

English and Comparative Literature, PhD

Doctoral Candidacy

To earn a PhD at Washington University, a student must complete all courses required by their department; maintain satisfactory academic progress; pass certain examinations; fulfill residence and Mentored Experience Requirements; write, defend, and submit a dissertation; and file an Intent to Graduate. For a general layout of doctoral degree general requirements in Arts & Sciences, including an explanation of Satisfactory Academic Progress, students should review the Doctoral Degree Academic Information page of the Arts & Sciences *Bulletin*.

Program Requirements

- **Total Units Required: 72**
- **Degree Length: 6 years**
 - The joint PhD degree in English and Comparative Literature requires study of English literature and culture, over the course of which the student virtually duplicates the courses and other preparations expected of a doctoral candidate in English. Students additionally complete the 12-unit core requirement for the Comparative Literature PhD program, which includes Comp Lit 502 Introduction to Comparative Literature. For a description of this core, see the [PhD in Comparative Literature](#).
 - **Note:** Students must be enrolled in 9 graduate credits each semester to retain full-time status. As students complete their course work, if enrolled in fewer than 9 graduate credits, they must enroll in a specific Arts & Sciences graduate course that will show 0 units but does count as full-time status. Students should connect with their department to ensure proper enrollment prior to Add/Drop.
 - The English Department assures funding 12 semesters for all full-time PhD students and 4 semesters for all full-time MFA students in good standing.

PhD in English and Comparative Literature

The AM/PhD program in English at Washington University in St. Louis is a six-year course of study leading to a doctorate in English and American Literature or in English and Comparative Literature. All English graduate students take a minimum of 12 elective 3-credit courses at the 500 level, along with two compulsory classes: L14 E Lit 503 Literary Studies and Graduate Research and L13 Writing 599 Seminar: Teaching Freshman Composition. Aside from these two classes, there are no specific course requirements, although students must take at least two courses in historical periods before 1780 (not in the same period) and at least two in historical periods after 1780 (again, not in the same period).

The English department requires a minimum of competency in one foreign language, ancient or modern, for all doctoral candidates. "Competency" is understood as a basic comprehension of the grammar, structure and core vocabulary of a language. Native speakers of another language or students who have had two full years of undergraduate language study with a grade average of B+ or better will be considered to have satisfied the competency requirement. Other students may demonstrate competency either by taking an introductory reading course designed for graduate students or by passing a translation exam administered by the appropriate language department.

Students entering the program with a master's degree in hand normally follow the standard first-year curriculum. At the end of their third semester, the director of graduate studies will review their AM credits taken elsewhere and determine how many credits (normally a limit of 9-12) may be applied toward the PhD at Washington University. Although students receiving transfer credit may be able to complete the PhD in fewer than six years, it is to their advantage to enter the program as first-year students, since this ensures them four full semesters of study without teaching responsibilities. If, after three semesters and the review of transfer credit, the director of graduate studies determines that the student has fulfilled the course requirements for the PhD, the student may elect not to take classes in semester four and instead to begin major field reading instead; their 6 credits of major field preparation during semester four will complete the requirements for the Washington University AM degree.

Students who wish to receive the combined PhD degree in English and Comparative Literature may do so by fulfilling the English department's requirements for combined degrees. More information about the combined degree may be found on the departmental website.

During the first seven semesters, credits are earned by taking courses, independent study and directed reading. More precisely, students complete 13 courses (39 credits) total across years one and two; the Practicum in Teaching (3 credits) in the fall of year three; 6 credits of directed reading in the spring of year three; and 6 credits of directed reading in the fall of year four.

Required Courses

Code	Title	Units
E Lit 503	Literary Studies and Graduate Research	3
Comp Lit 502	Introduction to Comparative Literature	3
Writing 599	Seminar: Teaching Freshman Composition	3

Course Requirements

Four courses comprising the Comparative Literature core requirement, including Comp Lit 502 Introduction to Comparative Literature and three additional courses distributed among designated categories (refer to the PhD in Comparative Literature for the listing of designated categories).

Qualifying Examinations

Progress toward the PhD is contingent upon the student passing examinations that are variously called *preliminary, qualifying, general, comprehensive, or major field exams*. The qualifying process varies according to the program. In some programs, it consists of a series of incremental, sequential, and cumulative exams over a considerable time. In others, the exams are held during a relatively short period of time. Exams may be replaced by one or more papers. The program, which determines the structure and schedule of the required examinations, is responsible for notifying the Office of Graduate Studies, Arts & Sciences, of the student's outcome, whether successful or unsuccessful.

Comparative Literature Joint PhD degree students will take the comprehensive examinations required in English. At least one of these examinations must entail a comparatist element; this element is to be identified and negotiated with the examination committee, which will include at least one faculty member representing Comparative Literature.

Mentored Experience Requirements

Doctoral students at Washington University must complete a department-defined Mentored Experience. The Mentored Experience Requirement is a doctoral degree milestone that is notated on the student's transcript when complete. Each department has an established Mentored Experience Implementation Plan in which the number of units that a student must earn through Mentored Teaching Experience(s) and/or Mentored Professional Experience(s) is defined. The Mentored Experience Implementation Plans outline how doctoral students within the discipline will be mentored to achieve competencies in teaching at basic and advanced levels. Some departments may elect to include Mentored Professional Experiences as an avenue for completing some units of the Mentored Experience Requirement. Doctoral students will enroll in LGS 6XXX Mentored Teaching Experience or LGS 7020 Mentored Professional Experience to signify their progression toward completing the overall Mentored Experience Requirement for the degree.

The Doctoral Dissertation

A Research Advisory Committee (RAC) must be created no later than the end of the student's third year; departments may set shorter timelines (e.g., by the end of the student's second year) for this requirement. As evidence of the mastery of a specific field of knowledge and of the capacity for original scholarly work, each candidate must complete a dissertation that is approved by their RAC.

A Title, Scope & Procedure Form for the dissertation must be signed by the committee members and by the program chair. It must be submitted to the Office of Graduate Studies, Arts & Sciences, at least 6 months before the degree is expected to be conferred or before beginning the fifth year of full-time enrollment, whichever is earlier.

A Doctoral Dissertation Guide & Template that give instructions regarding the format of the dissertation are available on the website of the Office of Graduate Studies, Arts & Sciences. Both should be read carefully at every stage of dissertation preparation.

The Office of Graduate Studies, Arts & Sciences, requires each student to make the full text of the dissertation available to the committee members for their review at least 1 week before the defense. Most degree programs require 2 or more weeks for the review period; students should check with their faculty.

The Dissertation Defense

Approval of the written dissertation by the RAC is necessary before the student can orally defend their dissertation. The Dissertation Defense Committee that observes and examines the student's defense consists of at least five members, who normally meet these criteria:

- Three of the five must be full-time Washington University faculty members or, for programs offered by Washington University-affiliated partners, full-time members of a Washington University-affiliated partner institution who are authorized to supervise PhD students and who have appropriate expertise in the proposed field of study; one of these three must be the PhD student's primary thesis advisor, and one may be a member of the emeritus faculty. A fourth member may come from inside or outside the student's program. The fifth member must be from outside the student's program; this fifth member may be a Washington University research professor or lecturer, a professor from another university, or a scholar from the private sector or government who holds a doctorate and maintains an active research program.
- Three of the five normally come from the student's degree program; at least one of the five must not.

All committees must be approved by the Office of Graduate Studies, Arts & Sciences, regardless of whether they meet the normal criteria.

The committee is appointed by the Office of Graduate Studies, Arts & Sciences, upon the request of the degree program. The student is responsible for making the full text of the dissertation accessible to their committee members for their review in advance of the defense. Faculty and graduate students who are interested in the subject of the dissertation are normally welcome to attend all or part of the defense but may ask questions only at the discretion of the committee members. Although there is some variation among degree programs, the defense ordinarily focuses on the dissertation itself and its relation to the student's field of expertise.

The dissertation committee should include at least one faculty member representing Comparative Literature. The dissertation itself should, in its theoretical grounding, approach, transnational or transcultural scope, and/or interdisciplinarity, speak to the field of Comparative Literature as currently constituted.

Submission of the Dissertation

After the defense, the student must submit an electronic copy of the dissertation online to the Office of Graduate Studies, Arts & Sciences. The submission website requires students to choose among publishing and copyrighting services offered by ProQuest's ETD Administrator. The degree program is responsible for delivering the final approval form, signed by the committee members at the defense and then by the program chair or director, to the Office of Graduate Studies, Arts & Sciences. Students who defend their dissertations successfully have not yet completed their PhD requirements; they finish earning their degree only when their dissertation submission has been accepted by the Office of Graduate Studies, Arts & Sciences.

Master's Degree Along the Way

It is assumed that all entering graduate students are aiming for the PhD; the English department does not admit students aiming for a terminal AM degree. The AM is awarded during the course of study when a student has completed 36 credit units, usually at the end of the second year. To satisfy the Office of Graduate Studies, Arts & Sciences, requirement of demonstrated excellence, candidates for the AM may also be asked to submit a graded seminar essay (or the equivalent) for review by the English Graduate Committee.

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