparation and Presentation of Theses," available either as a Word document or a pdf on the RGS website. For the thesis template, please consult <https://tid.acadiau.ca/thesistemplates.html>

7. **August 26:** Students must complete an "Application to Graduate" form to graduate in the Fall and submit it to the Registrar's Office.

The Thesis Defence

Once the thesis has been submitted for defence, the Division of Research and Graduate Studies will send copies to both the Internal Examiner and the External Examiner, each of whom will be asked to complete and to return a formal Examiner's Report. The defence will usually be held approximately four weeks after submission, and although usually only the Examining Committee and candidate are present, defences are open to the public. The Examining Committee will consist of the following:

- A Chair of the defence (appointed by RGS)
- External Examiner (or qualified delegate)
- Internal Examiner (or qualified delegate)
- Supervisor/s
- Head of Department or Graduate Coordinator (or qualified delegate)

The defence will begin with formal instructions. Then the candidate will be asked to present a concise summary of her or his research, emphasizing the conclusions that have been reached. This should take no more than 15-20 minutes. Questions from the Examining Committee will follow the presentation. Typically, there are two rounds of questions. Members of the public will then be invited to ask questions. When the questioning is complete, the candidate and the audience will be asked to leave the room so that the Examining Committee can complete its assessment of the thesis and of the defence *in*

camera. The candidate is then called back to the room and informed of the Committee's decision. The examination process typically takes between 1½ and 2 hours.

Candidates should be sure to bring with them to the defence:

- A copy of the thesis identical to that held by the examiners
- At least 2 copies of the signature pages of the thesis (numbered ii)
- A pen and some paper

Final Thesis Revision and Presentation

A thesis is not complete until it has been revised following the defence and formally submitted to the Division of Research and Graduate Studies. The Examining Committee will evaluate the thesis according to the following categories: “acceptable as is, or with minor revisions,” “acceptable, but major revisions are required,” or, on rare occasions, “unacceptable.” Detailed instructions will be provided to guide both supervisor and student in the revision process. Students must consult the guidelines available on the [RGS website](#) for specific formatting requirements. Once all required changes have been completed and the thesis has been formatted according to RGS guidelines, the supervisor and either the Head of Department or the Graduate Coordinator sign the “Thesis Certification of Acceptability” and the student can then submit the final copies of the thesis.

8. By September 28, 2022 (for Fall 2022 Graduation): The student must submit:

to the Department:

- 1 print copy of the final version of the thesis for binding

to the [Electronic Theses Submission website](#) at the Vaughan Library:

- 1 electronic copy of the final version of the thesis

to the Division of Research and Graduate Studies (214 Horton Hall):

- 1 print copy of the final version of the thesis
- 1 signed Certificate of Acceptability
- 1 confirmation form from the Electronic Theses Submission website
- 1 completed ProQuest Subject Code form
- 1 completed Non-Exclusive License to Reproduce Theses form

Thesis Binding

Acadia pays for binding one copy of student theses for the Vaughan Library collection. The Department of English and Theatre pays for binding a second copy of each thesis for its own collection. Students wishing to have copies bound for themselves, their supervisors, or others may arrange to pay for this by downloading an order form from the [library website](#) (click on the “Help” tab at the top of the homepage and select “Theses Guides” from the drop down list) and sending it to:

Wallaceburg Bookbinding & Manufacturing Co. Ltd., P.O. Box 104, Wallaceburg ON,
N8A 4L5
(519) 627-3552

Rights and Responsibilities for Graduate Students and Supervisors

Responsibilities of Students

- to treat their supervisors with respect and consideration
- to develop in consultation with their supervisors a viable thesis topic
- to abide by the decision of the graduate committee on the thesis proposal and to give serious and considered attention to any changes to the thesis project proposed by the committee
- to produce a thesis which meets the standards of scholarship required by the Department and the University, including demonstration of the candidate's capacity for independent scholarship and research in his or her field
- to acknowledge all sources, print or electronic or oral, including direct assistance or borrowed material from other scholars or researchers
- to realize that their supervisors have other duties which may at times delay the students' access to their supervisors at short notice
- to give serious and considered attention to advice and direction from their supervisors
- to submit their work by the deadlines prescribed in the Guidelines for Preparing a Master's Thesis in the Department of English at Acadia University (above)
- to be familiar with the Departmental and University regulations and standards to which the writer of a thesis is required to conform

Responsibilities of Supervisors

- to treat the students they are supervising with due respect and consideration
- to provide reasonable access for students and (whenever possible) to be available for consultation at relatively short notice
- to be as helpful as possible in suggesting research topics and in assisting students to define their theses
- to abide by the decision of the graduate committee on the thesis proposal and to give serious and considered attention to any changes to the thesis project proposed by the committee

- to tell students approximately how long it will be before written work, such as drafts of chapters, can be returned with comments
- to be thorough in their examination of thesis chapters, supplying, where appropriate, detailed comments on such matters as literary form, structure, use of evidence, relation of thesis to published work on the subject, footnoting, and bibliographical techniques, and making constructive suggestions for rewriting and improving the draft
- to indicate clearly when a draft is in a satisfactory final form or, if it is clear to the supervisor that the thesis cannot be successfully completed, to advise the student accordingly
- to know the departmental and University regulations and standards to which the writer of a thesis is required to conform, and to make sure the student is aware of them
- where necessary, to advise and help students to approach other faculty members for assistance with specific problems or even to request the reading of a chapter or section of the thesis

Rights of Students

- to have a clear understanding of what is expected in thesis writing (expected length, acceptable methodology, validity of topic)
- to expect help from their supervisors in establishing a feasible topic and in solving problems and assessing progress as the thesis is being written
- to receive a fair assessment of the completed thesis and explanations of negative criticism
- to be allowed to have a new supervisor when they can offer convincing reasons to the Department for the change and the change can be reasonably accommodated by the Department

Rights of Supervisors

- to expect students to give serious and considered attention to their advice concerning what they regard as essential changes in the thesis
- to terminate supervision and advise students to find another supervisor if students do not heed advice and ignore recommendations for changes in the thesis, or if students are not putting forth a reasonable effort
- not to be overburdened with supervisions to the point of having their effectiveness impaired as supervisors, teachers, or researchers

Guidelines for Teaching Assistants

The following guidelines detail the rights and responsibilities of graduate teaching assistants and their faculty supervisors. A threefold philosophy informs these guidelines: first, that graduate students benefit from teaching experience; second, that they interact with faculty supervisors to determine how best to acquire that experience; and third, that their workload ought to be reasonable, taking into account the demanding nature of their academic responsibilities. Teaching should be a positive experience, and these guidelines, combined with constructive feedback from faculty supervisors, are meant to help make it one.

1. **Teaching assistants are required to teach a minimum of 3 one-hour classes or 2 one-and-a-half-hour classes each term.** At the beginning of term TAs should meet with their teaching supervisors to discuss which classes they will teach. It is our belief – and common graduate practice – that the opportunity to gain teaching experience is a vital part of graduate studies: hence the current requirement. Any student who is extremely uncomfortable with the idea of being in the classroom should discuss matters with the Graduate Coordinator and his or her teaching supervisor. We recommend that the first time a TA takes a class, he or she does so without the teaching supervisor present in order to allow the TA to develop a relationship with the class independent of the supervisor. Thereafter, supervisors are encouraged to attend TA-taught classes on occasion and to offer constructive feedback.
2. Teaching supervisors and teaching assistants must meet at the beginning of each term to work out the specific details of an assistant's responsibilities during the term. The goal is to come up with a plan that is mutually beneficial to teaching assistants and supervisors. Supervisors are responsible for providing TAs with all necessary course materials at this initial meeting. The Coordinator and department administrator can help order texts.
3. Teaching assistants should dedicate no more than eight hours per week on average to fulfilling their teaching responsibilities.
4. Two hours per week must be scheduled office hours. Teaching assistants are responsible for communicating these hours to their teaching supervisors and assigned classes at the beginning of each term. They must also post these hours on their office doors. During office hours, TAs should be available to tutor students from their assigned classes. They might also have to make appointments with students to tutor outside of scheduled hours.
5. Teaching assistants will be responsible for marking a reasonable number of writing assignments each term. Because the number and kinds of assignments vary from class to class, the marking responsibilities of teaching assistants will also vary. The Graduate Committee stipulate the following limit as a rough guide for both teaching assistants and their supervisors: teaching assistants should mark no more than 1/3 of the assignments submitted each term. Final examinations are usually not marked by TAs.

6. Teaching supervisors will meet with teaching assistants in advance of the TA's first venture into marking to discuss marking conventions and standards, and to determine a reasonable timeframe for returning assignments. Unless supervisors and assistants agree otherwise, assistants will have at least seven days to grade assignments.
7. Wherever possible, when teaching supervisors deem it necessary to adjust grades assigned by teaching assistants, they will inform teaching assistants about those adjustments and provide some justification for them.
8. If disputes arise between teaching assistants and their assigned students, assistants should first meet with their students to attempt to resolve them. If they are unable to resolve such disputes, they should refer their students to their teaching supervisors. Clearly, it is in a teaching assistant's interest to communicate the nature of the dispute to their teaching supervisors as soon as possible.
9. Teaching supervisors are ultimately responsible for dealing with problem students.
10. If disputes arise between teaching supervisors and teaching assistants, teaching assistants should meet with the Graduate Coordinator to discuss their concerns.

Resources for Graduate Students

[Acadia Graduate Students' Association \(AGSA\)](#)

Each year the AGSA elects a graduate student from the department to represent our MA programme and its students. This a good opportunity to meet students from other Acadia graduate programmes, to learn more about how the university functions, and to contribute to supporting graduate studies in the broader university community. For more information, see the AGSA homepage at <http://clubs.acadiu.ca/agasa/AGSA/Home.html>.

[The Acadia Writing Centre](#)

The Coordinator of the Writing Centre, Dr Stephen Ahern, is available to meet with graduate students for one-on-one consultations about their theses. During 50-minute sessions, he offers personalized attention in a comfortable setting. Students who wish to make an appointment should email writingcentre@acadiu.ca and identify themselves as graduate students who would like to meet with the Coordinator.

[Division of Research and Graduate Studies](#)

The Division of Research and Graduate Studies is responsible for the official administration of all graduate programmes at Acadia. Theresa Starratt, Graduate Studies Officer, can answer questions about such matters as scholarship deadlines and proper preparation of theses for final submission. Call 585-1914.

[Student Accounts Office](#)

This office serves as the collection point for all university fees and charges. Call 585-1297.

[Student Health Services](#)

Located in Dennis House, this office provides health services and health education to Acadia students. To make an appointment to see a physician, call 585-1238. The health care team is available on a walk-in basis for urgent health needs. (Note: It is not necessary to disclose personal health matters when making an appointment.)

[Vaughan Library](#)

The Academic Librarian for English is Erin Patterson. She has an office on the second floor of the library Level 2, Room 418 and may be reached by phone at 585-1193 or via email at erin.patterson@acadiu.ca