

I. The four hour written examination.

1. The M.A. written exam is based entirely upon a reading list of materials kept on file in the main English office. Immediately upon matriculating into the M.A. program, students should pick up a copy of this list.
2. The aim of the exam is to assure that students completing the M.A. program at Duquesne are able to write knowledgeably and concisely across a range of materials, issues, and ideas that constitute literary studies at the present moment.
3. Typically, students take the exam in their final semester of course work, although they are allowed to wait until after completion of course work, if they so choose.
4. The M.A. exam is offered twice each academic year, in November and April.

Note: The four hour written exam is a good choice for students considering going on for work towards the Ph.D., insofar as it requires them to work independently to organize and distill a large body of material, and display command of that material in written form: both being skills that are required of students engaged in the advanced study of literature.

Students planning to become high school teachers may also find the exam a useful choice, because it provides an opportunity for them to draw together knowledge across a range of literary texts and periods.

II. Revision and expansion of a seminar or other graduate course research paper.

1. Typically, the student will ask the professor in whose class the paper was written to serve as advisor.
2. It is the student's responsibility to approach the potential faculty advisor in a timely fashion to request that s/he serve as advisor.
3. The potential faculty advisor has the right to determine whether the paper is worthy of development, and to decline the invitation to serve as an advisor on the proposed project.
4. Once a faculty member agrees to serve as advisor, s/he and the student will work out a schedule for completing the project, as well as guidelines of what sort of work needs to be done to make the project acceptable.
5. After the nature of the project and the schedule for completing it have been finalized, the student should ask the advisor to submit a brief letter to the Graduate Studies Committee describing the project and indicating the s/he has agreed to serve in an advisory capacity.
6. The revised and expanded paper must demonstrate significant revision, reworking and development of the original course paper.

7. Once the project is completed, the student must request that the advisor submit an approved copy to the Graduate Studies Committee to be placed in the student's file.
8. The paper that the student produces will typically run to 25-35 pages.

Note: This option provides students with an opportunity to develop a suitable writing sample for submission as part of an application to a Ph.D. program, or for submission to a scholarly journal with the possibility of publication. Also, because the option requires that students complete a full thirty credit hours of course work, it will benefit students if they are planning to continue on to the Ph.D., or to move into the high school classroom.

III. Two additional courses.

1. In taking 36 credit hours, students are exempted from the written exam, the thesis, and the development of a research paper. The two extra courses are intended to assure a mastery of subject matter equal to that of the other options.
2. The extra courses may be in any Distribution Area of the student's choosing, but must be selected from offerings within the English Department.

Note: Taking 36 credit hours towards completion of the degree may be especially suitable for students in the program who are, or who plan to become, high school teachers, insofar as the additional course work will broaden their knowledge in ways that may be applicable to the range of teaching responsibilities often placed on high school teachers.

Further, students planning to go on to work towards the Ph.D. may find the additional courses useful as a way of developing a broader knowledge of literary fields and issues, which, in turn, may give them a fuller understanding of the possibilities of study at the Ph.D. level; or the additional courses may be used as a way of developing a deeper understanding of a particular area of study to be pursued as a concentration later.

IV. Thesis.

1. Ordinarily, the thesis proposal must be approved **before** the student registers for thesis credits. **Approval is given by the director of the thesis and by the Graduate Studies Committee.**
2. Approval of the thesis proposal is not guaranteed. Every professor has a right to decline to work with a student on a thesis.
3. A student must have completed a minimum of **21 credit hours** prior to registering for thesis credits.
4. A student must take the six thesis credits during a single semester to assure that an appropriate block of time is available for completing the project.

5. In certain circumstances, a student will write the thesis prior to having completed the final course requirement. In that case, the student will take his/her final course during the term immediately following completion of the thesis.

6. The thesis typically runs from 85 – 110 pages.

How the student should prepare for working within the thesis option:

If a student wishes to pursue the thesis option, s/he should first settle on an idea (**generally early in the term prior to the semester when the thesis is to be written**), then seek out the advice of a professor with whom s/he wishes to work. During the conference with the professor, a decision will be made whether the topic is workable and whether the professor might serve as advisor.

Assuming that the professor agrees to serve as advisor, a second faculty member is then invited by the student and/or advisor to join the project. Once the faculty committee is in place, the student will prepare a proposal of 1-2 pages describing the thesis idea, the proposed method of investigating the idea, and the conclusions that might be reached from work on the project. The format of the proposal should follow general MLA guidelines. Unless the thesis advisor instructs the student otherwise, no bibliography is required. Work on the thesis itself will be carried out in a manner, and according to a schedule, to be determined by thesis committee in consultation with the student.