Graduate Handbook for the
Master of Arts and Master of Science
in Technical & Professional Writing
2014-2015

All information is subject to change.
Students are responsible for checking relevant University web sites
for current deadlines and updates.
1. The M.A. and M.S. in Writing (Technical & Professional Writing)
   The Department of English offers graduate work leading to the Master of Arts in Writing and the Master of Science in Writing degrees. The 48-credit M.A./M.S. in Writing is designed for students who are prepared to undertake advanced work in the field. The program provides a range of courses in technical and professional writing. The motives and destinations of the students in the program vary, but the focus on writing to earn a living will attract those who wish to make writing a career.

2. Requirements
   For technical and professional writing, the department requires a minimum of 28 graduate credits in writing. The remainder of the student's program may, with the approval of the advisor, include coursework in fields related to writing. In every case, the student's program must be approved by the advisor and the Chair of the M.A./M.S. in Writing Committee.

3. Course of Study: Technical and Professional Writing
   Students typically will complete 16 core credits (4 courses), 16 elective credits (4 courses), and 16 credits (4 courses) in a specialization that may involve coursework in another discipline (e.g., Management, Marketing, ISQA).

   Students will be required to submit a final project in addition to completing their course work. This project typically will be a portfolio of their work demonstrating competence at a professional level but, with advisor approval, may be a single, substantive work.

   Note that core courses include Management 550, Organizational Management, or an alternate advisor-approved business course, which are offered through the School of Business Administration. Students may substitute WR 560: Introduction to Book Publishing for Management 550.

   Electives include seminars and workshops on a variety of topics. Writers are encouraged to supplement their core courses in technical/professional writing with electives from creative writing, nonfiction writing, or literature. Advisor-approved courses from outside the department may also count as electives.

   Note that the M.S. option does not require students to demonstrate proficiency in a language other than English. In cases where a student does opt to demonstrate proficiency in a language other than English, the M.A. in Writing: Technical and Professional Writing will be awarded.

   **Core Courses: 16 credits**
   - WR 525 Advanced Technical Writing
   - WR 526 Document Design
   - WR 527 Technical Editing
• MGMT 512 Organization Management OR WR 560 Introduction to Book Publishing (may also be replaced with an alternate graduate business course with advisor approval).

ELECTIVES: 16 credits
• WR 504 Internship (Credit TBA)
• WR 505 Writing and Conference (Credit TBA)
• WR 510 Selected Topics in Writing (4) (Topics vary, including, e.g., Technical Publications Project Management, Writing for Presentations, Information Technology for Writers, Multimedia for PT Writers, Managing Web Communications, International Aspects of PTW, History of Business and Technical Writing, Legal Issues for Technical Writers, Public Relations Writing in Technical Industries, and many others. Consult the Bulletin for each quarter’s offerings.)
• WR 529 Writing Computer Documentation (4)
• WR 530 Desktop Publishing (4)

NOTE: Students needing training in relevant software are encouraged to look for the WR 510 Trends series offered in Framemaker, RoboHelp, Adobe Creative Suite, and others.

Specialization Tracks: 16 credits
Students will select a specialization track in consultation with the program advisor. Possible specializations include publications management (e.g., Introduction to Book Publishing, Book Editing, Book Design & Production, Book Marketing, Bookselling, Publications Project Management, PT Editing, Workshops in Publication Technologies, Writing Seminars, Selected Topics, Internship), technical communication (e.g., Writing Computer Documentation, Writing for Presentations, Information Technology for Writers, PT Editing, Writing Seminars, Selected Topics, Internship).

Additional specializations outside of technical/professional writing include nonfiction (i.e., four courses from the nonfiction strand chosen in consultation with the advisor) and creative writing (i.e., four courses from the creative writing strand chosen in consultation with the PTW advisor).

Possible specializations outside the field of writing include business administration (management, marketing/public relations), communication (speech), computer science, environmental sciences and resources, and information systems. Students are encouraged to enhance their professional development by specializing in a series of courses that will create advantages in employment opportunities. Students will identify possible specializations in consultation with the program advisor and with an appropriate faculty advisory from the related discipline.

In consultation with the School of Business Administration, for example, M.S. advisors have identified the following series of courses that would serve well technical communicators in the workforce:
• Marketing 544 Marketing Management
• Marketing 548 Product Management & Innovation
5. Foreign Language Requirement

M.S. students are not required to fulfill the foreign language requirement. However, students who choose to complete a foreign language may receive the M.A. in Writing: Technical and Professional Writing degree. All M.A. students at Portland State are required to have experience with a foreign language. We strongly encourage M.A. students to fulfill their language requirement early in their programs. Students must fulfill the foreign language requirement before completing the final portfolio review. Please note your final defense will not be scheduled until this requirement has been fulfilled. You may do so in one of three ways:

- Pass a 203-level course is the third term of a second-year college language course. If you have previously completed this coursework as a part of your B.A. degree, this counts as fulfilling the requirement.
- Pass two years of the same high school-level second language, or pass the third year of high-school level language course.
- Pass an exam administered by the Foreign Languages department:
  - For students who would like to fulfill their language requirement with Spanish or French, we recommend you take the Webcape exam. We do not recommend taking the CLEP, which is more costly.
  - If you are testing in other languages taught at Portland State, your exam will be conducted for free with a professor in that field.
  - If you are testing in a language not taught at Portland State, you may need to take the BYU test. These exams are administered by the World Languages and Literatures Department and you should consult them for more information.
- If you were born in a foreign country, you may prove that you have passed the TOEFL in English or provide high school or college transcripts from your home country, with notarized translation.

The Department of World Languages and Literatures sets the foreign language policy for the University. For further information students should consult that department website at:

http://www.pdx.edu/wll/foreign-language-requirement

6. Independent Study

The English department recognizes that By-Arrangement study can be a valuable means of expanding the curriculum and allowing students to pursue special
interests. By-Arrangement study may be arranged under several course titles. The following limitations apply:

- Students may take each By-Arrangement course for between 1 and 4 credits.
- Students may take no more than 9 credits of By-Arrangement in any given term.
- Students can only apply a combined maximum of 12 credits in 501: Research and 505: Reading & Conference towards the M.A. degree.
- Students can only apply a combined maximum of 9 credits in 504: Internship, 508: Workshop, and 509: Practicum towards the M.A. degree.

Students wishing to pursue By-Arrangement study should seek the approval of a faculty member willing to undertake the arrangement. To register for these courses you must fill out a By Arrangement Request Form, available in the Department of English or on the PSU website, have it signed by the instructor, and leave it with Department staff to be signed by the Chair and forwarded to Registration. Faculty time to supervise independent study is limited. Please keep in mind that professors choose to take on these courses on top of their regular workload.

Following are the course numbers for By-Arrangement:

- WR 501: Research. Students may take from 1 to 4 credits of Eng 501 as they prepare for their Focus Area or their Qualifying Essay. Students should arrange to work with a faculty supervisor, preferably their advisor.
- WR 504: Cooperative Education/Internship. Academic work with a faculty advisor or mentor in conjunction with either paid or unpaid employment outside the university.
- WR 505: Reading and Conference. One-on-one work with a faculty advisor or mentor on a student writing project; this may also include reading and discussion. There is a limit on the number of WR 505 credits that students can count toward their M.A. (see above).
- WR 509: Practicum. For students who are assisting a faculty member in a research, writing, or community-based project, or in teaching a course.

7. Graduation Requirements: Overview

Due to ongoing changes in policies and procedures, always check with the English Department Graduate Coordinator (grdstudy@pdx.edu), the Office of Graduate Studies (http://www.pdx.edu/ogs/), and your program adviser regarding the following information.

When checking deadlines and other policies with the Office of Graduate Studies (OGS), remember that MS/MA Technical and Professional Writing students are completing a portfolio, not a thesis. (Thesis deadlines and requirements are very different.)
The four required elements of your graduation process are:

1. Completion of the required 48 credits of coursework.

2. A portfolio demonstrating your best work over time and across genres. The portfolio can be constructed according to your own tastes; consult with your primary program adviser about format, content, and other matters. Specifically, your portfolio should contain a copy of your résumé or c.v. as well as a brief statement of your philosophy as a technical/professional writer. Individual items in the portfolio should be introduced by a brief statement giving the context of the document (e.g., where/when you produced it, your goals for the document, your audience analysis for the document, etc.).

3. A written exam. The topic of the written exam will be based on the contents of the portfolio. Your primary program adviser will write the exam question and deliver it to you after receiving your portfolio.

4. An oral exam. The oral exam will focus on the portfolio and on your response to the written exam. The oral exam requires you to identify three faculty members who will serve as your faculty committee. This committee will ask questions and make comments on your portfolio and written exam response (see below).

8. Graduation Requirements: Timeline

   Step 1: In the quarter before the term you plan to graduate, submit the Application for Awarding of Master's Degree, Doctoral Degree, or Graduate Certificate. (While OGS stipulates that you can file this form “no later than the first week of the term,” don’t delay that long!).

   Step 2: Finalize the Degree Completion Plan you started in your 3rd term according to your DARS audit to verify that your coursework has been (or is very nearly) completed. Work with the English Department Graduate Coordinator (engstudy@pdx.edu) to run your DARS audit, and work with your adviser to complete the Degree Completion Plan.

   Step 3: Identify faculty willing to serve on your graduate committee. Ask two faculty members (in addition to your primary program adviser) to serve on your committee. Your committee thus consists of three faculty members, one of which must be a tenured or fixed term faculty.
Step 4: Canvass these faculty committee members about a mutually convenient date and time to meet for your oral exam. The date of the oral exam should be at least two weeks before the end of the term in which you plan to graduate.

Step 5: Schedule your oral exam by working with the English Department Graduate Coordinator (grdstudy@pdx.edu), who will book a room.

Step 6: Make sure that you are registered for at least 1 graduate credit during the quarter in which you plan to graduate.

Step 7: Approximately one month prior to the oral exam, give a copy of your completed portfolio to each faculty committee member. The oral exam will consist of discussion and questions/answers based on your portfolio and on your written exam response.

Step 8: Approximately one week later, expect to receive a written exam question from your primary program adviser.

Step 9: Approximately one week later, give a copy of your written exam response to each faculty committee member.

Step 10: Meet with your faculty committee at the date and time agreed upon for your oral exam. Your committee will inform you about your graduation status immediately after the oral exam. If successful, your remaining graduation paperwork will be processed by the Department; no further action will be required on your part.

9. Pre-admission Credit and Transfer Credit

A maximum of 16 approved credits earned before admission to the program may be applied to the degree. This “pre-admission credit” limit applies to both transfer credits earned outside PSU or at PSU before admission to the program.

A separate 16-credit allotment of transfer credit may be approved for coursework taken after admission to the MFA program (courses taken elsewhere over the summer, for example). However, a maximum of one-third of a student's total of 48 credits may be taken outside PSU, so only 16 of the possible combined 32 transferred credits (pre-admission and post-admission) may be from outside PSU (the one-third limit is actually 15 credits but we are allowed an extra credit because of our four-credit course structure).
Students must download a Transfer and Pre-approved credit form (GO-21) from http://www.gsr.pdx.edu/ogs_forms.php, and meet with their advisor and the Director of the MFA for credit evaluation and approval.

All Pre-admission and Transfer credits must be graduate level and must be: 1) letter graded B- or higher; 2) not be used for any other degree at any institution; 3) no more than seven years old at the time the Master’s degree is awarded; 4) applicable to an MFA degree at the originating institution without qualification.

10. Coursework Outside the M.A. / M.S. Program

The English department requires a minimum of 28 graduate credits in writing. The remainder of the student's program may, with the approval of the advisor, include coursework outside the Department that is relevant to the student’s plan of study.

11. Advisement

As soon as you are accepted into the program, you should contact the program advisor to introduce yourself and receive advice on enrolling for fall courses. If your advisor is on leave or otherwise unavailable, contact the Department's Graduate Coordinator for help with any procedural or registration issues. You should also plan to meet with your faculty advisor early in the first term of your coursework to discuss your plan of study. The program director is:

Technical and Professional Writing: Tracy Dillon, dillont@pdx.edu

12. One-credit Courses

Graduate Assistantships, some student loans, scholarships, and grants require full-time status. At PSU, a full time course load is 9 credits or more, half time is 8 credits or less. This means that if you enroll for two 4-credit courses you will not have full-time status. However, in addition to Independent Study (explained above), the department offers a range of 1-credit graduate course options.

1. Discussion/reading groups attached to an existing course

Many of our courses are at the 400/500 level, meaning that they include both advanced undergraduates and graduate students. Graduates often feel a need to have a separate discussion, reading, or workgroup to augment their work in the course. Some of these 1-credit groups may be listed in the Schedule of Classes; otherwise, you will probably need to have the professor fill out a By Arrangement Request form, likely for Wr 508: Workshop. For details on the nature of the group and how to register, you should contact the professor directly.

2. Freestanding Discussion/Reading Groups

These are groups organized around a shared area of interest between a professor and a group of students (and sometimes additional faculty). What we aim for is something enriching, pedagogically and academically sound and interesting, that does not generate lots of extra work for faculty, but stretches graduate students in
new directions. These groups need supervision, not teaching or lecturing to, and need to produce their own discussions, with the faculty members as guides. Some of these courses may be listed in the Schedule of Classes; otherwise, you will probably need to have the professor fill out a By Arrangement Request form, likely for Wr 508: Workshop. For more details on the nature of the group and how to register, you should contact the professor directly.

Each term the department will generate a list of one-credit courses professors have offered for the term. You will receive these via email and/or they will be posted outside the English Department. These will also be listed in the Schedule of Classes. Again, please be mindful that professors are not required to teach these extra credits, and do so voluntarily in order to meet student needs. In addition, be aware that 1 credit of graduate work should equal no more than an average of 6 hours of work per week for the student. If you believe your work load is exceeding this amount, please inform your supervising professor. You may also negotiate with the professor to take any of these options (group work or independent study) for more than 1 credit, with workload adjusted accordingly (please be aware that for each graduate degree there is a limit for how many credits of independent study a student is allowed).

13. GPA

Although grades of C+, C, and C- are below the graduate standard, they may be counted as credit toward the Master’s degree with specific written approval of the Department Chair. Students must have a B average (3.0 GPA) on the courses fulfilling the degree requirements (courses listed on the Degree Completion Pan that you started in your 3rd term of coursework). Grades of D and F carry no graduate credit.

14. Financial Aid, Graduate Assistantships, and Employment

Information on graduate financial aid is available on the University website at:
http://www.pdx.edu/finaid/

For graduate students both in-state from out-of-state, the Laurels Graduate Award is available. Information about the Laurels and other competitive scholarships is available on the Graduate Studies website at: http://www.pdx.edu/ogs/funding.

http://www.gsr.pdx.edu/ogs_funding_scholarships.php

English department nomination is required for three all-University competitions: the Oregon Sports Lottery, the University Club, and the Underrepresented Minority Graduate Student Pipeline scholarships. Any student who would like to be nominated for one of these scholarships should speak to their advisor or the Student Affairs Committee about their qualifications. A computerized database of national and local scholarships is also available in the Millar Library.

Graduate Assistantships

The Department has a very limited number of Graduate Assistantships available primarily to first-year graduate students in which they help with Department
programs such as the Portland Center for Public Humanities, serve as assistants to faculty administrators such as the Director of Rhetoric and Composition or the Director of Literary Studies, perform other administrative or research duties that foster their career development, or teach in a variety of contexts: composition courses at all levels, tutoring in the Writing Center, assisting faculty in writing intensive courses, and assisting faculty in English courses. Depending on their qualifications, they may also teach courses in creative writing, technical writing, or literature. Graduate assistants receive both tuition remission and a stipend for the academic year. In recent years we have also been able to offer teaching employment in the summer, but this is not guaranteed.

For more information on Graduate Assistantships contact Prof. Susan Kirtley (skirtley@pdx.edu).

Many non-academic divisions of the University offer Graduate Assistantships, including: University Communications, Campus Recreation, University Housing, The Office of International Affairs, the Women’s Resource Center, the Queer Resource Center, and Student Health and Counseling. Unfortunately there is no centralized listing of these non-academic Assistantships; each office must be contacted individually (the Graduate Studies office does not keep a list of available Graduate Assistantships each year). Students with non-English language skills may want to contact the Department of Foreign Language about teaching opportunities.

The University also offers the following employment/professional development possibilities:

**Writing Intensive Course (WIC) Assistant**

WIC Assistants help faculty across the University curriculum in teaching writing for a content course. Responsibilities may include: reading drafts, leading writing workshops, or doing presentations on writing. To qualify for a WIC position you should take either ENG 413/513 (Teaching and Tutoring Writing) or ENG 414/514 (Introduction to Composition Theory). WIC Assistants are hourly employees, assigned term by term and paid through monthly timecards. Contact the Director of Rhetoric and Composition, Dr Susan Kirtley (skirtley@pdx.edu) for further information.

**Writing Center Tutor**

Tutors assist students in individual sessions. To qualify for this position you should take ENG 413/513 (Teaching and Tutoring Writing). Tutors are part time hourly employees paid by monthly timecard submission and assigned term by term. Contact the Writing Center Coordinator, Dan Deweese at deweesed@pdx.edu, for further information.

**University Studies Graduate Mentor**

University Studies Mentors come from all academic backgrounds and work with Sophomore Inquiry courses. Mentors plan and facilitate 50-minute mentor sessions for Freshman Inquiry, Sophomore Inquiry or Transfer Transition courses. Mentors
serve as friends, colleagues and teachers, helping students learn the academic ropes. All new mentors must enroll in a four-credit Education course that is offered in the spring and a two-week fall training prior to the start of school. Mentors work 10-20 hours per week. For more information see the mentoring website at

http://www.pdx.edu/unst/mentor_application.html

**Chiron Course Instructor**

Chiron courses are credit classes taught by students for students. They are listed under “Interdisciplinary Studies” in the University Schedule of Classes. In addition to the teaching experience gained, student instructors receive a small teaching stipend. For more information, go to: http://www.ess.pdx.edu/chiron/

**Work Study Positions**

If you qualify for the federal work-study program, you may apply for a variety of jobs with the English department or elsewhere on campus, including writing, website development, and office work. These jobs are also posted on the Career Center website at:

http://www.pdx.edu/careers/

15. Appendix 1: Admission Requirements

Admission to graduate study is granted on the basis of evidence of suitable preparation and the probability of success in the intended field of study. In Technical and Professional Writing, strong writing skills are considered central, but applicants do not need to have a previous degree in English or Writing. A B.A. or B.S. from a regionally accredited institution is required.

The MA/MS in Technical and Professional Writing program offers rolling admissions which follow the University's admission deadlines as follows: April 1st for Fall, Sept. 1st for Winter, Nov. 1st for Spring. Please note that if you wish to be considered for a Departmental Graduate Assistantship you must apply for fall admission.

16. Appendix 2: Application Procedures

Important: Applicants must apply separately to the University and to the English department. Two different applications must be submitted. Instructions to complete the University and English departmental applications are available on the English website, at: http://www.pdx.edu/english/graduate-admission-information.

**The University Application**

The University Application can be completed online by going to the University’s website http://www.pdx.edu/admissions/graduate-applicant. Please use the major code WR for the M.A. or M.S. in Writing: Technical and Professional Writing. With your application you must submit a non-refundable $50 application fee and you will be required to pay via Visa or MasterCard. You will also need to send an official transcript from each post-secondary institution you have attended. Send your official transcripts for your University application to:

Office of Admissions
If you have questions about the University application or admissions process, please contact the University’s Office of Admissions directly by going to [http://www.pdx.edu/admissions/contact](http://www.pdx.edu/admissions/contact). Do not send the University application fee to the English Department. This $50 fee is subject to change by the Oregon University System.

**The English Departmental Application**

The Department of English is now using an online application system, allowing for the electronic submission of all components of our application including personal statement, writing samples, transcripts, and letters of recommendation. There is no fee for this application, which can be found by selecting the link below: [https://www.applyweb.com/apply/psuclas/index.html](https://www.applyweb.com/apply/psuclas/index.html)

You will first need to create a username and password by selecting the link titled “Create Your Account”. You can either complete the application and submit it in one sitting, or save your work and continue it at a later time. When filling out your application:

- To save what you have done so far without exiting, click the Save button.
- To save and exit, click the Finish Session or Save and Exit button.
- To access an application in progress and continue your work on it, go to your [Activity Log](#) and select the application.

**Data Validation:** This error indicates that you have either skipped a necessary field on the application or have not correctly entered the required information. Please look over the application for any fields that are set aside in a box with an error message immediately above them, such as "This is a required field." You should be able to proceed with your application when you make the necessary correction or, for the purpose of navigating through the application you may select the button “Postpone Data Validation”

**Please note:** You **cannot** make a correction to a submitted application. Once your application has been submitted, you can only edit the contact information for your online letters of recommendation.

The application will require you to provide materials meeting specific criteria as outlined below and on the following page.

**Enrollment Deferment**

Students who do not enroll in the term to which they were admitted will automatically be dropped from the program by the University. However, students may request a deferment of their admission for up to three terms within the academic year in which they were admitted (for example, from fall term 2009 to summer session 2010, but not for a full calendar year from fall term 2009 to fall term 2010).
Postponement of matriculation by one year or more may require that you re-apply for admission.
To request deferment, a graduate Admission Application Update Request must be downloaded at:
http://www.pdx.edu/media/u/p/update-qr.pdf
The form must be filled out, signed, and forwarded to the Department Graduate Coordinator.

17. Appendix 3: International Students
Any applicant whose native language is not English and who has not received a baccalaureate, master’s or doctoral degree from a regionally accredited U.S. institution or an equivalently accredited non-U.S. institution with instruction exclusively in English must pass the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) with a minimum score of 600 (100 on the internet-based test or 250 on the computer-based test). The International English Language Testing System exam (IELTS) may be substituted for the TOEFL; the minimum acceptable score is 7.5.

18. Appendix 4: Office of Graduate Studies Forms and Definitions
• **GO-7, Request for Change of Status**
  If you were admitted conditionally you must file this after meeting the conditions for regular status. This must be done before you can submit graduation paperwork.

• **GO-10, Reservation of Graduate Credit**
  You can take up to 12 PSU graduate credits at the end of your undergraduate course of study (you only pay undergraduate fees even though they’re graduate credits), and transfer these credits in to a graduate program. This is allowed only for first B.A./B.S. degrees.

• **GO-13, Change in Graduate Degree Program**
  This is used to amend a GO-12 if any changes are made to your course of study after filing the GO-12.

• **GO-15, Validation of Out-of-Date Graduate Credit**
  If any of your coursework exceeds the 7-year time limit (5 years for the MFA), you can request a validation exam to approve the use of that credit.

• **GO-16M, Appointment of Final Oral Examination Committee (Masters Level)**
  This form must be submitted to have your thesis committee approved by the Graduate Studies Office. You should do this before beginning your thesis credits or submitting your prospectus.

• **GO-17M, Masters Recommendation for the Degree**
  This form is signed by your committee after your final oral exam is completed. Students are not allowed to handle this form once it has been signed.

• **GO-19M, Request for Change of Major (Masters Level)**
  This form is used to change from one Master’s degree program to another. Unless you are transferring from an M.A. to an M.S. (or vice versa) in the Writing Program, transferring between programs requires a full admission review during the fall term admission cycle.
• **GO-21, Proposed Pre-Admission and Transfer Credit**
  This form must be completed if you have taken any courses before admission to your graduate program that will be used to fulfill its requirements (at PSU or elsewhere). It must also be filed if you take any courses after admission that will be used to fulfill your requirements.

• **Dual Degree Memo**
  This form is used to define which courses will apply to both degrees in a dual degree program.

• **Graduate Petition**
  This form is used to petition the Graduate Council for a waiver of a University graduate academic regulation or degree requirement. Please be aware that in no case will a regulation be waived or an exception granted because of ignorance of the regulation or of the assertion that the student was not informed by the adviser or other authority.