



**GRADUATE HANDBOOK  
MFA IN CREATIVE WRITING  
2016-17**

<http://www.pdx.edu/creative-writing/>

All information is subject to change. Students are responsible for checking University websites for current deadlines and updates.

*September 23, 2016*

**MFA in Creative Writing Handbook**  
2016-17

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**MFA Directory  
2016-17**

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## The Master of Fine Arts in Creative Writing at Portland State University

Located in the center of one of the country's most vibrantly literary cities, the MFA offers an intensive program of writing in small, core workshops and seminars taught by established writers: Gabe Urza and Leni Zumas in fiction; John Beer and Michele Glazer in Poetry; and Paul Collins and Michael McGregor in Nonfiction.

Our two-year degree emphasizes workshops and close mentorship by core faculty, while offering the flexibility of a part-time option and the rich course offerings of Oregon's largest university. Students also work with acclaimed visiting and resident writers through our partnership with Tin House. Engagement in Portland's vibrant community of writers is also central to the development of our students' work.

Many students come to the MFA with a background in English literature, writing, or journalism, but others have backgrounds in the social sciences, sciences, and fine arts. Our program is distinguished by the diversity of its student body, including a range of ages and life experience, and by the accomplishments of its alumni, which includes a Stegner Award, two Fulbright scholarships, a Rona Jaffe Award, and publications from *Tin House* and *The New Yorker* to *The Believer* and *Iowa Review*.

## **I. Admission, Enrollment, and Funding**

### **1. Conditional Admission**

While the MFA Program requires a cumulative 3.25 GPA in undergraduate work, the admissions committee considers several other factors, including the writing sample, letters of recommendation, statement of purpose, and transcripts. If the committee feels that an applicant shows sufficient promise, it may offer conditional admission, allowing a student to demonstrate the capability to succeed at the graduate level.

A student with conditional admission will be expected to earn regular admission, which is achieved by taking 8 credits of 500-level English courses (ENG or WR), with grades in each of B+/3.25 or better. The Department will then approve your conversion to regular admission by notifying the Office of Graduate Studies of the removal of your departmental conditional status. Your graduate credits can then be applied towards your program requirements.

### **2. Establishing Residency Status**

To be considered a resident and thereby qualify for in-state tuition, you must have lived in Oregon for 12 consecutive months. If you are enrolled at PSU while establishing residency status, you must be taking 8 credits or fewer and be self-supporting outside of the University. See the Registrar's [Residency Requirements page](#).

### **3. Graduate Assistantships, Financial Aid, and Employment**

***English Department Graduate Assistantships:*** The Department offers a limited number of Graduate Assistantships, making them highly competitive. They are typically awarded at the time of admission and renewed for a second year. Graduate Assistants serve in a variety of contexts: teaching composition courses at all levels, tutoring in the Writing Center, and assisting faculty in English courses. During their second year, MFA GAs may also teach the undergraduate introductory creative writing course in their strand (Poetry, Fiction, or Nonfiction). Graduate Assistants receive tuition remission for up to 9 credits 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. To apply, students check the field on their online application to the program. The Graduate Admissions committee awards assistantships. Assistantships occasionally become available to students in their second year of study. These and other positions are announced on the graduate student listserv.

***University Studies Graduate Mentor:*** University Studies Mentors, who come from all academic backgrounds, plan and facilitate 50-minute mentor sessions for Freshman Inquiry, Sophomore Inquiry, and Transfer Transition courses. New Mentors receive training prior to the start of school. Mentors work 10-20 hours per week. Graduate Mentors receive graduate tuition remission for up to

9 credits and a monthly stipend. The deadline to apply is in January, before students receive word on their admission to the MFA program. This should not stop you from applying; you can be granted a Graduate Mentorship contingent on your admission to the MFA program. For more information, see the [Mentor Program website](#).

***Other Graduate Assistantships:*** Many non-academic divisions of the University also 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. 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 Assistantships each year). Students with skills in languages other than English may contact the Department of Foreign Language about teaching opportunities.

***Financial Aid:*** Information on graduate financial aid is available on the [University Financial Aid website](#).

The ***Doris W. Braley Award*** divides \$10,000 each year equally between two Poetry students for whom this gift promises to make a significant difference in their ability to pursue their poetry. Typically it is awarded to one incoming and one second-year MFA student. To be considered, students must have been out of school for some period before entering the MFA program. Students are selected based on the strength and promise of their poetry, as well as their ambition and perseverance. All eligible incoming students are considered at the time of their application. For eligible second-year students, the deadline to apply is March 1 (of their first year). Students should submit up to 6 pages of poetry (no more than one poem per page), and a maximum 250-word statement responding to the Award criteria of strength, promise, ambition, and tenacity. The Award was established in 2015 by Portland native Buzz Braley to honor his mother. Doris Braley’s long-held dream was to write and publish her poems, which she did, publishing three books, the first when she was in her fifties.

The ***Laurels Graduate Award*** is available to current and incoming students at PSU. Information about this award is available the [Office of Graduate Studies website](#).

Details about other competitive scholarships are available on the Graduate Studies [Financing Your Education](#) page. English Department nomination is required for several all-University competitions, including the ***Oregon Lottery Graduate Scholarship*** and the ***University Club Fellowship Award***. Any student who would like to be nominated for one of these scholarships should speak to their advisor or to the Student Affairs Committee about their qualifications. A computerized database of national and local scholarships is available through the [Portland State Scholarship Search site](#) and in the Millar Library.

***Other University Employment:*** The University may also offer the following employment and/or professional development opportunities:

**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 [deweese@pdx.edu](mailto:deweese@pdx.edu).

**PSU/WITS INTERN.** The **PSU/Writers in the Schools (WITS) intern position is available to all MFA students.** The intern will work from the office of Literary Arts (<http://www.literary-arts.org>) on a range of projects that support the WITS program; WITS hires local professional writers to teach creative writing in Portland's public high schools. The intern's responsibilities may include updating the WITS blog; coordinating author visits in the schools; working on the annual student writing anthology; coordinating WITS readings. Depending on the intern's interests and skills, there also may be opportunities to assist in the classroom with a teacher teaching creative writing. You can expect to work 6 to 8 hours per week in 3- to 4-hour increments for 10 weeks, with the precise number of hours dependent on WITS program's needs and the student's schedule. The position is flexible, and may begin in Winter or Spring. The award is \$1,500, paid through monthly timecard submissions. To apply, send a letter of interest and your CV or résumé to the [MFA Director](#). Include in your letter as references the names of two of your English Department professors.

**LEARNING CENTER TUTOR.** The Learning Center is housed on the second floor of Millar Library and hires tutors for subjects other than writing on an ongoing basis throughout the academic year as existing tutors graduate. You may pick up an application at the Center or email Assistant Director Liane O'Banion at [obaniol@pdx.edu](mailto:obaniol@pdx.edu).

**FWS 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](#).

#### **4. Admission Deferment**

Students who do not enroll in the term to which they were admitted will be dropped from the MFA program by the University. While a deferment may be requested for up to one year from the term for which you were originally admitted, deferments are rarely granted, and students should expect to reapply to the program. To request a deferment, download a [Graduate Application Information Change Request](#) form. The form must be filled out, signed, scanned, and emailed to the Program Coordinator at [grdstudy@pdx.edu](mailto:grdstudy@pdx.edu).

#### **5. Leave of Absence**

A student in good standing may petition for a leave of absence, which assures the student a continuation of admission in the program during a period of absence. A leave constitutes one or more terms without enrollment during the academic year; the cumulative amount of leave may not exceed one calendar year. Students on an approved leave of absence do not register for courses and are not required to pay instructional or other fees. During a leave of absence, access to University or

program facilities and services and use of faculty or staff time is restricted according to policies established by the University and each program. A leave of absence does not constitute a waiver of the time limit for completion of the graduate degree at PSU, nor does it extend the regular one-year limit for completion of a course.

A leave is only awarded to a student in good standing and must be approved by the student's advisor and Program Director. Students wishing to take a leave should fill out a [Request for Leave of Absence](#) form and have it signed by their advisor and Program Director before submitting it to the Program Coordinator. If the student fails to submit this form before going on leave, he or she will be listed as inactive and administratively withdrawn from the program. Students are responsible for keeping their contact information current with the Department's Program Coordinator during their absence. A student planning to return from a leave should contact the Program Coordinator and his or her advisor *at least three months* prior to returning to school. Students who fail to return to the graduate program within 12 months of initiating a leave of absence may be administratively withdrawn from the program.

## II. Orientation & Advising

### 1. Computer Accounts and MFA Listserv

Before your first term begins, make sure that you have a university [ODIN](#) account and email address. To get started, read the instructions on your university letter of admission or call 503-725-HELP (4357), email [help@pdx.edu](mailto:help@pdx.edu), or stop by Smith Memorial Student Union Room 18. The MFA program uses a listserv to communicate important information to our graduate students. We will add your official PSU email address to our listserv for all correspondence, so if you prefer to use a non-PSU email account for your routine business, you will need to set up your PSU email to forward to your personal e-mail. To set a mail forward, follow the instructions at <http://goo.gl/uj2uTz>.

### 2. Orientation

You should plan to attend the orientation for graduate students in the English Department, usually held on the Friday before classes begin in September. You will meet other students in the MFA Program, as well as MFA and English Department faculty and other graduate students. You will learn more about the program and become acquainted with resources available at the University and in Portland.

Other important campus resources include the [Graduate Studies Office](#), which provides information on University requirements; the [Career Center](#), which offers valuable guidance on graduate education and professional development; and the [Writing Center](#), which can help you with any stage of your writing process (from coming up with an idea for a paper to proofreading).

### 3. Advising

When you are accepted into the program you will be assigned a faculty contact, with whom you should communicate as early as possible. Your faculty contact can help you plan your preliminary program of study and answer any questions you have about the program. If you have questions that your contact cannot answer, email the English Department's Graduate Program Coordinator or the MFA Director. This Handbook, the [MFA website](#), and the [English Department website](#) may also provide answers to many of your questions.

## III. Course of Study

At the heart of the MFA curriculum are the core workshops. These are restricted to MFA students in each strand, with rare exceptions. Through writing, reading, and critical discussion, students gain mastery of techniques and intimacy with conventions and issues specific to the genre. The small-group format also helps students build a strong cohort. MFA seminars typically focus on aspects of craft, and the literature coursework helps students understand their own work in the context of literary history and develop a scholarly perspective on a range of relevant texts. The seminars in Fiction, Nonfiction and Poetry are open to MFA students from all strands, with preference given to students in the genre. Recent seminars include *The Art of Biography* (Nonfiction); *Fragment*. (Poetry); and *Writing Inside the Box: Constraints in Poetry and Fiction*.

### 1. Degree Requirements

The degree requirements include 48 credit hours of coursework, as listed below; a creative thesis of high literary merit (students may work in long or short form, and the thesis may be a collection of short pieces or a full-length work); a written examination based on the thesis and an advisor-approved list of 30-40 texts; and an oral examination in defense of the written examination and creative thesis. Students may take as many as six core workshops in their strand, and are required to take a minimum of four. Students are also encouraged to use at least one of their writing electives to explore another genre. The MFA program can be completed in two years of full-time coursework; however, many students take additional courses or attend part-time. You have a maximum of four years to complete the degree.

#### **Requirements for the MFA degree:**

**4 core workshops** in your strand (WR 521 [Fiction], 522 [Poetry], and 523 [Nonfiction])  
You may take the core workshop as many as six times (one each term, if you are a full-time student), and you are required to take workshop in your first two terms.

**2 writing seminars** (WR 507, 556, 557, 558, 559)

**2 courses in literature**, one of which may be in critical theory or rhetoric & composition

**2 electives in writing**, one of which must be an MFA workshop or MFA seminar. You are encouraged to take at least one of your writing electives outside of your strand.

**8 thesis credits**

**Maintain a cumulative GPA of 3.25**

All first-year students must take the MFA core workshop in their strand in Fall and Winter terms.

When there is more than one core workshop in a strand offered in a term, faculty will assign students to a workshop. MFA core workshops meet Tuesdays at 2:00 p.m.; most MFA seminars meet Thursdays at 2:00 p.m.

## **2. The Bibliography**

The scholarly aspect of your coursework is reflected in the bibliography. With your thesis advisor, you will develop a list of 30 to 40 titles, including works required by your strand, books you read in classes, books suggested by your advisor or other faculty or peers, and books you discover on your own that are important in your development as a writer. You are not expected to cram these texts before your examinations; you are, however, expected to be able to knowledgeably refer to them in your written exam and oral defense.

## **3. Independent Study**

Independent study, practicum, or internship credits may be arranged (1 to 4 credits per term) under several course titles (see below). There is no single CRN for these course numbers; to register, fill out a [By Arrangement Request](#), available in the Department 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. Please keep in mind that faculty choose to take on these courses on top of their regular workload. The options for independent study include:

***WR 501: Research.*** This can be used for special research projects in which the student has arranged to work with a faculty supervisor. If the research will lead to a writing project, students may also want to consider WR 505.

***WR 502: Independent Study.***

***WR 503: Thesis.*** See “Thesis Credits” on page 14.

***WR 504: Cooperative Education/Internship.*** For students doing an internship or engaged in a community-based project.

**WR 505: Reading and Conference.** For students engaged in one-on-one work with a faculty advisor or mentor on a student writing project; this may also include reading and discussion.

**WR 508: Workshop.** For students participating in a topic-specific group with a faculty sponsor.

**WR 509: Practicum.** Students may assist a professor in teaching an undergraduate course. You should work out your duties with the professor in advance of the course.

Students wishing to pursue independent study should seek the approval of a faculty member willing to undertake the arrangement. Faculty time to supervise independent study during any given term is limited. By University policy, a maximum of 12 combined hours of 501, 502, and 505 coursework may be applied toward the degree, and a maximum of 9 combined hours of 504, 508, and 509 may be applied toward the degree. Independent study credits may not be used to substitute for required MFA coursework.

#### **4. One-credit Courses**

Graduate Assistantships, scholarships, grants, and some student loans require full-time status. At PSU, a full-time graduate course load is 9 credits or more, part time is 8 credits or fewer. Thus, 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. Each term the Department will generate a list of 1-credit courses offered. The list will be emailed and posted outside the English Department; classes will also be listed in the Schedule of Classes. Except for those options already listed in the online Schedule of Classes, you will need to fill out special registration forms and obtain the professor's signature in order to take these courses. Individual professors will let you know which course number and title is the most appropriate. Please be aware that professors teach these extra credits voluntarily in order to meet student needs.

**MFA Colloquium:** Designed for first-year students in all strands, the MFA Colloquium is a one-credit class that will orient you in the MFA, connect you with fellow students, acquaint you with faculty members and their work, and help you map out your time in the program. Typically meets **every other Tuesday, 12:15-1:30 PM.**

**MFA Thesis Workshop:** Designed for students in their second year (or beyond) of the program, this one-credit course focuses on the drafting and revision of MFA thesis projects. Students will present informal talks on their theses, offer and receive feedback, discuss writing and research strategies, and support one another's progress toward completion. Typically meets **every other Tuesday, 12:15-1:30 PM.**

Other one-credit options generally fall into one of the following categories:

***Discussion/reading groups attached to an existing course:*** Some of our literature courses are offered at the 400/500 level, and thus include both advanced undergraduates and graduate students. Graduate students often want 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, contact the professor directly.

***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). The aim is for an enriching, pedagogically and academically sound experience that challenges graduate students without generating substantial extra work for faculty. These groups need supervision, but are expected to produce their own discussions, with faculty members as guides. Some of these courses may be listed in the Schedule of Classes; otherwise, you may ask the professor to 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, contact the professor directly.

***Student-organized reading groups:*** Graduate students may also decide to organize a 1-credit reading group. For this you will need to obtain a faculty sponsor who is willing to help the group formulate a reading list, mentor the group leader, and sit in on at least 3 group meetings. Please inform the MFA Director if you would like to organize such a group.

**One credit of graduate work should equal no more than an average of 5 hours of work per week for the student.** If you think that your workload exceeds this, please inform your supervising professor. You may also negotiate with the professor to take any of these options for more than 1 credit, with workload adjusted accordingly. Keep in mind that according to University policy, you can apply a maximum of 12 hours of WR 501, 502, and WR 505 coursework towards the graduate degree, and you may not substitute WR 501, 502, or 505 for required MFA coursework.

## **5. Coursework Outside the MFA Program**

Students may take required literature courses in the [Department of World Languages and Literatures](#), with their advisor's approval. In addition, students may, with advisor consent, take a graduate class in another department in the University, in which the study will further the student's writing project. If you have questions about whether other classes meet the requirements, contact your advisor or the MFA director.

## **6. Pre-admission Credit and Transfer Credit**

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

To apply credits taken at schools other than PSU to their degree, students must download a [Proposed Transfer Credit form \(GO-21\)](#), and meet with their advisor and the Director of the MFA for credit evaluation and approval; pre-admission credits taken at PSU should be listed on their [Program Requirements Worksheet](#). All Pre-admission and Transfer credits must be graduate level and must: 1) be letter graded B- or higher; 2) not be used for any other degree at any institution, 3) be no more than seven years old at the time the Master’s degree is awarded; 4) be applicable to an MFA degree at the originating institution without qualification. If you have questions, see your advisor and the program director.

## **7. GPA**

Students must maintain a minimum 3.25 cumulative GPA throughout their time in the program. Students who fail to maintain a minimum 3.25 cumulative GPA, and/or maintain a GPA above 3.25 for any given term will be placed on academic probation. Students must earn a B- or higher in their classes and will not earn graduate credit for a class in which they receive a C+ or below unless they have specific written approval from the Program Director or Department Chair.

## IV. Thesis & Examination

Each student completes a **creative thesis**, a **written exam**, and finally an **oral defense**.

### 1. The Thesis

Towards the end of your first year, you will be assigned a thesis advisor with whom, in your second year, you will work on developing and writing your thesis—a substantial and cohesive body of creative work of high literary merit. The form it takes may include, for fiction, a novel, a collection of stories, or a novella-length work (80-page minimum); for nonfiction a long piece or a collection of essays (100-page minimum); and for poetry a book-length collection of poems (48-page minimum). Shorter projects may sometimes be appropriate; this would be determined in consultation with your advisor, who must approve it. The thesis adheres to format requirements described by the [Graduate Office](#). (For poetry, there are no format requirements as to indentation and spacing.)

During your first year you will develop a sense of which faculty member you would like to have work with you as your thesis advisor. Faculty will be as accommodating as possible so that students can work most closely with the faculty member of their choice, but keep in mind that you may not get your first choice, and that students' selections are balanced against the necessity for a shared and equitable workload. Once you have been assigned a thesis advisor, you must complete and submit to the Program Coordinator the [Thesis Advisor Appointment Form](#).

**Thesis Credits:** Students must take one or more WR 503 (Writing Thesis) credits in each term that they are working on their thesis and in the term in which they will do their oral defense and graduate, including summer term. Students must take a total of at least 8 credits over at least two terms. If a leave of absence is taken while a student is working on a thesis, the student may not consult his or her thesis advisor or committee, and no paperwork will be processed by the Graduate Studies Office until the student is registered again. There is no single CRN for WR 503 Thesis; to register, fill out a [By Arrangement Request](#), have it signed by your thesis advisor, and leave it with Department staff to be signed by the Chair and forwarded to Registration.

**Assembling a Thesis Committee:** In your final term you will submit and defend your thesis to your thesis committee. The committee must include a minimum of three PSU faculty members, including your thesis chair (who is also your thesis advisor). The committee chair must be a full-time tenure-track PSU faculty, Assistant Professor or higher in rank, with a master's or doctoral degree. Other members may be fixed-term or adjunct. Students may have up to five committee members; if a fourth or fifth member who is not on the PSU faculty is requested, a CV for that member should be attached to the [GO-16M](#) form when it is submitted to the English Department Chair for approval and forwarding to the Graduate Studies Office.

The thesis committee must be approved with a GO-16M form that is filled out by the student and signed by the thesis advisor. The form is due in the term prior to the term in which you plan to graduate. Check for deadlines at the [Office of Graduate Studies website](#).

## **2. The Written Exam**

The written exam typically consists of one to three questions, and requires the student to reflect on formal, structural, aesthetic, and thematic aspects of his or her own work, as well as to consider the work of published writers. Your advisor will provide you with the most current requirements and deadlines for the written exam in the Spring term of your first year of study.

## **3. The Oral Exam**

The oral exam lasts approximately one hour, and must be scheduled to take place at least six weeks prior to the end of the term in which you will graduate. Committee members must receive a complete copy of the thesis at least two weeks prior to the oral defense and receive your written exam at least one week prior to the date of your oral. All members of the thesis committee appointed on the GO-16M must participate in the oral exam. Consult your thesis advisor for details.

After the oral exam, the committee may request limited revisions, which you will have two to three weeks to make, depending on the date of your oral. The written exam and the oral exam are based on the student's text list, and include literary history, theory, craft, and technique. A successful exam requires both original thinking and some research. At the defense, students may be asked questions about both the exam and the thesis. The structure of the oral exam will vary from strand to strand; contact your advisor for details.

## **4. Submitting the Final Thesis**

In the approximate two-week period between the deadline for your thesis defense and the deadline for submitting your thesis to the Graduate Office for final approval, make changes and address any concerns raised by your committee, then upload your thesis according to OGS requirements. Please note that PSU has now fully transitioned to electronic theses and dissertations (ETDs). Paper submissions will no longer be accepted. Additional information can be found with the Office of Graduate Studies [Thesis Information page](#). Once this process is complete, your advisor will submit the GO-17: Thesis/Dissertation Submission for Final Approval to the Office of Graduate Studies.

You will submit your thesis to two separate entities: UMI/ProQuest through the ETM Administrator, and the PSU Library via the ETD Access Form. With each you will be asked a series of questions. Please choose carefully, and if you have questions, contact your advisor.

(1)

A. With UMI/ProQuest, you are first asked to choose between Open Access and Traditional.

**The MFA recommends that students select the Traditional option.**

1. *Open Access* grants full public access via the internet.
2. *Traditional* provides access via a pdf only to those who have rights through an academic library.
3. The third option allows search engines to discover your work. You should select **No**.

B. You are then asked to choose between immediate release, 1-year delay, or 2-year delay.

**The MFA recommends that you choose 2-year delay.**

Traditional plus a 2-year delay provides the greatest protection of your thesis that ProQuest offers. Again, after two years, the work will be accessible to users only if they have rights to the ProQuest database via an academic library.

(2)

On the ETD Access Form, you will be asked to choose between three options:

1. *Open Access* grants full public access to the text via the internet.
2. *Open Access with Delayed Release* grants full public access via the internet after an initial embargo period of up to two years.
3. *Campus Restriction* provides access online only with an ODIN password login.

**The MFA recommends that that you choose Campus Restriction**, which permanently limits access from PSU's library to people who have an ODIN account.

The Campus Restriction option normally requires permission from the Office of Graduate Studies. However, MFA students are exempt from this requirement because the open availability of a complete text online has been viewed by many publishers as damaging to the acquisition of such manuscripts. There are also concerns, particularly for nonfiction, of possible liabilities incurred by texts that have not had the customary legal vetting process of periodical and book publishers.

For more information, visit the Office of Graduate Studies website or contact a representative directly at [grad@pdx.edu](mailto:grad@pdx.edu) or 503-725-8410.



## V. Graduation Procedures & Deadlines

### 1. Preparing to Graduate

Students are responsible for meeting all Graduate Office deadlines. For exact dates, see the table below and verify on the OGS website: <http://www.pdx.edu/ogs/graduate-candidate-deadlines>. All forms (with the exception of the degree application form) must be submitted to the Department so that they can be signed by the Chair and copied to the student's file before they are submitted to Graduate Studies.

<b>2016-17 Deadlines for Master's Degree Candidates</b>			
	<b>Fall 2016</b>	<b>Winter 2017</b>	<b>Spring 2017</b>
<b>GO-16M</b> <b>Appointment of Thesis Final Oral Examination Committee</b> To be submitted by the Advisor for all master's students completing theses.	<b>9/19/16</b>	<b>11/28/16</b>	<b>3/13/17</b>
<b>Application for Degree For all Graduate Students.</b> No student will graduate without submitting this form.	<b>9/30/16</b>	<b>1/13/17</b>	<b>4/7/17</b>
<b>Thesis Defense Deadline</b> Last day to schedule thesis defense	<b>11/4/16</b>	<b>2/17/17</b>	<b>5/12/17</b>
<b>Thesis Submission for Final Approval</b> Last day to electronically submit thesis	<b>11/18/16</b>	<b>3/3/17</b>	<b>5/26/17</b>
<b>GO-17M</b> <b>Recommendation for Master's Degree Completion Form</b> To be prepared by the Department and submitted by the Advisor for all graduate students completing theses or dissertations.	<b>12/13/16</b>	<b>3/28/17</b>	<b>6/20/17</b>

## 2. Forms and Deadlines

***Degree Completion Plan:*** This form should be started in the student's 3<sup>rd</sup> term and must be finalized at least two terms before the student plans to graduate (i.e., in Fall for Spring term graduation). This form is completed and approved by the advisor, kept in the student's academic file in the English Department, and is in place of the no longer required Office of Graduate Studies Form GO-12. No changes in the Degree Completion Plan should be made after the Application for Degree Completion has been submitted.

***GO-16M: Appointment of Thesis Committee:*** The [GO-16M](#) form is due in the term prior to the term in which you will graduate, and must be completed in consultation with your advisor. Make sure that your committee members have agreed to serve and will be present during your final term. Your committee will consist of at least three faculty members. Your thesis advisor is also your committee chair, and must be regular full-time PSU faculty, tenured or tenure-track, assistant professor or higher.

***Application for Degree & DARS Report:*** Submit an [Application for Awarding of Master's Degree](#) form in the Office of Graduate Studies in the first week of the term you will graduate. This form is submitted electronically through Banweb. Early in your final term you should also consult with your Advisor about submitting a DARS report to verify that all your degree requirements have been met. Please note that the DARS report has replaced the [GO-12](#) form, and that a request for a DARS report must be submitted to the Program Coordinator by the student or their advisor; there is no self-service DARS reportage for graduate degrees at this time. For further information please visit the DARS page of the OGS website.

***Scheduling Your Defense & Submitting Your Thesis:*** Contact your committee members early in the term in which you intend to graduate to schedule your oral defense. The deadline by which the oral defense must be completed varies; check the schedule for the term in which you plan to graduate, and aim for the final week before the deadline. It is advisable to reserve the date early in the term since faculty sit on multiple committees. You should also reserve the MFA conference room (contact Matt Swetnam, the Program Coordinator) for a 1.5-hour slot.

Check with your advisor to confirm when you should distribute your thesis to your committee. You can expect to distribute your thesis to committee members a **minimum** of 2 weeks in advance of your scheduled defense. Confirm with your committee via email a week to ten days prior to your oral.

You will receive your written exam about two weeks before your defense. You have one week to complete it. Distribute both hard and electronic copies to your committee. The written exam is graded pass/fail.

See section IV-4 above for information on the electronic submission of your final thesis.

### **3. Early Term Graduation**

A student who misses the listed thesis submission deadline may graduate in the following term without registering in that term if he or she submits the completed, defended, approved, and formatted thesis no later than 5:00 p.m. on the GO-17 (Recommendation for the Degree form) [deadline](#).

### **4. MFA Graduation and PSU Commencement**

The Graduation Reading (which typically is held on two days) at the end of Spring term celebrates our graduates with their families, friends, and the entire MFA community. The graduation readings are staged by the first-year MFA students, who provide food and organize the evening. All students who have graduated in the year prior—whether in Fall, Winter, or Spring—are expected to read from their work.

The College of Liberal Arts & Sciences at PSU holds general commencement exercises at the end of finals week in Spring. Check commencement deadlines on the University's [commencement web page](#) if you wish to take part in the ceremony.

## VI. Resources

### 1. Student Checklist

The checklist assumes a full-time schedule (9 credits per term).

TERM	CHECKLIST
FALL YEAR 1	<p>Confirm that the English Department staff has your contact information, including email address.</p> <p>Meet with your assigned faculty contact person to plan a preliminary program of study.</p> <p>Register for core workshop in your strand.</p> <p>Sign up for ODIN and OAM accounts.</p> <p>Familiarize yourself with the program information in the MFA Handbook and in the PSU Bulletin found at <a href="http://www.pdx.edu/oaa/psu-bulletin">http://www.pdx.edu/oaa/psu-bulletin</a></p> <p>Transfer any previous graduate credits from non-PSU institutions by submitting a GO-21 form.</p> <p>Previous graduate credits taken at PSU are now tracked via the DARS system.</p> <p>Read your MFA Program Handbook.</p>
WINTER YEAR 1	<p>Meet with your advisor prior to registration.</p> <p>Register for a core workshop.</p>
SPRING YEAR 1	<p>Consult with your assigned <a href="#">thesis advisor</a> to begin to develop your bibliography, and about forming your thesis committee.</p> <p>Talk with second-year students about their experience with the thesis process.</p> <p>Develop a summer writing plan—perhaps even a writing group—to keep on track.</p> <p>If you were admitted conditionally and have fulfilled the conditions, confirm that the Department has notified the Office of Graduate Studies so that your conditional status can be removed. If you have not met the conditions, consult your advisor.</p> <p>Start working on your Degree Completion Plan Form for your student file.</p>
SUMMER YEAR 1	<p>Assess your progress toward completing your degree.</p>
FALL YEAR 2	<p>Consult the timeline for submitting forms to the Graduate Office and to the Department.</p> <p>Assemble your thesis committee and consult with your advisor on how to proceed.</p> <p>Work with your thesis advisor to submit your GO-16M form.</p> <p>By the end of this term you should have a Degree Completion Plan form finalized and approved by your advisor.</p>
WINTER YEAR 2	<p>Consult with your thesis advisor and run a DARS report to confirm that by the end of next term you will meet all the requirements for graduation.</p> <p>Consult with the Graduate Office on proper formatting and the process for submitting your thesis. This is important; the Graduate Office is very particular about margins, etc.</p>

	If you have questions, consult with your thesis advisor about the Open Access thesis options. Apply for graduation. At this point, you should not make any alterations to your Degree Completion Plan unless you intend to postpone graduation to a later term.
SPRING YEAR 2	Consult with your thesis advisor on when you will be given your written exam and what to expect from it. Remind your thesis committee of the date of your oral exam. Reserve the MFA conference room for your oral exam.

## 2. Professional Development

The MFA degree is extremely versatile. Professional-development offerings at PSU include:

### TEACHING WRITING WORKSHOP

This is a one-day workshop on strategies for teaching others to write. It includes demonstrations, discussions, and teaching handouts on everything from invention and revision strategies to dealing with special issues such as non-native speakers. Contact Susan Kirtley at [skirtley@pdx.edu](mailto:skirtley@pdx.edu) for more information.

### WR 394, WRITING CAREERS FOR ENGLISH MAJORS

This course is also available for graduate credit if you enroll as ENG 505 (Reading and Conference). The course covers career possibilities, internships, and community service. Each student gets individual attention and the goal is to identify possible career paths. This course is particularly helpful for those who wish to pursue non-teaching careers. Contact Dan DeWeese at [deweese@pdx.edu](mailto:deweese@pdx.edu) for more information.

### ENG 513, TEACHING AND TUTORING WRITING

This course offers theoretical and practical strategies for teaching composition and tutoring. The focus is on preparing participants to teach in a variety of contexts. Contact Dan DeWeese at [deweese@pdx.edu](mailto:deweese@pdx.edu) for more information.

### THE PSU CAREER CENTER

The Career Center has a wide range of resources and can help you plan a job search, prepare application materials, and explore career options. Visit the website at <http://www.career.pdx.edu/> and the Center in 402 University Services Building.

### **3. Office of Graduate Studies Forms**

All of the forms listed below are online as Adobe Acrobat PDF files at <http://www.pdx.edu/ogs/forms>.

#### **GO-14; Dual Degree Form**

If you are working towards another Master's degree at PSU that has degree requirements that overlap those of the MFA, you can share up to 16 credits between the two programs. Use this form to designate your dual-degree courses.

#### **GO-15, Validation of Out-of-Date Graduate Credit**

If any of your coursework exceeds the 7-year PSU time limit (4 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)**

This form must be submitted to have your thesis committee approved by the Graduate Studies Office. You should submit it before beginning your thesis credits.

#### **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-19, Request for Change of Program**

This form is used to change from one Master's degree or graduate certificate program to another, or to add a second Master's degree or graduate certificate program to your course of study. Transferring between programs or adding a second Master's degree or graduate certificate requires a full admission review.

#### **GO-21, Proposed Transfer Credit**

This form must be completed if you have taken any courses outside PSU before admission to your graduate program that will be used to fulfill its requirements. It must also be filed if you take any courses outside PSU after admission that will be used to fulfill your requirements.

#### **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 because the student was not informed of it by an advisor or other authority.

#### **Thesis Signature Page**

A signed hardcopy of the Thesis Signature Page showing the approving signatures of all members of the thesis committee must be submitted to the Office of Graduate Studies after the oral exam is completed.

## **4. English Department Forms**

### **Degree Completion Plan**

This form is advisor-approved and must be submitted at least two terms before the student plans to graduate (i.e., in Fall for Spring term graduation). Once completed and approved by the advisor, this form is kept in the student's academic file in the English Department and is in place of the no longer required OGS Form GO-12. No changes in the degree completion plan should be made after the Application for Degree has been submitted.

### **Request for Leave of Absence**

This form, signed by the student's advisor and the Program Director, must be submitted to the department if students wish to be absent for one or more terms (other than summer term).

### **Thesis Advisor Appointment Form**

This form, signed by the student's new thesis advisor and the Program Director, is submitted to the department to formally appoint the thesis advisor at the end of the student's first year of study.

September 20, 2016