Waterloo English Graduate Orientation

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Program Info Session: PhD

English Graduate Orientation 2024

Contact:

Jennifer Clary-Lemon, Graduate Officer (HH 368)

englgrad2@uwaterloo.ca

Session outline:

- Relation of the MA and PhD Programs
- The PhD, year by year
- Teaching
- Research
- Longer-term planning

Coursework at Waterloo:

- MA and PhD students enroll in the same courses

- The 1-year MA, and year 1 of the PhD are primarily coursework

- Coursework is meant to broaden your knowledge of English studies

  - LIT / RCD / XDM designations

Coursework at Waterloo:

- Each course should equip you with more knowledge of a specific area and topic. Some courses are broad (e.g., Rhetorical Studies); others are specific (e.g., Shakespeare and Religion).

- In many courses, you can tailor your research-based projects so they connect to your intended area of specialization, or to particular areas of theory you wish to equip yourself with. Speak to instructors to see what will work in the context of a given course.

Time Management

- At the start of a term, take note of deadlines in the various classes you are taking, so you can budget your time accordingly.

- Balancing teaching tasks with other responsibilities is an important skill to develop. See especially: Bruce Dadey's tips on marking and commenting efficiently (TA workshop)

The Ph.D., year-by-year:

- Year 1: **Coursework**; later in year 1: declare a supervisor (April 30); submit progress report (April 30)
- Year 2: **Dissertation Proposal** (December**) + Comprehensive Exam (**written, May; oral, Jun**e)**; professionalization milestone; submit progress report (April 30)
- Year 3: **Dissertation writing**; language requirement (December); submit progress report (April 30)
- Year 4-5: **Dissertation writing**; submit progress report (April 30)
- Year 4 is the final year of funding. Note that one full term should be reserved for the dissertation defence
- See a full checklist of requirements here: https://uwaterloo.ca/english/sites/default/files/uploads/documents/phd-checklist.docx
- Each year will also bring scholarship application cycles (October: SSHRC and OGS-International; February: OGS-Domestic). You should apply for SSHRC each year starting Year 2 until your funding package expires.

SSHRC workshops

Event	Date	Time	Location
"Creating a Competitive Graduate Scholarship Application" webinar	Monday, September 9th	10:00 am – 11:30am	Live Virtual Webinar - this will be recorded, and link posted when available
Tri-agency doctoral scholarship workshop	Tuesday, September 25th	4:00-6:00 pm	In Person - Board and Senate Room, plus adjacent rooms (NH 3318, NH3308, NH3407)

- The Office of Graduate Studies and Postdoctoral Affairs (GSPA) is hosting 2 SSHRC info-sessions

- Register at

https://www.ticketfi.com/event/5800/creating-a-competitive-graduate-scholarship-application-webinar

- https://www.ticketfi.com/event/5830/tri-agency-doctoral-scholarship-workshop

By year 3: Language Requirement

Each candidate must attain or demonstrate basic competence subject to feasibility of testing by the University of Waterloo in a language other than English, excluding middle English but not Anglo-Saxon.

Proof of competence may take four forms:

- Successful completion of two term of undergraduate study in a language for basic competence or **two terms of advanced undergraduate study** for advanced competence.
- Successful sitting of an exam at the appropriate level set by a department of the University.
- Completion of degree-level study in that language at another university.
- Evidence of other kinds that is deemed sufficient by the Departmental Graduate Studies Committee.
- This milestone must be completed by December 1 of the third year.

Teaching

- TAing is part of your funding package, but is also excellent professional experience

- As you settle into teaching, you can make use of the department's resources – TA coordinator, course instructor, and the [English Teaching Portal](#)

- You will likely be one of your students' main points of personal, human contact.

- I strongly recommend documenting your teaching from the beginning: Securely save your evaluations, samples of comments to student writing, email interactions (with student names removed or blacked out, of course)

Research - Overview

- FAQ: am I a "research-based" grad student?

- Because of technicalities of UW's terminology, there are sometimes questions from students about whether this is a "research-based" program. All English students are considered "research-based."

Characteristics of Graduate-Level Research

- Demonstrates knowledge of prior content (course concepts, critical history, your method, the "state of the field"). Citation practices and principles of academic integrity are relevant here.

- You may find that faculty members ask you to highlight your original contribution to knowledge. How do you move an existing conversation forward, or apply known methods to a new corpus or archive?

- BUT highlighting your original contribution doesn't mean you need to say "no one has studied X," or reject prior scholars' work. Highly original work still takes place in a community of knowledge and can be constructive, building on what's been done already and finding new directions

Research - Materials

- Using the library
  - Newly expanded digital holdings and course reserves
  - Newly integrated University library system makes it easy to request books from other libraries; just leave ample time for delivery
  - Tour: September 20 (watch for announcements)
- What/where is your archive/corpus? What type of data/texts will you work with?
- Do I need ethics clearance for my MRP / Thesis / Dissertation?
  - If you plan to use interviews, or work with human subjects (including on social media), you and your supervisor may need to complete ethics clearance training before beginning your research. To make sure this doesn't catch you by surprise later, you can learn more here.

Research – Publishing (PhD)

- Quality of venue matters: it's not all about quantity. Be especially wary of unsolicited emails from dubious or "predatory" publishers.

- **Talk to your supervisor** about what, where, and when to publish; and what would build your overall profile as an expert in your field. What would build on, publicize, or complement the work of your dissertation?

- For scholarly purposes, peer-reviewed journal publications are still the gold standard

- Peer-reviewed chapters in edited collections are great, but sometimes they can take years to reach "accepted" status

- Non-peer reviewed publications (blog posts, encyclopedia entries, book reviews) can be good too, as long as their status is clearly indicated on your CV

How do I find a supervisor?

- Listen to me chat about "How to choose a committee" this afternoon!
- Make a note of faculty that have interests in your area. Try to take courses from them.
- If they aren't teaching, reach out via email and set up an appointment when you have an idea about what you want your dissertation to be about. You don't have to have a full proposal, but you should have a paragraph.
- Provide materials in advance of your meeting, and when in an in-person conversation with them about your work, broach the possibility of supervision
- Have more than one top choice for a supervisor: some may be on research leave or currently have too many students
- If it's a "no": you can always ask if they can recommend another faculty member in this area

A Quick Look Ahead:

- Keep your possible future(s) in sight and work toward them. What are the things you'd like to do with your degree, once you have it?

- Your **academic CV, non-academic résumé,** and **teaching portfolio** are documents you can build along the way, and use to keep track of your progress toward those goals

The CV/Résumé
as ongoing tools for planning/tracking

- **Curriculum Vitae** – used for scholarships, some PhD applications, academic/teaching jobs; update regularly

  - Look at lots of samples; here's our department's sample CV as a starting point.

- **Résumé** –think about how your studies and teaching translate into various types of work experience, and prepare you for jobs you might want; update regularly

- For advice about these documents and/or career planning, you can make use of a supervisor, grad officer, and/or the Centre for Career Action

For the time being:

- Back to the start of your program (i.e., now): make the most of your classes; start getting comfortable as a teacher.

- We'll do our best to keep building community; thanks especially to SAGE and the GSA for the efforts they will be taking on that front.

Questions, Contact, Follow-up

- Jennifer Clary-Lemon
  - Email: englgrad2@uwaterloo.ca
  - Office: Hagey Hall 368
- Agata Jagielska
  - Email: englishgrad@uwaterloo.ca
  - Office: Hagey Hall 250
- Deb Hergott
  - Email: english@uwaterloo.ca
  - Office: Hagey Hall 252

Program Info Session: MA

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- RCD MA: ENGL 702 is required (but open to all)

- XDM MA: ENGL 701 is required (but open to all)

The M.A., term by term

- **Coursework:** Fall: 3 courses; Winter: 3 courses; Spring: 2 courses (three terms)
- **MRP:** Fall: 3 courses; Winter: 3 courses + MRP proposal; Spring: MRP completion
- **Thesis:** Fall: 3 courses+thesis proposal; Winter: 1 course+thesis work; Spring: finish thesis
- **Co-Op Thesis**: Fall: 3 courses+thesis proposal, Winter: 1 course+thesis work; Spring co-op; Fall co-op; Winter: Thesis (five terms)
- **LIT/RCD/XDM Co-Op no MRP**: Fall: 3, Winter: 3; Spring co-op; Fall co-op; Winter: 2 (five terms)
- **RCD/XDM with MRP Co-Op**: Fall: 3; Winter: 2 + MRP proposal; Spring co-op; Fall co-op; Winter: 1 (five terms)
- **Notes:**
  - Taking fewer courses per term will mean you are likely to go over program time limits
  - It's easy to switch streams, or even programs, if you need to.
  - The thesis option is not used frequently, and can be challenging to complete on time. If your thesis proposal is not approved, or is late, you will need to switch to MRP or coursework stream. If your MRP proposal is not approved, or is late, you will need to switch to coursework stream.
  - For program-specific checklists, see: https://uwaterloo.ca/english/policies-forms

MA, Co-Op

- Co-Op MAs are available in all streams (RCD, XDM, LIT).
- Co-Ops increase your terms from 3 to 5. Here is the typical schedule:

Fall	Winter	Spring	Fall	Winter	Spring
Campus	**Campus**	**Work**	**Work**	**Campus**	

- You must write a Co-Op Work Report for each term of Co-Op work (2000 words)
- See more here: https://uwaterloo.ca/english/co-op-grad
- If you are a Co-Op student, you should have gone to the 11:30 session

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Research – Publishing (and the M.A.)

- Some students think about publishing at the M.A. stage, especially those considering applying for a PhD. I would suggest that:
  - The expectation to have published is not the same in every field, and isn't required prior to starting a PhD; speak to a supervisor, advisor, or to me if you have questions on that front.
  - In many cases, a MRP or Thesis does become the basis of a publishable article, to be revised and submitted to after degree completion.
  - If you're thinking about publishing, know that quality of venue matters: it's not all about quantity. **Be especially wary of unsolicited emails from dubious or "predatory" publishers.**

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