

Oklahoma State University

# ENGLISH GRADUATE GUIDELINES

MFA in  
Creative  
Writing

2015-2016

308 Morrill Hall

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## Graduate Program Personnel

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## Program Directors

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## Graduate Studies Committee

The Graduate Studies Committee consists of a representative from each of three areas:

### **Area A: Literature**

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### **Area B: TESL/Linguistics, Composition and Rhetoric, Professional Writing**

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The Graduate Director is a non-voting member.

# The Graduate Faculty

See the English Department online faculty directory for office and telephone information:

<http://english.okstate.edu/faculty/faculty-profiles>

**Linda Austin, PhD**

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University Of Rochester

Cultural Studies in the Long 19<sup>th</sup> Century

**Ron Brooks, PhD**

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University of Oklahoma

Composition

Rhetoric

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Writing Theories & Practices

Applied Linguistics

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Linguistics

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Creative Writing: Fiction

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Romanticism  
Literary Theory

# **MFA IN CREATIVE WRITING**

## MFA in Creative Writing

The MFA in Creative Writing at Oklahoma State University allows students to focus on developing their abilities as poets and/or writers of fiction and nonfiction, through a course of study emphasizing creative writing workshops, literature seminars, and electives in other areas in language and culture. In consultation with their advisory committees, students devise an individualized curriculum that reflects their own artistic and intellectual interests and prepares them to publish their creative work, enter a PhD program, or teach at the college level.

The MFA in Creative Writing consists of 42 credit hours, including twelve hours of thesis. In addition to these hours, students must present their creative work at a public reading following the completion of their thesis. A description of the degree requirements and regulations appears below.

### Forms to File in 308 Morrill for the MFA in English

- ❖ Departmental Advisory Committee Form: by the end of the first year of graduate study
- ❖ Plan of Study: before the end of the second semester of full-time enrollment – excluding summer sessions. (filed online at the Graduate College website: <http://gradcollege.okstate.edu/planofstudy>)
- ❖ Second Year Review: Notice of Intent for Portfolio Review no fewer than thirty days prior to the scheduled review
- ❖ Notice of Intent to defend a Thesis: no fewer than two weeks before the public reading
- ❖ Results of Final Defense Form: immediately following the public reading

### Summary Checklist:

#### **By the end of the second full semester of enrollment, you must have:**

- ❖ chosen an advisor in your major area of study
- ❖ chosen your advisory committee
- ❖ met with your committee and discussed your plan of study
- ❖ filed your plan of study

#### **By the end of the second full year (or twenty-four credit hours) of enrollment, you should have:**

- ❖ submitted material for the second-year review to your advisory committee and received a successful evaluation

#### **Before you are eligible to graduate, you must have:**

- ❖ filed a Graduation Clearance form (and a revised plan of study, if applicable)
- ❖ filed a Diploma Application (if your graduation is delayed you must file a Diploma Application Extension found on the Registrar's website: <http://registrar.okstate.edu/Forms>)
- ❖ submitted the final draft of your thesis by the Graduate College deadline
- ❖ completed your Public Reading and turned in the signed Thesis/Dissertation Defense Results form to the English Graduate Office
- ❖ submitted the final copy of the thesis in accordance with the format guidelines at: <http://gradcollege.okstate.edu/student/thesis/default.html>



## **Application and Admission**

Admission to the MFA program in Creative Writing requires a Bachelor of Arts or Bachelor of Science degree from an accredited institution of higher learning. Other qualifications and application materials are listed below. Applicants should be mindful that meeting the minimum standards for admission does not guarantee admission.

All applications are submitted electronically through the Graduate College. All required materials are to be uploaded electronically with the application at: <https://app.it.okstate.edu/gradcollege/>.

## **Admission Qualifications and Application Materials**

- ❖ **GPA** Applicants should have maintained an undergraduate grade-point average of 3.0 on a 4.0 scale, particularly in English and/or creative writing courses.
- ❖ **Undergraduate Major** Applicants for the MFA in creative writing usually have an undergraduate major in English, perhaps with an option or specialization in creative writing. Other undergraduate majors may be eligible for admission depending on the quality of the writing sample, but normally all applicants will have taken at least twelve hours of upper-division courses in English.
- ❖ **Recommendations** Applicants must submit two letters of recommendation.
- ❖ **Statement of Purpose** Applicants must submit a written statement of approximately 250 words, identifying the proposed area of emphasis (poetry, fiction, or creative nonfiction), reasons for undertaking graduate study in this area, relevant experience, and future publication and/or work plans.
- ❖ **Writing Sample** Applicants must submit a writing sample: either approximately 25 pages of fiction or creative nonfiction, or ten poems (not to exceed 20 pages in combined length). The GRE is not required, but students who have taken the test are encouraged to submit their scores as part of their application.

### **English Language Proficiency (non-native speakers)**

Applicants who are not native speakers of English must submit current scores from one of the following:

- ❖ TOEFL iBT - minimum score of 100
- ❖ TOEFL (paper based) - minimum score 600 and TWE
- ❖ IELTS - minimum score of 7.0

**Please see the English Department website for further score requirements.**

Students are admitted into the Department of English as MFA candidates only.

If a student wishes to move from one degree program into another degree program, the student must submit a new application through the Graduate College.

## Graduate College Rules and Regulations

There are many rules and regulations affecting graduate enrollment, tenure, examinations, theses, and dissertations that are made by the Graduate Faculty of Oklahoma State University rather than the English Department. Among the rules students should familiarize themselves with are those governing academic dishonesty or misconduct, especially those dealing with plagiarism. It is the student's responsibility to become informed about all English Department, Graduate College, and University regulations.

The Oklahoma State University Catalog should be read closely by all those who are considering, or participating in, graduate studies in English at Oklahoma State University. Copies are available online at <http://www.okstate.edu/registrar>.

## Advisor and Advisory Committee

All graduate students select an individual advisor and an advisory committee to guide them in completing their degrees.

**Advisor:** Students are encouraged to choose an advisor by the end of their first semester of course work, but if this is not possible, students should select an advisor by the end of their first year of graduate study. An advisor of an MFA student may be any member of the graduate faculty in creative writing.

**Advisory Committee:** The advisory committee will normally consist of the student's major advisor as committee chair and at least two additional members of the English Department's graduate faculty. Most MFA students' committees will include another member of the creative writing faculty in the student's genre besides the advisor.

**Changes:** To change an advisor or advisory committee, a student must request the change in writing to the Graduate Director and provide reasons for the change. The Graduate Director will forward the request to the Graduate College for final approval.

## Plan of Study

A plan of study is a listing of course work the student intends to take for completion of the degree and an estimated time schedule. The student must develop the plan with his/her advisor and advisory committee. The Graduate College requires MFA students to file a plan of study with the Graduate College by the end of the second semester of full-time enrollment – summer sessions excluded.

**Planning Meeting:** Prior to completing the second semester of full-time enrollment (summer sessions excluded) students must schedule a meeting with their advisory committee. During that meeting, the student and advisory committee will discuss the student's preparation, professional goals, and plans for graduate study. The student and committee should agree upon

- ❖ A plan of study
- ❖ Tentative plans for the thesis or creative component

**Submitting the Plan of Study:** The student will finalize the plan and submit it online at the Graduate College website : <https://gradcollege.okstate.edu/planofstudy>. Members of the advisory committee and the Graduate Director will review and sign the form electronically.

**Changes:** Changes to the plan of study can be made with the approval of the advisory committee. A revised plan should be submitted electronically to the Graduate College at the beginning of the intended semester of graduation.

**Ten-Year Rule:** A final plan of study may not include any course more than ten years old at the time of actual graduation.

## Checklist for Submitting a Plan of Study

- ❖ Minimum of 42 hours, including 12 hours of thesis, beyond baccalaureate degree
- ❖ Minimum of 15 hours of creative writing and 6 of literature
- ❖ At least 30 hours of course work at the 5000 or 6000 level at OSU
- ❖ No more than 9 hours of course work taken as a special student or transferred from another institution
- ❖ No course work may be used to complete requirements for another degree
- ❖ The plan of study will be signed by the advisor, committee members, and the Graduate Director electronically
- ❖ **DO NOT LIST MORE THAN 12 HOURS OF THESIS.** Even if you have taken more as the Graduate College will reject the Plan of Study if more than 12 hours are listed.

## Course Requirements

The MFA program consists of 42 credit hours. The following requirements govern MFA course work:

### MFA in Creative Writing Curriculum

#### **Craft and Forms: (three hours)**

- ❖ ENGL 5723      Craft and Forms of Poetry
- ❖ ENGL 5763      Craft and Forms of Prose

#### **Graduate-Level Workshops: (twelve hours selected from the following courses)**

- ❖ ENGL 5730      Seminar in Fiction Writing
- ❖ ENGL 5740      Seminar in Poetry Writing
- ❖ ENGL 6130      Studies in Fiction Writing
- ❖ ENGL 6140      Studies in Poetry Writing
- ❖ ENGL 6160      Studies in Creative Nonfiction

#### **Graduate-level Literature Courses (six hours)**

##### **Electives: (nine hours)**

- ❖ XXXX xxxx      creative writing, literature, methods course for teaching assistants, or other areas of language and culture

#### **Thesis: (twelve hours)**

- ❖ ENGL 5000      Thesis

**Methods Course for Teaching Assistants:** Teaching assistants must take an appropriate pedagogy course or courses in their first semester of teaching at Oklahoma State University. These hours may be counted as part of the elective hours of course work.

**Creative Writing Requirements:** As the defining focus of work towards the MFA degree, creative writing course work makes up the majority of credit hours, in a combination of **ENGL 5730:** Seminar in Fiction Writing, **ENGL 5740:** Seminar in Poetry Writing, **ENGL 6130:** Studies in Fiction Writing, **ENGL 6140:** Studies in Poetry Writing, **ENGL 6160:** Studies in Creative Nonfiction, **ENGL 5723:** Craft and Forms of Poetry Writing or **ENGL 5763:** Craft and Forms of Fiction Writing, as well as thesis hours.

**Literature Course Work Requirement:** MFA students are required to take six hours of literature course work at the 5000 or 6000 level.

**Electives:** Students choose the remaining hours of course work in consultation with their advisory committees. Course selection should take into account the student's thesis genre, artistic interests, and academic and professional goals. For instance, students interested in going on to PhD work at Oklahoma State University upon completion of the MFA would normally include courses to assist in preparing them for the first-year exam for PhD students.

**Required Hours at 5000/6000 Level:** All MFA students must complete their course work at the 5000/6000 level.

**Transfer Hours:** Students may transfer up to nine graduate hours from another university granting a Master's degree in English. No hours in creative writing may be transferred. A student's advisory committee shall determine the number of hours of transfer credit to be awarded. If a student used the hours for a degree at the previous institution, the hours are not applicable to the MFA degree at OSU.

**Independent Study:** Independent Study courses may occasionally be arranged with an instructor when no regular graduate course on the desired topic is available during the student's expected tenure. Each of the two course numbers (ENGL 5210 and 6210) may be used for up to six credit hours per semester, and no more than nine hours total per course number. All students requesting an Independent Study course must hold a meeting with their advisory committee and receive approval by the members of the committee. Students who wish to enroll in independent study courses must submit an Independent Study Request form to the Graduate Office no later than the end of the first week of graduate enrollment prior to the semester in which the Independent Study course is taken. A student who has completed the 17th graduate credit hour in a degree program but who does not have an approved plan of study on file in the Graduate College may not arrange an Independent Study course.

**The Graduate Studies Committee will evaluate applications for Independent Study in accordance with the following criteria and procedure:**

1. Has the student's advisory committee approved the course?
2. Has the student taken regularly offered courses related to the subject?
3. Is the Independent Study unlikely to have a negative impact on enrollment in concurrent or immediately subsequent course offerings?
4. Does the Independent Study fill a gap in the student's curriculum? Or is the specific course content unlikely to be offered during the student's expected tenure?
5. Are the text materials clearly listed?
6. Is the work appropriate for the number of credit hours requested?
7. Is the list of assignments and percentages awarded to each clearly explained?
8. Is the schedule of conferences sufficiently specific?

If all eight questions may be answered affirmatively, the Graduate Director will email a notice of acceptance to the proposed instructor, who will then inform the student. If one or more questions cannot be answered affirmatively, the Graduate Director will contact the proposed instructor in an effort to clarify and/or resolve the problem(s). If no resolution can be reached, the Graduate Director will inform the proposed instructor of the denial and the reason(s) for the denial in writing. The proposed instructor will then inform the student.

**End-of-Semester Evaluations:** All graduate students will be evaluated in writing at the end of each semester by the professors with whom they have taken courses. These evaluations are kept on file in the English Graduate Office and are available for students to read.

**Grade of "Incomplete":** The following regulations apply to students who receive what at OSU is termed the "composite incomplete" grade ("IB," "IC," "ID," or "IF") for any of their course work within the English Department:

- ❖ Students must complete course work within one calendar year, after which time the preliminary grade (expressed by the second letter of the composite) becomes permanent in accordance with University policy. Individual faculty members, however, may establish a shorter time limit for completing course work. Faculty will identify time limits in the "remarks" dropdown of the electronic grade sheet.
- ❖ Teaching assistants or associates having more than three incomplete grades on their records will not be recommended for reappointment.
- ❖ Teaching assistants or associates having any incomplete grades on their records will not be recommended for summer employment.

Students should familiarize themselves with Section 6.2 of the University Academic Regulations found in the *University Catalog* for a full explanation of University policy governing incomplete grades.

## Second-Year Review

Prior to the completion of their second full year (twenty-four credit hours) of enrollment, MFA candidates submit a portfolio of their creative work to their advisory committee which decides in advance the length of the portfolio and other specific requirements for its contents. Students must submit a Notice of Intent to Review Portfolio, signed by their committee, 30 days before the portfolio is due. The Notice of Intent will indicate the specific requirements for the portfolio. No review will be conducted after the beginning of the summer session. The Advisor should report the results of the review to the English Graduate Office.

**Prerequisites:** In order to submit a portfolio for review, students must:

- ❖ have a grade point average of at least 3.0 on all graduate work taken beyond the baccalaureate degree. All courses carrying graduate credit, including transfer hours on the approved plan of study, will be calculated in this grade point average.
- ❖ have an approved plan of study on file with the Graduate College (<http://gradcollege.okstate.edu/planofstudy>)
- ❖ submit an Intent to Submit Portfolio Review form (<http://english.okstate.edu/graduate-program/graduate-forms>) to the English Graduate Office 30 days before the portfolio is due.

**Format and Submission:** Students must submit a signed Notice of Intent to the Graduate Office no later than 30 days before the portfolio is due. The Notice of Intent will indicate the specific requirements for the portfolio. Additional paper or electronic copies should be submitted for committee review as specified in the Notice of Intent.

**Evaluation:** The portfolio will be evaluated by the student's advisory committee. The readers will meet as a committee to discuss the portfolio and will provide a rating of "Pass" or "Fail." The advisor will then notify the English Graduate Office of the results.

**Notification of Results:** The Graduate Director will email notification of the results of the portfolio review to students and their advisors no later than five weeks after the submission date.

**Resubmission:** Students may submit a portfolio for review only twice. When resubmitting a portfolio, students may modify all or part of the portfolio contents prior to the second review. Students must submit a revised Notice of Intent at least 30 days prior to the second review.

**Appeals:** Normally, a second “Fail” rating of a student’s portfolio will result in termination of the student’s work toward the degree. However, when course work has been of exceptionally high quality, a student may, after a second failure, petition the Graduate Studies Committee for permission to submit the portfolio a third and final time. In order to petition, the student must have a grade point average of 3.50 or higher in graduate courses taken at OSU. In addition, the student’s petition must be supported by favorable end-of-semester evaluations from at least three professors.

## **Thesis**

The candidate for the MFA degree prepares original work in poetry, prose fiction, or creative nonfiction for the twelve hours of thesis credit. The thesis should be a serious effort of publishable quality.

**Thesis Committee:** Unless a student requests a change, the advisory committee serves as the thesis committee. If it is necessary to change the committee, a new committee form must be completed and submitted to the English Graduate Office and the Graduate College.

**Reading Procedure:** The candidate and the committee members should agree upon a reading procedure for the thesis. Matters to be discussed in reaching this agreement might include whether each member of the committee needs to see individual poems, stories, or essays as they are completed or revised by the candidate; whether individual committee members wish to see the sections of the thesis serially or all at once; and how much time committee members will need to finish reading a section or the entire thesis. Under no circumstances should a completed thesis be submitted to any committee member for reading fewer than two weeks before the defense.

**Deadlines:** Students submitting theses must adhere to deadlines established by the Graduate College and by the Department of English.

**Style:** The student must write the thesis according to the guidelines in the current Graduate College Style Manual, available from the Graduate College or at: <http://gradcollege.okstate.edu/download/misc.htm>.

**Final Copy:** The final draft of the thesis should contain all of the original work in a completed form. All members of the student’s advisory committee must read and approve the thesis prior to the public reading. Committee members will not sign the thesis until they are satisfied with any revisions they have requested.

## **Public Reading**

The final exercise for the MFA degree will consist of a public reading of material from the student’s thesis. It will last no fewer than 45 minutes, but in many instances, it will be longer. The public reading occurs after the student has submitted a complete draft of the thesis to all committee members.

**Notice of Oral Defense Form:** Candidates will indicate their intent to give a public reading by filing a nonbinding Intent to Defend form with the Graduate Director no fewer than two weeks before the public reading. Each member of the committee will sign this form before it is filed with the Graduate Director. If a student does not conduct the reading in the semester when the form is filed, he or she should resubmit the form when he or she is prepared to reschedule the reading.

**Scheduling of Public Reading:** *Under no circumstances should a completed thesis be submitted to any committee member for reading fewer than two weeks before the public reading.* The English Graduate Office must be notified no fewer than two weeks before the public reading of the day, time, and location of the defense, and the title of the thesis. No public reading may be conducted after the beginning of the summer session.

## **Student Tenure**

Students are expected to complete all requirements for the MFA degree within seven years from their first enrollment in courses for the MFA program. See the University Catalog for Graduate College Academic Regulations regarding time limits.

## **Length of Financial Support for Teaching Assistants**

A teaching assistant who has not been placed on strict academic probation and who is making satisfactory progress toward the degree is eligible for financial support for a maximum of three years. A student who obtains an MFA in English at OSU and then enters the PhD program is eligible for an additional four years of support.

If exceptional circumstances warrant, a student in the final year of financial support may petition the Head of the English Department for an additional year's support. Such exceptional cases will be judged on an individual basis and in light of Departmental policies and staffing needs.

## **Ineligibility for the MFA Degree**

The Graduate Director may upon proper cause declare a student ineligible for a degree from the English Department at Oklahoma State University. Upon determining that such cause exists, the Graduate Director will immediately notify the student's advisor, who will discuss the matter with the student and respond to the Graduate Director within fifteen working days. Should the Graduate Director still believe that proper cause exists, he or she will write a letter to the student indicating the reasons for the decision. The student may then appeal to the Graduate Studies Committee within ten working days for a hearing.

The Graduate Studies Committee will review the appeal and report its findings to the Graduate Director, who will notify the student. The student may then appeal that decision to the full Graduate Faculty of the English Department. The decision of that group shall end the Departmental appeal process.

## **Appeals and Petitions**

All appeals involving grades or charges of academic dishonesty or misconduct must be directed to the OSU Academic Appeals Board. Contact the Provost's Office (101 Whitehurst) for information and forms. Petitions involving teaching assistantships must be directed to the Department Head.

All other petitions or appeals must be directed in writing to the Graduate Director, who will then forward the petition to the appropriate body, usually the Graduate Studies Committee (for special requests as described within the English Graduate Guidelines) or the English Graduate Faculty (for exceptions to English Department policy). The Graduate Director will notify students by mail of the decision reached by the Graduate Studies Committee or the Graduate Faculty, with a copy to the student's advisor. For exceptions to university policy, the Graduate Director will forward the petition to the Graduate Council.

Students are urged to discuss matters with their advisors and with the Graduate Director before making a formal petition or appeal.

If the Graduate Director does not act upon a student's written request within a reasonable amount of time, a student and/or advisor may appeal directly to the Department Head. If a student has exhausted all appeals procedures within the Department and is still not able to resolve the problem, he or she may appeal to the Graduate College.

