

**AY 2026 - 2027  
Department of English  
Doctoral Student Handbook**

**Degree Programs Covered by This Handbook:**

**Ph.D. in Computational Cultural Studies**

**Ph.D. in Literary & Cultural Studies**

**Ph.D. in Rhetoric**

# Table of Contents

|                                                                                |           |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------|
| <b>Section 1: Welcome &amp; Introduction.....</b>                              | <b>1</b>  |
| <b>Section 2: Department of English Vision, Mission, and Values.....</b>       | <b>1</b>  |
| <b>SECTION 3: Department Personnel.....</b>                                    | <b>2</b>  |
| <b>SECTION 4: Email Professionalism.....</b>                                   | <b>3</b>  |
| <b>SECTION 5: Department Resources.....</b>                                    | <b>3</b>  |
| <b>SECTION 6: Advising.....</b>                                                | <b>3</b>  |
| 6.1 Advisor Assignments & Selection.....                                       | 3         |
| 6.2 First Year Reviews.....                                                    | 4         |
| 6.3 The Annual Review after the First Year.....                                | 5         |
| 6.3.1 Student Input.....                                                       | 6         |
| 6.3.2 Faculty Input.....                                                       | 6         |
| 6.3.3 Outcome.....                                                             | 6         |
| 6.4 Guidance for Post-Coursework Semester Assessments.....                     | 6         |
| 6.4.3 Process.....                                                             | 7         |
| 6.4.3.1 Early semester.....                                                    | 7         |
| 6.4.3.2 Mid semester.....                                                      | 7         |
| 6.4.3.3 End of Semester.....                                                   | 7         |
| 6.4.4 Assessment Heuristic.....                                                | 8         |
| 6.5 Doctoral Advising and Mentoring Expectations.....                          | 9         |
| 6.5.1 Communication & Meetings.....                                            | 9         |
| 6.5.2 Meeting Programmatic Milestones.....                                     | 9         |
| 6.5.3 Exam and Dissertation Committee Formation and Function.....              | 10        |
| 6.5.4 Funding.....                                                             | 10        |
| 6.5.5 Feedback.....                                                            | 10        |
| 6.5.6 Professional Skills and Goals.....                                       | 11        |
| 6.5.7 Teaching.....                                                            | 11        |
| 6.6 Expectations of Faculty Working with Doctoral Students.....                | 11        |
| 6.7 Individual Development Plan (IDP).....                                     | 12        |
| 6.8 Review/Redress of Academic Issues.....                                     | 12        |
| 6.8.1 Academic Concerns and General Grievances.....                            | 12        |
| 6.8.2 Appeals of Final Grades.....                                             | 13        |
| 6.8.3 Academic Concerns Raised by Faculty and Appeals of Academic Actions..... | 13        |
| <b>SECTION 7: Doctoral Degree Requirements.....</b>                            | <b>14</b> |
| 7.1 Registration Process.....                                                  | 14        |
| 7.2 Required Units for Degree Attainment.....                                  | 14        |
| 7.3 Cross-Registration and Transfer Credits.....                               | 14        |

|                                                                                      |           |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------|
| 7.3.1 Cross-registration Courses.....                                                | 14        |
| 7.3.2 Transfer Courses.....                                                          | 15        |
| 7.3.3 Non-degree Students.....                                                       | 15        |
| 7.4 Exemption of Program Requirements.....                                           | 15        |
| 7.4.1 General Information.....                                                       | 15        |
| 7.4.2 Deadline.....                                                                  | 15        |
| 7.4.3 Procedure.....                                                                 | 16        |
| 7.4.4 Petition.....                                                                  | 16        |
| 7.5 Teaching Requirements/Opportunities.....                                         | 16        |
| 7.5.1 Eligibility for Classroom Teaching in the Writing & Communication Program..... | 16        |
| 7.5.2 Priority in Teaching Assignments.....                                          | 17        |
| 7.5.3 Satisfactory Teaching and Teaching Probation.....                              | 18        |
| 7.5.3.1 Evidence of Satisfactory Teaching.....                                       | 18        |
| 7.5.3.2 Options for Student Evaluations of Teaching.....                             | 18        |
| 7.5.3.3 Criteria for Satisfactory Teaching.....                                      | 19        |
| 7.5.3.4 Consequences of Failure to Demonstrate Satisfactory Teaching.....            | 20        |
| 7.5.3.5 Teaching probation.....                                                      | 20        |
| 7.5.3.6 Termination of teaching.....                                                 | 20        |
| 7.5.4 Relationship of Teaching to Stipends and Other Benefits.....                   | 21        |
| 7.5.4.1 Contingency of stipend and benefits on teaching.....                         | 21        |
| 7.5.4.2 Choosing not to teach.....                                                   | 21        |
| 7.5.4.3 Probation, Suspension.....                                                   | 21        |
| 7.5.4.4 Employment Eligibility Verification.....                                     | 21        |
| 7.5.5 English Proficiency.....                                                       | 22        |
| 7.6 Time to Degree.....                                                              | 22        |
| 7.7 Doctoral Degree Completion and Certification.....                                | 23        |
| 7.7.1 Standard Degree Requirements & Degree Certification.....                       | 23        |
| 7.7.2 Early Completion.....                                                          | 23        |
| 7.7.3 Extended or Longer-than-Standard Completion.....                               | 23        |
| 7.7.4 Financial aid and student account.....                                         | 23        |
| 7.7.5 International students.....                                                    | 24        |
| <b>SECTION 8: Dissertation Preparation &amp; Requirements.....</b>                   | <b>24</b> |
| 8.1 PhD Qualifying Exam Requirement.....                                             | 24        |
| 8.1.1 CCS & LCS Qualifying Exam.....                                                 | 24        |
| 8.1.1.1 Exam Preparation.....                                                        | 24        |
| 8.1.1.2 Exam Scheduling.....                                                         | 24        |
| 8.1.1.3 Exam Documents.....                                                          | 25        |
| 8.1.1.4 Exam Committee.....                                                          | 26        |
| 8.1.1.5 Approval of Exam Proposals.....                                              | 26        |

|                                                                            |    |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------|----|
| 8.1.1.6 Format of the Exam.....                                            | 26 |
| 8.1.1.7 Evaluation of the Exam.....                                        | 27 |
| 8.1.1.8 Evaluation Criteria.....                                           | 27 |
| 8.1.2 Rhetoric Qualifying Exam.....                                        | 27 |
| 8.1.2.1 Directed Reading.....                                              | 27 |
| 8.1.2.2 Exam Scheduling.....                                               | 28 |
| 8.1.2.3 Exam Committee.....                                                | 28 |
| 8.1.2.4 The Exams.....                                                     | 28 |
| 8.1.2.5 Evaluation.....                                                    | 29 |
| 8.1.2.6 Outcomes.....                                                      | 29 |
| 8.1.2.7 Summer Qualifying Exams.....                                       | 29 |
| 8.2 PhD Criteria for Advancement to Candidacy.....                         | 30 |
| 8.2.1 Candidacy.....                                                       | 30 |
| 8.2.2 All But Dissertation (ABD) Status.....                               | 30 |
| 8.2.3 In Absentia (ABS) Status.....                                        | 30 |
| 8.2.3.1 Academic Progress.....                                             | 30 |
| 8.2.3.2 Returning from ABS.....                                            | 31 |
| 8.2.3.3 International Student Eligibility.....                             | 31 |
| 8.3 PhD Dissertation.....                                                  | 31 |
| 8.3.1 Dissertation Committee Membership.....                               | 31 |
| 8.3.1.1 Committee Members.....                                             | 31 |
| 8.3.1.2 Committee Chair.....                                               | 31 |
| 8.3.1.3 Committee Member Not from CMU.....                                 | 32 |
| 8.3.2 Dissertation Prospectus Development and Submission.....              | 32 |
| 8.3.2.1 Submission Procedure.....                                          | 32 |
| 8.3.2.2 Deadline for Submitting Prospectus.....                            | 32 |
| 8.3.2.3 Acceptance of the Prospectus.....                                  | 32 |
| 8.3.2.4 Evaluation Procedure.....                                          | 33 |
| 8.3.2.5 IRB Approval.....                                                  | 33 |
| 8.3.2.6 Contents of Prospectus.....                                        | 33 |
| 8.3.2.7 Length of Prospectus.....                                          | 34 |
| 8.3.2.8 Formatting and Citation Style for Prospectus and Dissertation..... | 34 |
| 8.3.3 Rhetoric Research Tool Requirement.....                              | 34 |
| 8.3.3.1 Demonstrating Competency in a Foreign Language.....                | 35 |
| 8.3.3.2 Departmental Foreign Language Competency Exam for Rhetoric.....    | 35 |
| 8.3.3.3 Introductory and Intermediate Courses in a Natural Language.....   | 35 |
| 8.3.4 Dissertation Defense.....                                            | 36 |
| 8.3.4.1 Scheduling.....                                                    | 36 |
| 8.3.4.2 Public Announcement.....                                           | 37 |

|                                                                                        |           |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------|
| 8.3.4.3 Time Allocation.....                                                           | 37        |
| 8.3.5 Approval of the Defense and Dissertation.....                                    | 37        |
| 8.3.5.1 Defense Evaluation.....                                                        | 37        |
| 8.3.5.2 Final Revisions.....                                                           | 37        |
| 8.3.5.3 Final Approval.....                                                            | 38        |
| 8.3.5.4 Access to Dissertations.....                                                   | 38        |
| <b>SECTION 9: Department Policies &amp; Protocols.....</b>                             | <b>38</b> |
| 9.1 Cross-Listed Courses.....                                                          | 38        |
| 9.2 Course Audits.....                                                                 | 38        |
| 9.3 Withdrawing from a Course.....                                                     | 39        |
| 9.4 New Policies / “Grandfather” Policy.....                                           | 39        |
| 9.5 Requesting Letters of Recommendation.....                                          | 39        |
| <b>SECTION 10: Grading &amp; Evaluation.....</b>                                       | <b>39</b> |
| 10.1 Incomplete (“I”) Grade Policy.....                                                | 39        |
| 10.1.1 University Policy on Incomplete Grades.....                                     | 39        |
| 10.1.2 Department of English Guidelines for Assigning an Incomplete Grade.....         | 40        |
| 10.2 Independent Studies.....                                                          | 41        |
| 10.3 Academic Good Standing Policy.....                                                | 42        |
| 10.3.1 Doctoral students after coursework.....                                         | 42        |
| 10.3.2 Academic Probation.....                                                         | 43        |
| 10.3.3 Part-time and ABS Students.....                                                 | 44        |
| 10.3.3.1 Part-time Students.....                                                       | 44        |
| 10.3.3.2 Students in ABS (in absentia) status.....                                     | 44        |
| <b>SECTION 11: Funding Extension Request in Case of Catastrophic Life Event.....</b>   | <b>44</b> |
| 11.1 Policy Statement: Catastrophic Life Event Request for Additional PhD Funding..... | 44        |
| 11.2 Applicability.....                                                                | 45        |
| 11.3 Definition of “Catastrophic Life Event” .....                                     | 45        |
| 11.4 Review and Adjudication.....                                                      | 45        |
| <b>Appendix A.....</b>                                                                 | <b>45</b> |
| Graduate Mentor Program.....                                                           | 45        |
| Key Offices for Graduate Student Support.....                                          | 46        |
| Key Offices for Academic & Research Support.....                                       | 51        |
| Key Offices for Health, Wellness & Safety.....                                         | 54        |

## Section 1: Welcome & Introduction

Welcome to the Department of English at Carnegie Mellon University!

This Handbook describes the department's degree requirements and how your progress through the program will be assessed. The Handbook also covers other departmental procedures and provides a list of resources you may find useful. This is the first place to turn when questions arise about departmental expectations and how to meet them. Your first step as a student here should be to become familiar with the requirements and procedures that govern your degree program.

While this handbook is specific to your academic experience in the Department of English, it is just one element of the Graduate Student Handbook Suite. There are a couple of other resources within the suite that you should consult when needed:

- [The University-Wide Graduate Student Handbook](#) (Office of Graduate & Postdoctoral Affairs)
- [The Carnegie Mellon Student Handbook](#)

## Section 2: Department of English Vision, Mission, and Values

### 2.1 Vision

The Department of English will advance the study and practice of writing, language, literature, rhetoric, film and media, and culture through rigorous, inventive, interdisciplinary, and publicly engaged humanistic research and education.

### 2.2 Mission

To develop deep disciplinary knowledge, pursue significant questions about language, culture, history, technology, and public life, and produce original, methodologically sound research.

To combine historical, theoretical, interpretive, empirical, qualitative, quantitative, digital, computational, and practice-based approaches as appropriate to particular research questions and fields of study.

To use writing and communication as modes of inquiry, reflection, and knowledge-making, and to communicate clearly, persuasively, ethically, and effectively across audiences and contexts.

To teach thoughtfully, collaborate across disciplines and communities, and contribute through scholarship, leadership, and engaged citizenship in academic, cultural, civic, nonprofit, technological, and professional settings.

### 2.3 Values

**Intellectual rigor and curiosity**, reflected in careful reading, deep and patient thinking, sustained inquiry, precise argument, appropriate use of evidence, and engagement with significant questions about language, culture, history, technology, and public life.

**Methodological pluralism**, reflected in our recognition that consequential questions often require multiple forms of inquiry. Students learn to select, combine, and critically evaluate methods appropriate to their research questions and professional goals.

**Clear, persuasive, and ethical communication**, reflected in our treatment of writing—both process and product—and communication as forms of inquiry and intellectual work. We value attention to audience, purpose, evidence, form, accessibility, and the responsible use of information and emerging technologies.

**Historical and cultural understanding**, reflected in our examination of texts, media, technologies, and rhetorical practices in relation to the social, political, economic, material, and cultural conditions in which they are produced, circulated, and interpreted, and in our attention to the continuing interaction between humanistic traditions and technological change.

**Creative and critical inquiry**, reflected in our encouragement of intellectual experimentation, openness to new ideas, and the exploration of emerging objects, media, methods, and forms of expression.

**Collaboration and mentorship**, reflected in close advising, collegial exchange, constructive feedback, and collaborative learning within small graduate communities and across disciplinary and institutional boundaries.

**Access, respect, and community**, reflected in shared responsibility for an academic environment in which community members are treated with dignity, encounter a meaningful range of perspectives, participate in respectful intellectual exchange, and have opportunities to learn and thrive.

**Professional development, engaged citizenship, and public contribution**, reflected in our preparation of students to translate advanced humanistic knowledge into effective teaching, scholarship, communication, leadership, and service in academic and nonacademic settings.

### **SECTION 3: Department Personnel**

[Chris Warren](#) is the Department Head for the Department of English. His primary role is to provide strong academic leadership. He leads, manages, and develops the implementation of strategic policies and works toward the academic advancement of the department.

[Doug Coulson](#) is the Director of Graduate Studies, which leads our master's and doctoral programs, collaborating with the Head, relevant Program Directors, and staff. He is the final arbiter on academic questions and is available for questions and guidance.

[John Oddo](#) is the Director of the Rhetoric Program. He is available for questions and guidance specific to the Rhetoric program.

[Stephen Wittek](#) is the Director of the Computational Cultural Studies and Literary and Cultural Studies Programs. He is available for questions and guidance specific to the CCS and LCS programs.

[Jessica Bittel](#) is the Director of Academic Affairs. She provides academic and general support to all graduate students while overseeing the academic program management of the Department of English's graduate programs.

[Laura Donaldson](#) is the Associate Director of Academic Affairs. She registers all graduate students for courses and supports the Director of Academic Affairs.

[Beryl Omune](#) is the Business Administrator. She is a key resource for graduate students with questions about funding and finances.

[Eyona Bivins](#) is the Department of English Senior Administrative Coordinator & Technology Coordinator. She is responsible for office key assignments, graduate student reimbursements, graduate space and printers, and technology.

## **SECTION 4: Email Professionalism**

All email correspondence must reflect professional standards. Students are expected to:

- Phrase requests politely and respectfully.
- Proofread emails for clarity, grammar, and spelling.
- Demonstrate consideration for recipients' time and responsibilities.

While first names may be used in addressing faculty and staff where appropriate, students should maintain professional etiquette in all communications. This policy applies to all correspondence—including academic inquiries, administrative business, and advising. Practicing effective email habits is essential for academic and professional success. For guidance on writing professional emails, students are encouraged to consult institutional resources or instructional materials such as [this video on writing professional and effective emails](#).

## **SECTION 5: Department Resources**

The department's [Graduate Student Resources](#) page serves as a central directory for academic, administrative, financial, professional, event, and technology-related support. The page itself and most linked Google documents and spreadsheets found there require signing in with a CMU email account. Questions or suggested additions should be directed to the Director of Academic Affairs.

## **SECTION 6: Advising**

### **6.1 Advisor Assignments & Selection**

Advising is an important part of graduate education in the Department of English. Doctoral students' initial advisor is the Program Director of CCS, LCS, or Rhetoric, as appropriate. No later than a student's third semester in the program (or the equivalent for part-time students), the student will select and recruit a Qualifying Exam Committee chair. This person will then be the student's advisor. If a student

should decide to work with a different Dissertation Committee chair, that person would then become their advisor.

Students are highly encouraged to meet with their advisor every semester, especially prior to course registration. The Director of Graduate Studies and other faculty members are also available for advising, but a student's faculty advisor is their official advisor during the course of their program.

Students are encouraged to seek advice and mentorship from other faculty members as well. The Director of Graduate Studies, Program Directors, and other members of the faculty are available for additional guidance, but the assigned advisor remains the student's official academic advisor.

Note: In addition to a student's faculty advisors, the Director of Academic Affairs and the Assistant Director of Academic Affairs are listed as students' secondary advisors in the SIO portal. The Director of Academic Affairs and the Associate Director of Academic Affairs serve as advisors who provide practical, administrative, and professional support to help students navigate the institutional and bureaucratic aspects of graduate education. This can include assisting with university procedures and paperwork, identifying resources, troubleshooting administrative obstacles, and facilitating communication with relevant offices or personnel.

## 6.2 First Year Reviews

The first-year review for doctoral students takes place in two stages, one at the end of the first semester and the other at the end of the second semester. These reviews are intended to help the student plan a focused course of study and to help faculty evaluate the student's performance with an eye to judging whether or not the student should continue in the program after the first year.

**Student Input:** With the assistance of their advisor, the student will write and submit a brief statement (250-500 words) that describes their:

- areas of interest for coursework and research specialization
- plans for language/research tool requirement

This statement will be considered by the program faculty and will be used by both the student and their advisor to plan future coursework and possible projects. It should be seen as a planning document rather than a binding contract.

The fall semester statement and teaching materials are due by **the last day of classes**. The spring semester statement and teaching materials are due by **the last day of classes**.

**Faculty Input:** Each faculty member with whom the student has studied and each faculty member who has supervised the student's research or teaching will be asked to comment in writing on the following:

- How would they characterize the student's performance (strengths and weaknesses) in the course they took with them (or in research/teaching that person did under their supervision)?
- Should the student continue in this graduate program? Please explain.

These forms must be completed by faculty by **the last day of classes** for the fall semester review and **the last day of classes** for the spring semester review.

#### **Meetings:**

- **Program Faculty.** All statements and evaluation forms go to the faculty members of the student's program for review. The program faculty meet to evaluate the student on the basis of the faculty evaluation forms referred to above as well as the student's completion of coursework, grades in coursework, teaching performance, and the student's statement.
- **Student and advisor.** After the program faculty meeting, the Program Director and another faculty member from the student's program meet with the student to discuss the student's review.

The Faculty meeting about the fall semester review will be held during the first week of classes of the spring semester. The Student-Advisor meeting about the fall semester review will be held as soon as possible thereafter. Spring review meetings will be held in May.

#### **Outcomes:**

Evaluations are based on grades, classroom performance, teaching, assessment of a student's potential to do doctoral-level research, overall focus, and fit with the program. A negative assessment could be based on any or a combination of these things. A negative evaluation in the fall semester review will result in the student being placed on probationary status for the spring semester. The student and their advisor will work out a plan for attempting to remedy the problems that led to the negative Fall-semester review.

*For students placed on probationary status after the fall semester review, a second negative evaluation in the spring review will result in the student being dropped from the program.*

### **6.3 The Annual Review after the First Year**

After the first year, doctoral students will be reviewed annually to encourage them to make satisfactory progress through the program and to help them deal with any difficulties that they are encountering. Annual reviews will also provide faculty with evidence about students' academic standing and teaching performance. **NOTE:** Doctoral students who are on leave of absence do not need to submit a review.

### **6.3.1 Student Input**

Each doctoral student must submit an annual review report every year **by the last day of classes of the spring semester**.

### **6.3.2 Faculty Input**

The faculty of the program in which the student is enrolled will be expected to meet within ten days of the final day of classes. Faculty will not provide written input but will be asked to comment at the meeting on the progress of students with whom they work. The student's Program Director will consult with the Director of Writing & Communication and other teaching observations regarding the student's teaching.

### **6.3.3 Outcome**

No more than a week after the program faculty has conducted the annual review, students will be informed by their advisor (by letter or email) whether their progress has been judged satisfactory and any other relevant information discussed in their review. Annual reviews and faculty responses will also be placed in students' files. Students whose progress is found to be unsatisfactory according to the "Good Standing" policy will be placed on academic probation and will be required to meet with their advisors sometime before the date on which final grades are due for the semester. (Students found to be having more minor difficulties, which do not merit probation, may also be asked to meet with their advisors sometime before the date on which final grades are due for the semester.) The scheduling of these meetings will normally be the responsibility of the advisor.

## **6.4 Guidance for Post-Coursework Semester Assessments**

### **6.4.1 Background**

Faculty committee chairs who are the primary advisors of doctoral students in the qualifying exam, prospectus, and/or dissertation stages of their matriculation are responsible for assigning the students whom they are advising a letter grade each semester of the academic year (fall and spring).

### **6.4.2 Assessment Basics**

Post-coursework doctoral students are assessed according to the plan of work they co-develop with their primary faculty advisor. The Academic Good Standing policy explains, "Progress will normally be gauged by the student's adherence to a plan for submitting work that the student creates with the dissertation committee and submits to the Director of Academic Affairs."

Students out of coursework will prepare and file a plan of work for each semester of the academic year (fall and spring). (See "Process" below.) To be considered in "good standing," students should have met the benchmarks laid out in their plan of work for the semester. A student judged to be in "good

standing” will be awarded a grade of B (3.0) or higher. The CMU Graduate Student Handbook explains that doctoral students must “maintain a B average (QPA of 3.00) for each semester and cumulatively” to remain in good academic standing. A student judged not to be in “good standing” will be awarded a grade below B (3.0) and placed on academic probation.

### **6.4.3 Process**

#### **6.4.3.1 Early semester**

Students out of coursework will:

- Draft a plan of work for the semester,
- Meet with their primary faculty advisor in the first two weeks of the semester to discuss and make necessary revisions to their plan of work,
- Upload their plan of work to their folder on Box by Monday of the third week of classes. Committee members, Program Directors, and the Director of Academic Affairs will have access to the uploaded plan of work. The Director of Academic Affairs will check to make sure all graduate students’ plans of work are submitted by the deadline.

#### **6.4.3.2 Mid semester**

Primary faculty advisors and the students they are advising will meet before the mid-semester break to check students’ progress toward meeting the benchmarks laid out in their plan of work. During this discussion, faculty advisors should share with students their mid-term grade and their rationale for assigning it.

If a student’s benchmarks have changed, the student in consultation with their primary faculty advisor can revise their benchmarks in the plan of work. Students’ who have revised their plan of work will upload it to their Box folder by Monday of the week following the mid-semester break. No additional changes to the plan of work can be made following the upload deadline. A student who has uploaded a revised plan of work will notify their Program Director and the Director of Academic Affairs by email that a revised plan of work has been submitted.

#### **6.4.3.3 End of Semester**

Students will submit the work completed over the semester to their primary faculty advisor one week before the last day of classes. Faculty advisors will review the material submitted by their advisees’ and compare it to their plans of work. Faculty advisors will determine whether the students they are advising have adequately met their benchmarks for the semester. (See “Assessment Heuristic” below)

In making this determination, faculty advisors can consider circumstances which may have arisen after the semester's mid term which might have adversely affected a student's progress toward meeting their benchmarks.

Faculty advisors will communicate to the students they are advising their assessment of their progress along with rationales for the grade they have assigned. (See "Assessment Heuristic" below.) Students who faculty advisors adjudge not to be in academic good standing will be discussed at the final program meeting of each semester (fall and spring). The progress of all doctoral students will be discussed at the end of the academic year. Faculty advisors will submit their final grades by the deadline assigned by the university.

#### **6.4.4 Assessment Heuristic**

The suggestions which follow are heuristic. They are designed to offer recommendations rather than to outline requirements for dissertation completion progress.

Progress toward dissertation completion is generally assessed in terms of the quantity and quality of material produced from various kinds of activities. These activities include, but are not necessarily limited to:

- Writing chapters
- Gathering data
- Building data sets
- Compiling research notes
- Designing methods for analysis

Because chapter writing is a core activity to dissertation completion, this heuristic focuses on this activity.

##### **Quantity:**

According to the Academic Good Standing policy, a standard quantitative benchmark for identifying good progress is the completion of one dissertation chapter in a semester: "Progress will normally be gauged by the student's adherence to a plan for submitting work that the student creates with the dissertation committee and submits to the Director of Academic Affairs.... This schedule will normally require that the student produces at least a complete draft of one chapter per semester."

The degree to which a dissertation chapter is complete, therefore, can be used as a criterion for assessment. Dissertation chapters average 7,500 to 10,000 words (~30-40 double-spaced pages). Full dissertations average between 150 - 250 pages.

Quantitative good progress doesn't have to be solely based on the completion of a chapter. Partial chapter completion during a semester can be considered in conjunction with production of other kinds of materials related to dissertation completion like a data set, research notes, etc. to constitute good progress.

### **Quality:**

Faculty advisors make assessments of the qualitative dimensions of writing based on their expertise. There are a variety of ways to assess the quality of written chapters which include, but are not necessarily limited to, the presence of:

- An articulated, novel, and sustained argument
- Relevant and sufficient evidence from credible data and recognized authorities
- Clear and engaging prose with scrupulous attention to grammar, spelling, punctuation, etc.
- Consistent and appropriate use of an academic style for citations, footnotes, works cited, etc.
- Revisions of content and style based on advisor feedback

A chapter may be complete, but may not be considered a reasonable sign of good progress because the writing is judged to be of low quality.

## **6.5 Doctoral Advising and Mentoring Expectations**

### **6.5.1 Communication & Meetings**

Advisors should communicate the following to advisees:

- The best way to contact them (preferably school email address).
- The acceptable formats for meeting (e.g., in person, on campus, remote).
- The expectations for what an appropriate timeframe would be to receive a response to professional questions, feedback on writing, letters of recommendation, and general communication.
- Times the advisor is unavailable.
- Plans for regular meetings. (The frequency of and the agenda for these meetings should be determined in advance by both advisor and advisee.)
- Agreed upon "next steps" after each advising/mentorship meeting.

### **6.5.2 Meeting Programmatic Milestones**

Advisors and advisees should review programmatic milestones such as coursework, qualifying exams, committee creation, the prospectus, dissertation writing, etc.

Advisors and advisees should discuss and set revisable goals for meeting programmatic milestones like dissertation defense and graduation dates.

Advisees and advisors should work with the Director of Academic Affairs to keep track of programmatic milestones.

### **6.5.3 Exam and Dissertation Committee Formation and Function**

Advisors serving as committee chairs should assist advisees with identifying potential committee members.

Dissertation committees should meet once during the academic year to discuss advisee progress.

If the advisee wishes to change their committee, then the chair and the advisee will collaborate to determine how changes should be made.

If the advisee wishes to change their committee chair, they should consult with their Program Director and the Director of Graduate Studies to choose another chair. Advisees have the right to change their committee chair without prejudice or retaliation.

Advisors serving as committee chairs should aid advisees in resolving any conflicts with committee members that might arise. If the conflict involves the committee chair, then the advisee should consult the Director of Graduate Studies and Department Head, who will help mediate the situation with a neutral third party.

### **6.5.4 Funding**

Advisors and advisees should discuss both internal and external funding opportunities (fellowships, grants, etc.). Funding conversations should be tied into programmatic milestones and timelines. CMU English's external funding database may be consulted [here](#). Students considering changing status to *In Absentia* (ABS) should review the funding implications detailed [here](#).

Advisors should provide letters of support for funding opportunities when they are requested by the advisee.

### **6.5.5 Feedback**

Advisors serving as committee chairs and their advisees should agree upon the form and frequency of feedback advisees will receive on their overall progress during the pre-dissertation (qualifying exam and prospectus) and dissertation process (drafting, editing, and revising chapters) as well as on other professional development activities.

Advisees should expect extensive feedback on milestone documents (qualifying exam, prospectus, and dissertation chapters), though the form of the feedback will depend on the nature of the deliverable.

Advisors serving as committee chairs and their advisees should determine when and in what order advisees will circulate their work to the chair and/or other committee members as well as how much time the chair and committee members have to provide feedback.

Advisors serving as committee chairs and their advisees should discuss how to manage contradictory feedback from committee members. If a conflict arises, the committee will meet to figure out a compromise to ensure that the advisee's progress toward programmatic milestones is not impeded.

### **6.5.6 Professional Skills and Goals**

Advisors and advisees should meet at the beginning of each academic year to identify the skills and abilities the advisees will focus on developing during the upcoming year. These could include, but are not limited to, writing, teaching, researching, mentoring, developing secondary language proficiency, and additional training experiences such as workshops or internships.

Advisors and advisees should identify advisees' short or long-term professional goals (e.g., job market, publications, fellowships, etc.), and should discuss any suggested or required steps, resources, and/or training necessary to accomplish these goals.

Advisors and advisees should discuss professional development opportunities within the department beyond required milestones and teaching. (e.g., graduate student representative roles, RA and TA positions, awards, teaching additional courses, etc.).

Advisors and advisees should discuss professional conferences and workshops. Advisors should help their advisees identify conferences, caucuses, research fora, and other professional organizations that will help advance the advisee's scholarship and career development.

Advisors should assist advisees with identifying publishable materials and potential venues for publication and presentation that align with the advisee's professional goals.

Advisors should discuss with their advisees co-authorship and other collaborative work processes and products (e.g. orders of authorship, responsibilities in collaborations).

### **6.5.7 Teaching**

Advisees, particularly those in their third year or later in the program, should invite their advisors for teaching observations. These observations are not meant to be evaluative, but rather to encourage a constructive and supportive conversation about teaching practices and strategies.

The goal of these observations is to aid the advisee in their professional development and prepare the advisor to provide feedback on the advisee's teaching in letters of recommendation and support for advice giving on the job market.

Advisors should help their advisees plan a feasible timeline for teaching upper-level courses and assist them in identifying relevant topics that align with their research interests and professional objectives.

## **6.6 Expectations of Faculty Working with Doctoral Students**

At all stages, doctoral students should be able to expect that faculty members will read and comment on their work (draft exam petitions, prospectuses, dissertation chapters, etc.) within two to three weeks. If there are unavoidable exceptions, the faculty members must make the students aware of the reasons for exceptions, and the student and the faculty member should agree on a response deadline. If the student experiences repeated difficulty in getting prompt responses to work, the student should

talk to the relevant Program Director or ask another faculty member to do so. If the problem lies with the Program Director, the student should talk to another faculty member or the Department Head.

## **6.7 Individual Development Plan (IDP)**

Individual Development Plans (IDPs) are meant to promote professional and personal growth by formally documenting goals and facilitating dialogue, collaboration, and accountability between advisors and advisees. CMU has developed a set of templates that can be used by doctoral students and their advisors to create an IDP. The IDP templates can be found here:

<https://www.cmu.edu/graduate/resources/index.html>

## **6.8 Review/Redress of Academic Issues**

The Department of English is committed to addressing academic concerns promptly and fairly. The appropriate process depends upon the nature of the concern. Whenever possible and appropriate, students should first seek an informal resolution within the department. University procedures govern when a concern cannot be resolved informally or when a student seeks formal review of a departmental decision.

### **6.8.1 Academic Concerns and General Grievances**

A student with an academic concern should ordinarily begin by discussing it with the faculty or staff member directly involved. When the matter concerns a course, this will normally be the course instructor; when it concerns the student's program of study or progress toward the degree, the student should normally begin with the academic advisor or Program Director.

If the concern cannot be resolved at that level, or if the student is uncomfortable raising the concern with the person directly involved, the student may seek assistance from the Program Director, the Director of Graduate Studies, or, as appropriate, the Department Head. Students are not required to pursue a concern through an individual who is the subject of that concern.

For a grievance that is not governed by another specific university procedure, a student who has been unable to obtain an informal resolution may submit a formal written grievance to the Department Head. The Department Head, Program Director if designated by the Department Head, or an appropriate departmental committee will review the matter and provide a written decision.

A student who wishes to appeal the resulting departmental decision may submit a formal written appeal to the Dean of Dietrich College within seven calendar days after receiving written notice of the departmental decision. The Dean may conduct the review or delegate review to an Associate Dean, the College Council, or another appropriate committee. A student who wishes to appeal the Dean's decision may submit a formal written appeal to the Provost within seven calendar days after receiving that decision. The Provost's decision is final.

### **6.8.2 Appeals of Final Grades**

Appeals of final course grades follow a [separate university procedure](#). Final grades are subject to appeal only in exceptional circumstances and only with the approval of the instructor and the department, unit, or program, principally when the grade resulted from a manifest error (e.g. an arithmetic error in computing a grade or an oversight in grading a submitted assignment or exam component) or when the faculty or staff member assigning the grade violated a university policy.

A student should first discuss the matter informally with the instructor or other faculty or staff member responsible for the course. If the concern is not resolved, the student may submit a formal written appeal, with appropriate documentation, to the head of the department in which the course was offered. Grade appeals should be initiated as soon as possible and no later than one year after the final grade was issued. If the student is dissatisfied with the departmental decision, the student may submit a formal written appeal to the dean of the college in which the course was offered within seven calendar days. The dean's decision in a final-grade appeal is final.

### **6.8.3 Academic Concerns Raised by Faculty and Appeals of Academic Actions**

Faculty may also raise concerns about a graduate student's academic performance or progress toward the degree. Such concerns are addressed through the department's academic good-standing and review procedures.

For master's students, academic performance that does not meet the standards for good standing is reviewed by the appropriate program faculty. The advisor and/or Program Director should discuss the concern with the student and, when remediation is possible, identify the steps the student should take to return to satisfactory academic standing. Program-specific policies concerning academic probation and dismissal continue to apply.

Any formal academic action—including academic probation, academic suspension, or dismissal from a program—will be communicated to the student in writing. Students are encouraged to seek informal resolution of concerns about an academic action within the department before filing a formal appeal.

Under university policy, a student who wishes formally to appeal an academic action must submit a written appeal, with appropriate documentation, to the Dean of Dietrich College within seven calendar days after receiving written notice of the action. The dean may review the appeal or delegate review to another individual or committee and will issue a written decision. A student who wishes to appeal the dean's decision may submit a formal written appeal to the Provost within fourteen calendar days after receiving the dean's decision. The Provost's decision is final.

These procedures do not replace separate university procedures governing matters such as academic-integrity violations, discriminatory or sexual misconduct, research misconduct, or other matters governed by specific University policies.

Graduate students should consult the [Summary of Graduate Student Appeal and Grievance Procedures](#) maintained by the Office of Graduate and Postdoctoral Affairs for the complete university procedures, applicable deadlines, and additional avenues for assistance.

## **SECTION 7: Doctoral Degree Requirements**

### **7.1 Registration Process**

Seats are allotted for graduate students in department courses. The Associate Director of Academic Affairs will register all graduate students during registration week. Prior to registration week, the Associate Director of Academic Affairs will provide students a survey link to rank their course selections. Once all current and incoming students have been registered, students will receive an email to confirm their classes in Student Information Online (SIO).

[Course descriptions are located on the Department of English website.](#)

### **7.2 Required Units for Degree Attainment**

The official and current degree requirements, including the total units required for degree attainment and the distribution of those units among required and elective coursework, are maintained on the program curriculum pages linked below. These pages constitute the department's current statement of degree requirements:

- [Ph.D. in Computational Cultural Studies](#)
- [Ph.D. in Literary & Cultural Studies](#)
- [Ph.D. in Rhetoric](#)

### **7.3 Cross-Registration and Transfer Credits**

#### **7.3.1 Cross-registration Courses**

Cross-registration courses are courses taken at [institutions](#) included in the Pittsburgh Council on Higher Education (PCHE). These courses can be taken only in the spring and fall semesters. Graduate students taking cross-registered courses at PCHE institutions will have their grades recorded on their CMU transcript and factored into their CMU QPA.

Full-time doctoral students, with the approval of their advisor, may cross-register for elective courses with institutions affiliated with the PCHE. Students may take one elective course per semester for a total of up to three courses during the time they are students in our programs. If a student wishes to exceed the three course limit, they must petition the Director of Graduate Studies. Students may only take elective courses via cross-registration and should use this option only to register for courses not available through CMU.

[Cross-Registration Form](#)

### **7.3.2 Transfer Courses**

Transfer courses are courses taken before a student enrolls as a doctoral student at CMU. Students may petition to have previously-earned graduate credit from other institutions transferred to CMU to be applied against the credit hour requirements for their PhD. Credit from courses taken at institutions not in the PCHE while a student is enrolled in one of our programs cannot be applied against the credit hour requirements for the degree they are seeking.

Under exceptional circumstances, students may petition their Program Director to take courses at non-PCHE institutions. The cost of these transfer courses are not covered by any scholarships or tuition remission agreements a graduate student might have with the Department of English or the university. All costs are assumed by the student who wishes to take them. Transfer courses may only be taken in the summer or while a student is on leave from the English program. They may not be taken while a student is enrolled in coursework in the fall or spring semester. Students may not petition for more than three transfer courses and all petitions must be made before the student enrolls in the course. To be accepted for credit, transfer courses must have been taken for a letter grade and students must have earned a B (3.00) or above in the transferred course (a grade of B- will not transfer). Only the units/credits earned for a transfer course are applied; the grade recorded does not transfer. As a consequence, these courses will not be considered for academic actions, honors, or QPA calculations.

### **7.3.3 Non-degree Students**

For CMU staff members taking [non-degree seeking courses](#) who have been admitted to one of the English doctoral programs, we will assess non-degree seeking coursework on a case-by-case basis. The applicability of non-degree coursework will be determined by the admissions committee in consultation with Program Directors. As a guideline, we will usually count no more than one course toward the degree.

## **7.4 Exemption of Program Requirements**

All graduate students may petition for the waiver of specific program requirements if they have satisfactorily completed equivalent coursework here or in another graduate-level program, provided that a grade of B (3.0) or higher was earned in the equivalent course.

### **7.4.1 General Information**

A waiver allows the student to substitute another course for an original program requirement. In the waiver request, a student must identify how that course is the close equivalent of a required course in the degree program. If a waiver is granted, the student must still take the full number of credits required by the degree program.

### **7.4.2 Deadline**

Students should submit requests for requirement waivers as early in their programs as possible to allow time to plan a coherent course of study with their advisors. All petitions for waiver of a program requirement must be submitted no later than the semester before the student wishes to take the qualifying exam.

### **7.4.3 Procedure**

To request the waiver of a specific program requirement, a student should:

1. Write a petition in accordance with the guidelines highlighted in the “Petition” section below.
2. Provide a copy of the petition to their advisor for review and signature.
3. Submit the signed petition to the Director of Academic Affairs for review and approval by the Director of Graduate Studies.

### **7.4.4 Petition**

A petition for the waiver of a specific program requirement must include the following information:

1. The student’s name and degree program.
2. A statement at the top of the page identifying the petition as a request for the waiver of a program requirement.
3. The titles of both the course to be waived and the course proposed as a program substitute.
4. Information about the course being proposed as a substitute for the program requirement:
  - a. course number, title, number of credits received, and whether credits were semester or quarter hours
  - b. school at which the course was taken
  - c. degree program enrolled in at the time the course was taken
  - d. semester and year the course was taken
  - e. grade received
  - f. brief description of the course
5. An argument that explains how the course is the close equivalent of the required course for which it is being proposed as a substitute. (Note: When providing an explanation, keep in mind that the audience for petitions may not be aware of the content of courses taken in another degree program.)
6. Advisor’s signature.
7. A copy of the student’s transcript documenting the completion of courses identified in the petition.

## **7.5 Teaching Requirements/Opportunities**

### **7.5.1 Eligibility for Classroom Teaching in the Writing & Communication Program**

Prior to starting independent classroom teaching in First-Year Writing, doctoral students must demonstrate a range of professional skills as well as academic skills.

To that end, for students to be eligible to commence our teacher training program in our Writing & Communication Program, students must have

1. Been assessed in good standing and not be on probationary status at the conclusion of the spring term of the first year;
2. Received an A- or above in 76-824, Theory and Design of Writing Instruction;
3. Received a “Pass” in 76-902, Teaching Practicum;
4. For international students, passed the ITA test by the last week of classes in the first year of coursework;
5. Demonstrated a strong, consistent academic record during their first year of coursework as documented at both the mid-year and final first-year review sessions;
6. Followed rules/guidelines for professional behavior during their first year of coursework, as documented at both the mid-year and final first-year review sessions. Examples of this behavior may include but are not limited to
  - considerate communication with peers and faculty
  - adherence to faculty policies in coursework
  - regular class attendance
  - appropriate contributions to class discussions
  - project management and adherence to deadlines

Students failing to meet the above requirements will receive notification along with the results of their program’s academic review that they are not eligible to begin training for teaching. Within that notification, students will be given a plan for regaining eligibility for teaching in the Writing & Communication Program. Students who do not meet eligibility requirements for teaching will continue to receive their tuition remission while in the probationary period but they will not be guaranteed a full stipend. If the student does not regain their eligibility for teaching in the Writing & Communication Program within one academic year, they are no longer guaranteed a tuition remission or stipend.

### **7.5.2 Priority in Teaching Assignments**

Teaching assignments of one full-semester course or two half-semester mini courses per semester go first to full-time doctoral students taking coursework (including exams). The usual teaching assignment for graduate students will be at the 100 level and all students must teach at this level for two semesters. The department will endeavor—though not guarantee—to give graduate students who have a minimum of four semesters of teaching experience at CMU and have completed coursework

the opportunity to teach at the 200 level or above. Students will be chosen as instructors for upper-level courses according to their qualifications to teach the proposed courses, their teaching record as displayed through student evaluations and faculty observations, the fit between the courses available and their research interests, their progress in the program, and their seniority in the program. Students will normally not be assigned more than one new preparation per semester.

### **7.5.3 Satisfactory Teaching and Teaching Probation**

We see a student's development as an academic as closely linked to their development as a teacher. To that end, if students have difficulty with their teaching, they should expect the department to assist them by providing a course of action that will allow them to improve their teaching. Good standing in teaching does not affect a student's academic standing. Thus, students cannot be dropped from their academic program solely because of teaching difficulties. Regardless of a student's teaching status, tuition remission will not be affected, although fellowship support (which depends on teaching) will be.

#### **7.5.3.1 Evidence of Satisfactory Teaching**

Students must submit teaching evaluations for the preceding semester or calendar year, as appropriate, as part of their annual review (see the "First-year Reviews" and "Annual Review after the First Year" policies.)

Students teaching in the Writing & Communication Program must have their classes observed at least once by the Director of Writing & Communication and/or their Course Lead. Students teaching courses outside the first-year program must have each course that represents a new preparation observed at least once by one of the faculty members who provide mentoring for the course. This should normally not be the Director of Writing & Communication. Program Directors will designate observers for courses other than First-Year Writing courses to ensure that these students have had appropriate training. In addition, by the time students apply for jobs, at least one member of their dissertation committees should have observed their teaching. Observers will write short (one- or two-paragraph) reports, which students will submit with their annual reviews.

#### **7.5.3.2 Options for Student Evaluations of Teaching**

There are two options for student evaluations: (1) the University Course Assessment, which is the online evaluation tool with scores made available to students and some other members of the CMU community, and (2) the departmental course assessment, which is a paper form with scores made available only to students and faculty involved in mentoring teaching and making teaching assignments. (There are four paper evaluation forms, one for Writing & Communication courses (first-year writing + 76-270), one for other upper-level Rhetoric courses, and one for upper-level LCS courses.) There are reasons for and against each option. A student's teaching advisor (the Director of Writing & Communication in the case of 100-level courses, Program Directors in the case of other

courses) will have a policy or at least advise about which a student should choose. If a student doesn't already have their advice, they should seek it out.

The university's policies about privacy prohibit anyone from divulging information about a student without the student's explicit consent. Since the University Course Assessment makes private information (student teaching evaluations) public, a doctoral student cannot be evaluated by this method unless they sign a waiver form opting out of the privacy policy for this purpose. **If a doctoral student wants to use the University Course Assessment in their course, they must sign a waiver form.** The Associate Director of Academic Affairs will circulate a request for waiver forms each semester. Waiver forms must be returned by the deadline specified.

### 7.5.3.3 Criteria for Satisfactory Teaching

To demonstrate satisfactory teaching, students must:

- Maintain teaching evaluations that indicate generally average or better than average performance.
- Use course syllabi that meet the goals of the program within which they are teaching. (Program Directors are generally the people who can help students with their syllabi.)
- Meet job expectations, including
  - Holding all scheduled class sessions. Attending class with appropriate modality (in person during the academic year). No more than 10% of instruction days—about a week's worth—can be converted to either remote synchronous or asynchronous learning.
  - Preparing for class, including designing lesson plans that align with program outcomes.
  - Grading papers and assigning grades in a timely manner (usually no more than a week to grade major assignments or comment on higher stakes drafts).
  - Using program rubrics and the university's course management system as directed by the appropriate program.
  - For Writing & Communication instructors of record:
    - Attending "Reorientation" meetings one week before the start of each academic year.
    - Attending teachers' meetings, including course-specific, weekly meetings.
    - Contacting a program director when canceling classes, and so forth.

If a student is unsure about these requirements, they should consult the Writing & Communication Director or Assistant Director.

#### **7.5.3.4 Consequences of Failure to Demonstrate Satisfactory Teaching**

If a student fails to demonstrate satisfactory teaching, a committee consisting of the Program Directors, the Director of Graduate Studies, the Director of Writing & Communication, the Director of Professional and Technical Writing, and the Department Head will decide on a plan of action. The outcome of this process may be probation, suspension, or termination.

#### **7.5.3.5 Teaching probation**

During a semester of teaching probation, students should expect to document the course of action that they are taking to remediate the teaching problems that were outlined by the ad hoc committee. Teaching probation will end when the student has fulfilled these plans. Teaching probation does not affect a student's stipend and related benefits. (See "Stipends and Other Benefits".) A student on teaching probation may not serve as graduate representative to any faculty committee, since the understanding is that the student will need to spend as much time as possible doing the work necessary to be removed from probation.

*Suspension from teaching.* A student may be suspended from teaching for a variety of reasons:

- Failing to rectify the teaching problem(s) outlined by the *ad hoc* committee by the end of the teaching probationary semester;
- demonstrating a pattern of failing to meet basic professional requirements, as sketched above

Students who have been suspended from teaching are no longer considered to be in good standing and will forfeit the stipend and all other benefits unless they are engaged in another department-sanctioned activity that has an associated stipend and benefits.

A student who has been suspended from teaching may reapply for teaching after one semester's suspension by petitioning the committee described above. Petitions should describe how the student will rectify the problems that led to suspension from teaching. The committee will then decide whether or not to allow the student to return to teaching on a probationary status. A student who does not demonstrate satisfactory teaching during that semester will be terminated from teaching in the Department of English.

#### **7.5.3.6 Termination of teaching**

In extreme cases, a student's teaching may be terminated if the committee finds that there are severe problems with teaching that cannot be rectified. Although a student may be terminated from teaching

at any time, termination should be a last resort, reserved only for those students who demonstrate either recurring problems in the classroom, unwillingness to work with the relevant Program Director to solve these problems, and/or other egregious behavior that cannot be remediated through services provided in the department and campus-wide. Students whose teaching has been terminated will not receive a stipend.

## **7.5.4 Relationship of Teaching to Stipends and Other Benefits**

### **7.5.4.1 Contingency of stipend and benefits on teaching**

Starting in the second year of study, doctoral students are expected to teach at least one full-semester course or two half-semester mini course sections in the Department of English each semester in order to receive a stipend and other benefits. (Students should see their letter of admission for details. If misplaced, the department has it on file.) A small number of students occasionally do an alternative department-sanctioned activity (including, but not limited to, serving as a research assistant for a journal or grant or assistant director of a program) in return for the stipend and other benefits. Students who accept a dissertation fellowship in place of a stipend will retain other benefits for the duration of the fellowship, provided that they remain in residence. Students whose fellowships require them to change their official status to or from ABS should review the funding implications [here](#).

### **7.5.4.2 Choosing not to teach**

If, for any reason except those mentioned above, a student chooses *not* to teach at least one full-semester course or two-half-semester mini course sections in the Department of English in a given semester or engage in another department-sanctioned activity, the student will not receive a stipend nor will they receive the standard tuition remission for that semester. Depending on the semester and length of the opt-out, other benefits may be affected. This includes both students who are *In Absentia* and students who are in residence but not working in the Department of English in one of the ways described in the preceding paragraph.

### **7.5.4.3 Probation, Suspension**

Students who are placed on academic or teaching probation or teaching suspension should see the relevant sections of this Handbook for information about which benefits they forfeit.

### **7.5.4.4 Employment Eligibility Verification**

Employment Eligibility Verification is required if a student is receiving a stipend or compensation for any position within CMU's Workday HR Portal.

Form I-9 must be completed within 3 business days of beginning work for any type of compensation (stipend or employment). Additional details are highlighted below.

To ensure compliance with federal law, CMU maintains the [Employment Eligibility Verification \(I-9\) Policy \[pdf\]](#) covering the university's I-9 and E-Verify requirements:

Every individual receiving a stipend from CMU or employed by CMU must comply with the I-9 Policy by completing the Form I-9 within three business days following the first day of stipend start date/employment.

Individuals who expect to work on a federally funded project are further responsible for submitting an E-Verify Processing Request Form to the Office of Human Resources.

For more information, please see CMU's Guidance for [Completing the Form I-9 and E-Verify Requirements at CMU \[pdf\]](#), or visit the [Human Resources Service website](#) to learn more about Form I-9 and E-Verify and to [schedule an appointment to complete the Form I-9](#).

### **7.5.5 English Proficiency**

Language assessment is required for all nonnative speaking students who plan to work as teaching assistants at CMU, in accordance with [CMU policy](#) and PA law. To work as a sole instructor, students must obtain a score of "Pass" via the International Teaching Assistant (ITA) certification process. Students can satisfy the certification requirement in 1 of 2 ways: either by submitting documentation of a TOEFL Speaking score of 28 or above, or by taking the ITA test. The ITA test is an exam that assesses a candidate's ability to communicate with learners/people outside their field. Please be aware that this is a rigorous test of spoken academic fluency, and the required score of "Pass" is the highest of four possible scores. Students may find that they will need language classes at the ICC in order to develop the fluency needed for the test. See the link above to better understand the test, the level of fluency needed for specific scores, and the amount of additional language work that may be required.

### **7.6 Time to Degree**

Full-time doctoral students in the Department of English are expected to finish the degree in no more than six years. Students who complete their program more slowly than this should be aware of the following university-wide policy.

As outlined in the university's [Doctoral Student Status](#) policy, students will complete all requirements for the degree within a maximum of ten years from original matriculation as a doctoral student, or less if required by a more restrictive department or college policy. Once this time-to-degree limit has lapsed, the person may resume work toward a doctoral degree only if newly admitted to a currently offered doctoral degree program under criteria determined by that program.

Under extraordinary circumstances, such as a leave of absence, military or public service, family or parental leave, or temporary disability, a school or college may, upon the relevant department's recommendation and with the written approval of the dean, defer the lapse of All But Dissertation status for a period commensurate with the duration of that interruption.

## **7.7 Doctoral Degree Completion and Certification**

### **7.7.1 Standard Degree Requirements & Degree Certification**

Doctoral students are expected to complete their degree requirements within the standard length of time for their program of study as outlined in the relevant Graduate Student Handbook. Standard program lengths for graduate students vary significantly – ranging from two semesters for some full-time master's programs to several or more years for doctoral programs. Upon completion of the graduate program degree requirements, the degree will be certified by the student's academic program in the semester in which the student completes the requirements.

### **7.7.2 Early Completion**

Graduate students who consider the completion of all degree requirements in less than the standard length of time for their program of study may consult with their degree-granting program or department to determine if early degree certification is allowed and under what circumstances.

### **7.7.3 Extended or Longer-than-Standard Completion**

Longer-than-standard degree completion may occur due to academic interruptions in making progress toward the degree as defined by the academic program, interruptions of full-time study or progress toward the degree due to serious, documented medical issues, or other unusual or unforeseen circumstances. Doctoral students who require an extended period to complete their degree requirements must consult with their academic program, and are subject to the CMU Policy on [Doctoral Student Status](#), specifically the "Time to Degree" section.

### **7.7.4 Financial aid and student account**

Students are expected to make normal progress toward their degree in order to graduate within the standard timeframe for their program of study. Under U.S. Federal Title IV regulations, student eligibility for federal financial aid is contingent upon enrollment in and successful completion of courses that are counted as credit toward their current degree program. To receive the maximum amount of federal financial aid for which they may be eligible, students must enroll each semester in at least 36 units that count toward their current degree level. (See separate guidance regarding integrated degree completion.) Students should consult with their designated college liaison in The HUB regarding billing and financial aid, particularly for early completion, longer- than-standard completion, or integrated undergraduate and master's degree programs.

### **7.7.5 International students**

Immigration status for students in F-1 and J-1 non-immigrant status is tied to making normal progress toward completing degree requirements. Therefore, F-1 and J-1 students who are considering completing their degree requirements early, anticipating longer-than-standard completion, or moving from an undergraduate to a graduate student classification (integrated undergraduate-graduate study) should consult with their designated advisor in the Office of International Education (OIE) to ensure compliance with immigration regulations.

## **SECTION 8: Dissertation Preparation & Requirements**

### **8.1 PhD Qualifying Exam Requirement**

#### **8.1.1 CCS & LCS Qualifying Exam**

The main purpose of the exam in CCS & LCS is to prepare the student for broad competency in generally recognized fields in English departments. A secondary purpose is to prepare the doctoral candidate for dissertation research. We see the exam as playing a strategic role in preparing students for the job market. Our goal is for the student to read widely in both primary and secondary materials and to be able to write and talk expertly about the major questions in the field.

##### **8.1.1.1 Exam Preparation**

In the last semester of coursework, the student shall take a directed reading supervised by a member of the exam committee, usually the chair. This directed reading will count for 12 units, and will be conducted in a form to be negotiated by the student and his/her advisor. The student will need to consult with faculty prior to the start of his/her last year of coursework to arrange this directed reading.

##### **8.1.1.2 Exam Scheduling**

No later than the last day of classes of the semester of the Directed Reading course, the student must schedule their Qualifying Exam dates for their oral and written exam and email the Director of Academic Affairs confirming the scheduled written and oral exam dates. Both the written and oral portions of the exam must take place before September 30.

A student who takes an approved leave of absence during the fall semester immediately following the Directed Reading may, with the prior written approval of the student's primary advisor, elect one of the following timelines for the qualifying examination: (a) in the subsequent spring semester, to be completed no later than February 27; or (b) in the fall semester of the next academic year, to be completed no later than September 30. The advisor must approve the student's option and examination schedule in advance (in consultation with the Program Director, as appropriate).

### 8.1.1.3 Exam Documents

There are two required documents that the student must produce by the end of the directed reading. One is the **reading list** on which the student will be examined; the other is a **series of questions, no longer than five double-spaced pages**, that reveals the student's approach toward the list, and which will guide both the student's study for the exam and the examiners' formulation of the test. The student will work with two additional faculty members concurrent with the directed reading to get feedback on the list and on the questions. The final list and questions must have the approval of three committee members.

The list should represent a recognized field. Recognized fields may be periods or other broad areas of expertise as defined, for example, by the Modern Language Association divisions or in JIL advertisements, e.g.:

- American Literature and Culture (such as nineteenth-century, early twentieth-century, 1945 to present, or African-American)
- British Literature and Culture (such as Renaissance/Early Modern, eighteenth-century, Romantic, Victorian, Modernist, or 1945 to present)
- World Literature in English (such as African, Caribbean, Indian, or Irish)
- Criticism and Theory

The reading list is divided into primary and secondary sections and may be further organized into thematic or chronological sub-sections as appropriate to the field and project or at the discretion of the student and their committee. Primary materials are the objects of analysis on which the student seeks to demonstrate professional mastery in the declared area, while secondary materials are the scholarly works about those objects. Primary texts should include texts that are considered standard in the student's field of expertise, so it will usually include novels, poetry, plays, essays, or other cultural artifacts, such as films, though it could include mainly theoretical texts if the field were "criticism and theory." There should be roughly 30 to 50 of them (since fields differ in their spread of primary texts, a student's committee should advise the student on this). Secondary items will usually include influential literary criticism and literary/cultural theory that reflects the chosen approach. The secondary list may also include social, cultural, and political works and some standard reference works if they are needed for approach to cohere. There should be around 20 to 25 secondary texts.

The questions on the list should address big issues about which a significant essay might be written. The questions should make reference to key works of criticism and theory, as well as to primary works. The series of questions should be organized by major questions that are developed and elaborated by subquestions.

#### **8.1.1.4 Exam Committee**

The 5-member exam committee is composed of:

- a chair and two readers recruited by the student from the LCS faculty. This part of the committee will set the questions for the written exam.

AND

- two full-time faculty members invited by the committee chair, who will read the student's written answers and join the first three exam committee members to conduct the student's oral exam and evaluate and vote on the student's written and oral performance. (If an emergency makes it impossible for one of the appointed committee members to attend, the oral exam may proceed with only one.)

Students should identify and consult with faculty members about serving on their exam committee no later than their third semester of coursework (or the equivalent for part-time students).

#### **8.1.1.5 Approval of Exam Proposals**

Once members of the student's committee are satisfied that a student's exam proposal defines an appropriate exam based on a reading list that meets the above requirements, they will sign a form to be submitted to the Director of Academic Affairs.

#### **8.1.1.6 Format of the Exam**

The exam consists of two parts:

- A take-home written exam with several questions written by the committee to reflect previously discussed issues. The student should choose two questions to answer. The student shall write two essays of approximately 10 double-spaced pages each, which are to be returned within seven days to the student's committee members.
- An oral review as soon as possible after the student's committee has read the exam. Students who wish to may begin with a 10-minute presentation preceding the oral review. The examining faculty has the option to pose questions based on the student's exam proposal (both the 5-page series of questions and the reading lists), in addition to questions referring to the exam essays.

### 8.1.1.7 Evaluation of the Exam

The exam committee will take a simple majority vote to pass or fail the examinee.

### 8.1.1.8 Evaluation Criteria

**Pass:** *Successful completion of the exam.*

**Fail:** *Unsuccessful completion of the exam.* If the exam committee judges that a student has not passed either the written or oral part of the qualifying exam, that is considered a failure and the student may retake the exam. A student must pass the written exam in order to take the oral portion. Students who fail the qualifying exam must retake it by February 15th. Failure to pass on the second attempt will result in a program faculty recommendation that the student be dropped from the program.

## 8.1.2 Rhetoric Qualifying Exam

The main purpose of the qualifying exam in rhetoric is to prepare the student for broad competency in fields related to Rhetoric, Composition, and Writing Studies generally recognized by English, Communication, and other academic departments in the humanities and social sciences. It is also designed to prepare the candidate for non-academic positions calling for sophisticated rhetorical research, scholarship, and production in the public, non-profit, and private sectors. The qualifying exam for Rhetoric has four specific learning outcomes:

1. Students should demonstrate mastery of key issues, debates, and agreements in three or four research areas
2. Students should be able to identify and justify open research questions in each research area they have elected to focus on
3. Students should be conversant with research methods or analytical approaches used in the specific areas of research they have elected to focus on
4. Students should be able to respond to questions with depth and flexibility and address effectively counter-arguments

### 8.1.2.1 Directed Reading

In preparation for the exam and its learning outcomes, students shall take the Directed Reading (76-911) course with a member of their exam committee in their final semester of coursework. This faculty member is typically the advisor or chair of the exam committee but need not be. This directed reading will count for 12 units, and will be conducted in a form to be negotiated by the student and their advisor. The student will need to consult with faculty prior to the start of their last year of coursework to arrange this directed reading. The directed reading is designed to help the student identify and pursue readings and research questions relevant for the exam.

There are two required documents that the student must produce by the end of the directed reading: One is the reading list on which the student will be examined; the other is a short list of challenging questions the student should prepare to answer for the exam. The Directed Reading course thus includes exam preparation.

### **8.1.2.2 Exam Scheduling**

No later than the last day of classes of the semester of the Directed Reading course, the student must schedule their Qualifying Exam dates for their oral and written exam and email the Director of Academic Affairs confirming the scheduled written and oral exam dates. Both the written and oral portions of the exam must take place before September 30.

A student who takes an approved leave of absence during the fall semester immediately following the Directed Reading may, with the prior written approval of the student's primary advisor, elect one of the following timelines for the qualifying examination: (a) in the subsequent spring semester, to be completed no later than February 27; or (b) in the fall semester of the next academic year, to be completed no later than September 30. The advisor must approve the student's option and examination schedule in advance (in consultation with the Rhetoric Program Director, as appropriate).

### **8.1.2.3 Exam Committee**

Typically, the exam committee for a Rhetoric student is composed of three Rhetoric faculty members:

- the committee chair, who is responsible for the major area of concentration (the student's specialization) and
- two other faculty members

The exam committee is expected to match the student's declared areas of specialization. Members of the exam committee shall be chosen from CMU faculty. Students should identify, consult with, and secure the consent of faculty members they wish to serve on their exam committee no later than their third semester of coursework (or the equivalent for part-time students).

The members of the exam committee will work with the examinee to:

- establish the date and time of the exam
- identify the material to be covered in the exam
- compose the exam questions

They are also charged with evaluating the examinee's responses to the exam questions.

### **8.1.2.4 The Exams**

The exam committee will compose two exam questions for the written exam in consultation with the student and based on the exam proposal. The committee chair will email the questions simultaneously

to the student and the Director of Academic Affairs 8-10 days before the scheduled oral exam. The email time-stamp starts a writing period of seven calendar days. The student must submit two essays—approximately 10 double-spaced pages each, one essay addressing each question—no later than seven calendar days after receiving the exam questions from their committee.

The oral exam begins with an approximately 20-minute oral presentation in which the student overviews both essays. The examining faculty will then begin their questions. In addition to questions referring to the exam essays, the examining faculty have the option to pose questions based on the student's exam proposal (both the short list of challenging questions and the reading lists).

#### **8.1.2.5 Evaluation**

The exam committee will take a simple majority vote to pass or fail the examinee.

#### **8.1.2.6 Outcomes**

*Pass:* Successful completion of the exam. The student is eligible to write a dissertation prospectus leading to a dissertation.

*Fail:* Unsuccessful completion of the exam. If the exam committee judges that a student has not passed the qualifying exam, the student may retake the exam or part of the exam. Failure to pass on the second attempt will result in a program faculty recommendation that the student be dropped from the program.

#### **8.1.2.7 Summer Qualifying Exams**

Qualifying exams are normally not administered during the summer, since most faculty members in the Department of English are on 9-month contracts and thus not obligated to do summer work. Under unusual circumstances, however, a student may petition for a summer exam date. This petition must be received by the Director of Graduate Studies by **May 15** and must include:

- the date proposed
- the reason for scheduling the exam at that time
- written statements of agreement by exam committee members that they can attend on the date proposed

## **8.2 PhD Criteria for Advancement to Candidacy**

### **8.2.1 Candidacy**

A doctoral student shall attain “candidacy” in the Department of English when they have successfully completed:

- all coursework (having transferred credits from an MA program, if applicable, and eliminated all incompletes);
- two semesters of teaching and the teaching practicum;
- the public paper requirement; and
- the qualifying exam

In order to write the prospectus and the dissertation, a student must have achieved the status of doctoral candidacy.

### **8.2.2 All But Dissertation (ABD) Status**

Students are moved to “ABD” [“All But Dissertation”] status in CMU’s records once they have completed all requirements except for the dissertation. See CMU’s “Doctoral Student Status Policy” for information on time limits on doctoral degree student status, a definition of All But Dissertation status, and related matters. (Note that in order to remain in good standing, Students will typically be required by their dissertation committees and program faculty to finish sooner than the time specified in the CMU policy.) Once the time limit has been reached the student may resume work toward a doctoral degree only by reapplying to the relevant program. See the CMU Graduate Student Handbook for details.

### **8.2.3 In Absentia (ABS) Status**

A student who has been moved to ABD status may be moved to In Absentia (ABS) status if they spend one or more semesters off campus. Students who are ABS forfeit their stipend and all related benefits. Exceptions to this policy must be negotiated with the Department Head. Exceptions will normally not be made.

#### **8.2.3.1 Academic Progress**

Students with ABS status are required to submit annual reviews and fulfill the normal requirements for satisfactory academic progress.

### **8.2.3.2 Returning from ABS**

The department can only fund a limited number of doctoral students each semester. This means that students returning from *in absentia* status are not guaranteed funding or teaching, even if they have not yet had 6 years of fellowship support. Students who plan to return from *in absentia* status and would like to be considered for funding must let the Director of Academic Affairs know at least one semester in advance.

Students returning from ABS to defend their dissertations should take note of any financial requirements detailed [here](#).

### **8.2.3.3 International Student Eligibility**

J-1 or F1 visa holders are generally not eligible for ABS status. Before making any plans to leave campus prior to graduation, international students must review university policy and consult the Office of International Education.

## **8.3 PhD Dissertation**

### **8.3.1 Dissertation Committee Membership**

The dissertation committee is composed of at least three members. These members are proposed by the student in their prospectus when it is submitted to the Director of Academic Affairs.

#### **8.3.1.1 Committee Members**

The dissertation committee will include at least two faculty members from the English Department. The required third member (and optional additional members) may be from the English Department or other departments at CMU. The individuals who serve on a dissertation committee must be available to advise the candidate about the prospectus as well as the dissertation.

#### **8.3.1.2 Committee Chair**

The dissertation committee chair shall be a member of CMU's Department of English faculty. Emeriti faculty can chair dissertation committees with the approval of the Program Director. Dissertation chairs who leave the university may remain on a dissertation committee, but must step down as chair and be replaced in accordance with the policies already described.

### **8.3.1.3 Committee Member Not from CMU**

If in writing the dissertation the student needs the expertise of someone from an institution other than CMU, with the dissertation chair's approval an external scholar from another institution may serve on the committee, either in addition to the three CMU members or in place of one. If the chair requests the external member's in-person attendance and travel support is needed, funding must be secured from the department or another source before the invitation is extended. When requesting travel support, the chair should briefly explain the scholarly necessity and any lack of comparable local expertise.

### **8.3.2 Dissertation Prospectus Development and Submission**

A prospectus is a proposal describing the topic and goals of the student's dissertation. It should clearly define the topic and the argument to be made and indicate the student's plan for researching and/or otherwise developing the topic and the argument.

#### **8.3.2.1 Submission Procedure**

1. A student should submit a prospectus after they have completed the requirements for candidacy. (See "Candidacy," under Policies and Procedures)
2. In consultation with their advisor, a student should select faculty members who agree to serve as a dissertation committee. (See the "Dissertation Committee Membership" policy)
3. When the student and the dissertation committee agree that the prospectus is ready, the student should obtain a cover sheet from the Director of Academic Affairs, attach it to the prospectus, and have it signed by all of the dissertation committee members to indicate that they have read and approved the prospectus.

#### **8.3.2.2 Deadline for Submitting Prospectus**

Since qualifying exams are normally taken in September of a given year, the completed and committee-approved prospectus must be submitted to the Director of Academic Affairs *no later than September 1* of the following year. For instance, if a student took the qualifying exam in September 2025, their approved prospectus would have to be filed no later than September 1, 2026.

#### **8.3.2.3 Acceptance of the Prospectus**

For the purpose of meeting requirements for progress through the doctoral program, the prospectus is considered to be accepted once the prospectus, together with cover sheets signed by all committee members, has been submitted to the Director of Academic Affairs.

### 8.3.2.4 Evaluation Procedure

The prospectus is evaluated for the substance of its content and the quality of its presentation. Therefore, it must demonstrate that the student can discover, design, carry through, and report on a significant scholarly project.

### 8.3.2.5 IRB Approval

If the dissertation research involves observing, interviewing, or experimenting with human beings, prior approval from the university's Institutional Review Board may be required. If the student thinks their project may require IRB review, they should consult with their advisor. [Learn more about the IRB review of human subjects research](#). If IRB approval is required, it must be submitted to the Director of Academic Affairs along with the prospectus.

### 8.3.2.6 Contents of Prospectus

The following content areas are presented as topics that a prospectus should cover, not as a strict template that defines a prescribed order of topic presentation:

- *Purpose of the study.* The prospectus should clearly define the scope of the dissertation and specify its purpose and objectives (e.g., a thesis to be supported, a theoretical position to be elaborated, a hypothesis to be tested, a problem to be resolved, a debate to be clarified, new information to be acquired). Hence, the prospectus establishes both the nature of the project and its boundaries.
- *Significance of the study.* In addition to clarifying the purpose, the prospectus should explain the importance of the study. One way to do this is to show its place in existing scholarship or research; another way is to show that this particular study looks at distinctly new things or at old things in a new way.
- *Relevant previous research.* The prospectus should briefly discuss previous research relevant to the dissertation topic. The discussion should include both scholarship with which the student is already familiar and that which they plan to examine. The student should elaborate some of the relations between their own work and major published work in the field. This discussion should be specific enough to clarify the contours of the dissertation and what is fundamentally at stake.
- *The student's own research plan.* Students doing empirical or pedagogical studies should describe how they will gather, analyze, synthesize, and evaluate information and explain why the methodology proposed is the most effective way of meeting their objectives. This

description should clarify both the theoretical and methodological grounding of the project. Students doing other kinds of studies (theoretical, historical, descriptive, or analytical) should show that their research methods will cover their topic sufficiently.

- *Plan of work.* The prospectus must include a "Plan of Work" that shows the schedule of work agreed upon between the student and the advisor. This schedule will be used in the annual reviews to review academic progress.

Each prospectus should also include *a proposed table of contents* and *a bibliography or reference list*.

### **8.3.2.7 Length of Prospectus**

A dissertation prospectus should be at least ten pages (2500 words) but no more than 15 pages (3750 words), not including the bibliography or reference list.

### **8.3.2.8 Formatting and Citation Style for Prospectus and Dissertation**

Because CMU does not have a centralized graduate school, the programs decide how theses and dissertations should be formatted and which citation style should be followed.

### **8.3.3 Rhetoric Research Tool Requirement**

The research tool requirement for doctoral students in Rhetoric is designed to ensure that students possess the skills necessary for research.

To fulfill this requirement, doctoral students in Rhetoric must:

- Beginning with the review after the first year, and at each subsequent annual review, the student must identify the chosen research tool and report progress toward mastery. A research tool is either a methodology (e.g., ethnography, historiography, experimental methods, statistics, advanced discourse analysis, rhetorical analysis and criticism, computer-assisted corpus analysis) or a language, as appropriate to the student's research plan. The Rhetoric faculty, through the student's advisor, will provide feedback on the annual statement and on the selected research tool. Progress toward mastery may be demonstrated through coursework or independent study.
- In the dissertation prospectus, the student should include a special, named, section that details the research tool or tools they have chosen to employ in their dissertation work. The student's dissertation committee will be responsible for approving this set of tools, as one of the broader requirements for the dissertation prospectus.

### **8.3.3.1 Demonstrating Competency in a Foreign Language**

Rhetoric students who use competency in a foreign language as their research tool may satisfy this requirement by:

- scoring in the “competency” range on the ETS exam
- earning a grade of B (3.0) or higher in a literature course taught in the language
- taking a competency course and passing the final exam
- presenting equivalent proof of competency
- passing a competency exam administered by the department (see below)

Petitions to fulfill the language requirement should be submitted to the Director of Academic Affairs. Petitions are reviewed and approved or denied by the Director of Graduate Studies. Each petition will be judged on an individual basis, and the judgment will take into account both the appropriateness of the language to the student’s specialization and their unique abilities and experience. Students may submit petitions in advance if they wish to find out whether a course they have in mind will count as fulfilling the language requirement. Such petitions may be approved provisionally, subject to the student demonstrating that they have completed the course with a B (3.0) or better. Deadlines for submitting petitions will be announced every semester.

### **8.3.3.2 Departmental Foreign Language Competency Exam for Rhetoric**

Competency in a foreign language can be demonstrated by an exam where a student is asked to translate one or more pages of text in a set period of time; use of a dictionary is permissible. The student’s advisor and/or exam committee will recruit a qualified faculty member from the Department of English or some other department to set and evaluate the exam. This examiner will determine the kind of text to be translated based on the language that the student is offering. The exam will be organized and supervised by this examiner, who will certify the results in a brief memo to the Director of Graduate Studies.

### **8.3.3.3 Introductory and Intermediate Courses in a Natural Language**

The Department of English cannot provide tuition remission for the introductory and intermediate courses in a natural language that one would take for acquiring fluency, but it can provide remission for advanced natural language courses in cultural or rhetorical studies that are appropriate for a student’s program.

### 8.3.4 Dissertation Defense

A doctoral candidate must publicly defend their dissertation before their dissertation committee and other members of the Department of English.

#### 8.3.4.1 Scheduling

Dissertation defenses must occur **by the last day of classes** of the semester the student hopes to graduate.

Revisions must be approved by the **final grade deadline for graduating students**. If the student's revisions are not approved by this deadline, **they may not walk or be hooded during spring commencement**. The student should check with the Director of Academic Affairs for the exact dates of the deadline.

Because the dissertation defense is meant to be a public gathering, summer defenses are discouraged. The latest defense date for regular spring defenses is the last day of finals week (but note that a defense held this late would not allow the student to graduate in spring semester). The earliest date for regular fall defenses is the week of Orientation. Under unusual circumstances, a doctoral candidate may petition for a summer defense in between these dates. The petition must be received by the Director of Graduate Studies by **April 15** and include the following information:

- the date proposed
- the reason for scheduling the defense at that time
- written statements by dissertation committee members that they can attend on that date

Note that students graduating in August **may not** walk or be hooded during Spring Commencement.

Before the dissertation defense can be scheduled, the student must submit a copy of the final (or next-to-final) draft to their dissertation committee for their review and must receive written agreement from them that the thesis is ready for defense.

A dissertation that is held to be ready for defense is one that is complete, save, at the most, for very minor changes to the text. In particular, all chapters must be in almost-finished form. Committee members must agree that, unless unforeseen issues arise at the defense, revisions that are still needed will require **no more than two weeks** to complete.

#### **8.3.4.2 Public Announcement**

Not less than 10 working days prior to the scheduled defense, the doctoral candidate must send the Director of Academic Affairs the final information about the date, time, and location of the defense; a list of the chair and readers on the student's committee; and the dissertation title and abstract (approx. 250-300 words). A scheduled defense is subject to cancellation if the 10-day notice is not observed.

This information is used for a public announcement of the defense that is to be sent to the Dean's office and circulated to other departments in the college for posting. An announcement of the defense will also be posted in the English Department office and elsewhere in the department and circulated by email.

#### **8.3.4.3 Time Allocation**

The dissertation defense typically lasts two hours. It is composed of the following segments:

30 minutes: Candidate's overview of the dissertation study and major findings.

45 minutes: Questions from the dissertation committee.

30 minutes: Questions from other faculty.

15 minutes: Questions from other members of the audience.

### **8.3.5 Approval of the Defense and Dissertation**

#### **8.3.5.1 Defense Evaluation**

Immediately following the defense, committee members meet to discuss the defense and the dissertation. They will vote to pass or fail the defense.

#### **8.3.5.2 Final Revisions**

Assuming the defense is passed, the committee may vote to approve the dissertation as is or require changes. Other faculty may also submit suggestions for changes to the committee. If changes are required, the committee will so indicate on the approval form and describe the required changes in a written memo to the candidate. The candidate should also receive the necessary paperwork from ProQuest for filing the dissertation with the university library and making it available to online searchers.

### 8.3.5.3 Final Approval

When the changes have been made to the satisfaction of the committee, the committee (or a designated member thereof) will sign the dissertation approval form and the signature page (six copies) indicating their final approval of the dissertation. The final version with the completed approval form and signature pages, along with the paperwork required for depositing the dissertation with the library, will then be submitted to the department and forwarded to the Dean for official approval. **Only at this point will the candidate be certified for graduation.**

### 8.3.5.4 Access to Dissertations

All doctoral candidates must submit copies of their dissertations to the University Libraries. The Libraries maintains [KiltHub](#), a free, open access repository of CMU research, and provides access to and assistance with [ProQuest Dissertations & Theses](#), a commercial repository and database of dissertations from institutions around the world. Graduate students will also be asked if they want to offer immediate open access to their dissertations or to delay such access through an embargo period. Both the University Libraries and ProQuest enable authors to provide immediate or delayed access to their dissertation online. The University Libraries' standard embargo periods are six months, one year, two years, and five years, after which the work becomes available open access. ProQuest's standard embargo periods are six months, one year, and two years, after which the work will become available either open access or restricted access according to the student's instructions. Students should carefully read the University Libraries policies on these options and **discuss them with their primary advisor in terms of potential impediments to future publication.**

## SECTION 9: Department Policies & Protocols

### 9.1 Cross-Listed Courses

Doctoral students registering 7xx/3xx or 8xx/4xx courses which enroll both undergraduates and graduates must register with the graduate-level course number (i.e., 7xx or 8xx) in order to receive credit toward their degrees.

### 9.2 Course Audits

Auditing means a student attends a course but doesn't earn credit or a grade. The extent of a student's participation must be arranged and approved by the course instructor. A student wishing to audit a course is required to register for the course, complete the Course Audit Approval Form, obtain permission of the course instructor and their advisor, and return the form to the Registrar's Office prior to the last day to add a course. Any student enrolled full-time (varies with each program) may audit a course without additional charges. Part-time or non-degree students who choose to audit a course will be assessed tuition at the regular per-unit tuition rate.

[Course Audit Approval Form](#)

### **9.3 Withdrawing from a Course**

Students at CMU may drop a course by accessing online registration on or before the drop deadline as published in the official university calendar. This applies to all courses with the exception of mini-semester courses. Policies for graduate students vary and students are advised to check with their individual colleges/departments/programs for details. The deadline to drop a mini-semester course is the last day of the second week of the mini-semester course. When a course is dropped by these deadlines, the course is removed and does not appear on the academic record.

After the deadline to drop, students may withdraw from a course by accessing online registration by the end of the 10th week of class as noted in the academic calendar. After the deadline to drop, a W (withdrawal) grade is assigned and appears on the student's academic record. W grades do not apply to graduate students except in Tepper and MCS. Students may use a late drop voucher for a limited number of course drops after the deadline during the pursuit of their degree. This action must be taken through consultation with their academic advisor or associate dean. Details on the late drop voucher process can be found in the Undergraduate Catalog and the Graduate Education website.

### **9.4 New Policies / “Grandfather” Policy**

This handbook is updated every year. When policies are changed, the Department Head and Director of Graduate Studies will discuss such changes with graduate students as needed. In certain cases, students already enrolled whose programs are affected may elect to follow the policies in effect when they matriculated. If degree requirements are changed and certain courses are no longer offered, students should consult with their advisor (and, as needed, the Director of Graduate Studies) to identify and approve substitutions that satisfy the intent of the original requirements.

### **9.5 Requesting Letters of Recommendation**

Students must be careful to give faculty members ample advance notice when a letter of recommendation is needed. A period of at least three weeks before the due date of the letter is suggested.

## **SECTION 10: Grading & Evaluation**

### **10.1 Incomplete (“I”) Grade Policy**

#### **10.1.1 University Policy on Incomplete Grades**

[University policy](#) states the following about Incomplete grades:

CMU students are expected to complete a course during the academic semester in which the course was taken. However, if the instructor agrees, a grade of I (incomplete) may be given when a student, for reasons beyond their control, has been unable to complete the work of a course, but the work completed to date is of passing quality and the grade of incomplete provides no undue advantage to that student over other students.

In awarding an I grade, an instructor must specify the requirements for completing the work and designate a default letter grade where no further work is submitted. Students must complete the required coursework no later than the end of the following academic semester, or sooner if required by prior agreement. The instructor must record the permanent grade by the last day of the examination period of the following semester, or Enrollment Services will administratively assign the default grade.

### 10.1.2 Department of English Guidelines for Assigning an Incomplete Grade

Instructors should consult with the Director of Academic Affairs before assigning an Incomplete grade to a student. The guidelines below can help prepare instructors for that consultation. Instructors should explain to students that they cannot grant an Incomplete grade without consulting the department and its guidelines.

1. A sufficient amount of coursework should be completed for a student to be eligible to receive an Incomplete grade. The department recommends that the student should already have completed enough coursework that they have a reasonable chance of finishing the remainder of the coursework independently and successfully. If a student has completed less than 50% of the total coursework, an Incomplete grade should not be considered a reasonable option.
2. The student should be completing the same work that everyone else in the course completed. There shouldn't be a different set of assignments for that student (except where different but equivalent assignments or examinations are necessary to discourage academic dishonesty).
3. Most Incompletes are assigned because of unforeseen circumstances that have occurred in a student's life. The department may require documentation from another CMU entity (e.g., Student Affairs, Athletics, Disability Resources, University Health Services, Counseling and Psychological Services, Office of Title IX Initiatives) to verify the basis for an Incomplete grade. Such documentation does not need to include details of the unforeseen circumstances. Merely having trouble "keeping up" or maintaining balance with other coursework is insufficient justification for assigning an Incomplete grade.
4. If a student is to receive an Incomplete grade due to unforeseen circumstances, chances are the student may also receive additional Incomplete grades in other courses. To prevent students from becoming overwhelmed with coursework due to multiple Incomplete grades, it is important for the instructor to consult with the Director of Academic Affairs so that a well-informed decision can be made. At times, a Leave of Absence is more appropriate for a student than multiple Incomplete grades.
5. There must be a written agreement that outlines the specific work that needs to be completed and the deadline by which that work should be submitted in order for the instructor to have the time to assess it and change the grade before the system triggers the default grade (which typically occurs near the end of the following semester).
6. Instructors assigning an Incomplete grade to a **graduating student** should discuss with that student the possibility of their graduation date being pushed back as a result. For graduating

students, an I grade with a deadline more than a week after the final grade deadline is likely to affect the student's graduation date. Please refer to the academic calendar and consult with the appropriate assistant director.

## 10.2 Independent Studies

While Independent Study courses (76-900 or 76-901) are not part of faculty members' contractual obligations, some may choose to provide doctoral students with an opportunity for intensive study of a subject that is either **unavailable** or **insufficiently covered** in regular coursework. An Independent study is not intended to substitute for existing courses, but to provide the opportunity for a specialized educational and research experience.

- Who can supervise
  - Any tenure-track or teaching-track faculty member in the Department of English is eligible to serve as the supervisor of an Independent Study project. The student must provide a brief prospectus of the project to the faculty supervisor as a basis for reaching agreement on the objectives of the study.
- Approval
  - Students arranging Independent Study projects must:
    - Get approval from their advisor before electing the course.
    - Draw up a contract with the supervising faculty member that describes in detail the course and its requirements. A copy of this should be given to the Director of Academic Affairs.
- External Study
  - Graduate students may request that CMU faculty who are outside the Department of English serve as Independent Study supervisors. Approval of the reading list and/or research project must be obtained from the student's advisor.
  - Independent study courses taken outside of the Department of English are counted as external courses even though they are registered under an English course number.
- Restrictions
  - Students may elect up to a total of 12 credit hours (36 units) of Independent Study.
  - Because independent studies require significant faculty mentorship, offerings are limited. Faculty are not obliged to supervise independent studies and, when available, are encouraged to supervise no more than one per academic year.

## 10.3 Academic Good Standing Policy

This section describes the required procedures that are aimed at ensuring that doctoral students are doing satisfactory work and proceeding through their programs at the required pace. This section also describes the penalties for falling out of academic good standing and the procedures that faculty members will use to evaluate students' performance and mentor students who are having problems.

In order to maintain good academic standing, doctoral students must meet the following criteria:

- maintain a B average (QPA of 3.00) for each semester and cumulatively
- carry no more than three incompletes or incompletes that have lapsed to the default grade at any one time (see the "Incomplete Grades" policy or more information on incompletes).

### 10.3.1 Doctoral students after coursework

Coursework is considered complete once a student has finished the required units of approved coursework. After that point, doctoral students must meet the following deadlines:

- **Qualifying Exam.** To remain in good standing, full-time students must take the qualifying exam by September 30th of the semester following coursework. If coursework ends during the fall semester, then the exam must be taken by the end of the spring semester. Under extraordinary circumstances, such as military or public service, family or parental leave, or temporary disability, the student may petition the relevant program faculty for an extension commensurate with the duration of the interruption. The department may, upon the program faculty recommendation and with the written approval of the head, allow an extension. Petitions should be submitted along with the Annual Review form.
- **Dissertation Prospectus.** To remain in good standing, full-time students must submit a dissertation prospectus, approved by the student's dissertation committee, to the Director of Academic Affairs within 2 semesters of passing the qualifying exam. For example, if a student passes the qualifying exam in Fall 2019, the student must submit the dissertation prospectus by September 1, 2020. Under extraordinary circumstances, such as military or public service, family or parental leave, or temporary disability, the student may petition the relevant program faculty for an extension commensurate with the duration of the interruption. The department may, upon the program faculty recommendation and with the written approval of the head, allow an extension. Petitions should be submitted along with the Annual Review form.
- **Satisfactory progress toward completing the dissertation.** In order to remain in good standing, the student's committee members and program faculty must agree that the student is making satisfactory progress toward completing the dissertation. Progress will be reviewed

annually. (See the “Annual Review after the First Year” policy.) Progress will normally be gauged by the student’s adherence to a plan for submitting work that the student creates with the dissertation committee and submits to the Director of Academic Affairs with their dissertation prospectus. The plan typically targets a complete draft of one chapter per semester, or an equivalent body of work (e.g., data collection, analysis, archival work) agreed upon with the dissertation committee. The dissertation chair will report to the program faculty on the student’s progress toward the degree. The student will also submit a 1-3 sentence report as part of the annual review.

### **10.3.2 Academic Probation**

Students who fall out of good standing at any point in the doctoral program will be placed on probationary status (aka “Academic Probation”). Students placed on probationary status will be informed of this change in status in writing. These students will work with their advisors and with the Director of Graduate Studies, if necessary, to rectify the situations that have led to probation.

During a semester of probationary status, the student will remain eligible for tuition remission, a research assignment, and, provided the student has met requirements for teaching eligibility, a teaching assignment (see “Eligibility for Classroom Teaching in the Writing & Communication Program” for elaboration of teaching eligibility requirements). A student on academic probation may not serve as a graduate representative to any faculty committee, since the understanding is that the student will need to spend as much time as possible doing the work necessary to be removed from probation.

If, by the end of the semester, the student meets the criteria for academic good standing, the student will be removed from probationary status and returned to good standing. The Director of Academic Affairs will send the student a letter to this effect with a copy to be placed in the student’s file. If, by the end of the semester, the student fails to meet the criteria for good standing, the student will be dropped from the program.

A student who has been dropped from the program under the above provisions may petition the appropriate Program Director for one semester of *extended probationary status*. The program faculty, acting as a committee of the whole, may place the student on extended probationary status for one semester. During a semester of extended probationary status, the student forfeits the doctoral stipend and all related benefits. (See “Stipends and Other Benefits”.)

Students who accumulate 4 semesters on probationary status through multiple lapses of good standing will be dropped from the program whether or not they have returned to good standing after each probationary semester. Students who have been dropped from the program after accumulating 4 semesters on probationary status may petition the Director of Graduate Studies for a one-semester extension if they have evidence of extraordinary mitigating circumstances that have not already been considered. If this petition is unsuccessful, the student may follow the normal departmental and college grievance procedures.

Students accepted into our doctoral programs without a master's degree who are dropped from the program in the first year will not have earned enough units to complete a master's degree. Students in these circumstances may continue to take courses at CMU to complete the required units for a master's degree (90 units (30 credits)); however, they are no longer guaranteed tuition remission and other benefits associated with being a doctoral student in good standing. Students choosing to apply to other doctoral programs can petition those programs to have the units of graduate-level coursework they have completed at CMU credited toward the number of units required to earn a doctorate at those institutions.

NOTE: Only academic-year semesters (Fall and Spring) are counted in calculating probationary periods.

### **10.3.3 Part-time and ABS Students**

#### **10.3.3.1 Part-time Students**

Part-time doctoral students must work with their advisors to produce a schedule for moving through the program they are enrolled in. This schedule must be in writing, with a copy sent to the Director of Academic Affairs for the student's file. Students who move from full-time to part-time status must have such a schedule before they become part-time students. Students entering the program on a part-time basis must have this schedule worked out by the end of their first semester. The schedule will be reviewed as needed, but at least once a year.

#### **10.3.3.2 Students in ABS (*in absentia*) status**

Students who plan to change to ABS (*in absentia*) status must work with their advisors, in consultation with their other committee members if they have finished coursework, on a schedule for fulfilling requirements to remain in academic good standing. This schedule must be spelled out in writing and submitted to the Director of Academic Affairs for the student's file. The schedule must be reviewed and, if necessary, revised by the student and the student's committee once a year for the time the student remains in absentia.

## **SECTION 11: Funding Extension Request in Case of Catastrophic Life Event**

### **11.1 Policy Statement: Catastrophic Life Event Request for Additional PhD Funding**

The English Department recognizes that in extremely rare circumstances a doctoral student may experience hardship due to an unforeseen catastrophic life event. This policy allows a student experiencing such an event to apply for a single-semester extension of funding.

## **11.2 Applicability**

This policy applies to students in good standing. The student's advisor must attest in writing to the fact that the student was making good progress toward the degree before the catastrophic event. A student may apply for this extension no earlier than the last two semesters of their program.

As part of the application process, we will require documentation to establish the timeline and the severity of the event, injury or illness.

## **11.3 Definition of "Catastrophic Life Event"**

This policy applies to a limited number of unforeseen catastrophic life events, such as: the death of a spouse, domestic partner, or child; sudden severe injury or illness to a spouse, domestic partner, or child, or sudden severe injury or life-threatening illness to the student making the application.

## **11.4 Review and Adjudication**

Applications and supporting documentation for a catastrophic life event request are reviewed by the Executive Committee of the Department of English, which will make a recommendation to the Head. The Head will grant or deny the extension based on factors including the Executive Committee recommendation, supporting documentation, and budgetary constraints.

The granting of an extension is dependent on the availability of funds. The student, the student's advisor, and the DGS should work together to explore all funding opportunities at the university level and beyond in the eventuality that the departmental budget may not be equipped to support the extension.

## **Appendix A**

### **Graduate Mentor Program**

The Graduate Mentor Program helps incoming MA and doctoral students adjust to graduate study, build relationships with current students, develop professional skills, and prepare for future careers. Incoming students will be automatically assigned a student mentor, and current doctoral students will have the option to opt-in to the program each academic year.

MAPW students receive mentorship through the 76-700 Professional Seminar, the Career & Professional Development Center (CPDC), and advising from the MAPW Director.

The department regards mentoring as a mutually beneficial form of professional practice. The program supports incoming students while giving participating doctoral students experience in establishing and sustaining effective mentoring relationships.

The following guidelines apply to doctoral student mentors:

1. **Matching and notification.** Incoming MA and doctoral students will be matched with current doctoral students based broadly on shared interests or goals. Incoming students and participating mentors will receive information about the program before the semester begins.
2. **Initial contact.** The mentor will contact the mentee and invite them to an in-person or Zoom meeting. During this meeting, the participants should become acquainted, discuss shared interests, and identify the forms of support most useful to the mentee.
3. **Areas of guidance.** Mentees may seek advice on topics including:
  - a. navigating graduate study, including course selection, time management, and departmental expectations and practices;
  - b. professional development, including conference participation, curriculum vitae development, reading scholarly journals, and developing research skills; and
  - c. career planning, including applying to doctoral programs, maintaining work-life balance, developing an academic specialization, and exploring careers in research, teaching, administration, and related fields within or beyond universities.

Doctoral students who are considering careers outside academia should also consider enrolling in 76-700 Professional Seminar and meeting with Kristen Staunton at the CPDC.

4. **Frequency and timing of meetings.** Mentors and mentees should meet in person or by Zoom twice each semester for approximately 30 minutes, although they may meet more often or for longer periods by mutual agreement. Mentors will be given a DineX card by the Associate Director of Academic Affairs at the beginning of each semester to buy coffee for these meetings. The meetings should include:
  - a. an introductory meeting during the first two weeks of the semester; and
  - b. a midsemester meeting to discuss the mentee's coursework, progress toward professional goals, and general well-being.

## Key Offices for Graduate Student Support

Information on general CMU resources and support programs for graduate students can be found at the following web sites:

[Graduate Education Office](#)

The Graduate Education Office provides central support for all Master's and Doctoral students with a focus on their academic experience at CMU. The Graduate Education Office serves as a hub for connecting graduate students to relevant campus experts and resources to support their academic

success, understanding of university level policies and practices and to assist them in advancing their personal and professional development.

Examples of resources offered through the Graduate Education Office include- but are not limited to:

- Website with university resources, contact information for CMU programs and services, calendar of events related to graduate students
- Bi-monthly email to all graduate students with information on activities, resources and opportunities
- Professional Development Seminars and Workshops
- GSA/Provost Conference Funding Grants
- GSA/Provost Small Research Grants (GuSH)
- Consultations on issues related to the graduate student experience

The Graduate Education Office also works with the colleges and departments by informing and assisting in developing policy and procedures relevant to graduate students and working with departments on issues related to graduate students. Additionally we partner with many other offices and organizations, such as the Graduate Student Assembly, to support the holistic graduate student educational experience.

#### [Office of the Dean of Student Affairs](#)

The Office of the Dean of Students provides central leadership of the metacurricular experience at CMU, including the coordination of student support. Vice President of Student Affairs and Dean of Students Gina Casalegno leads the Division of Student Affairs which includes the offices and departments listed below (not an exhaustive list).

Graduate students will find the enrollment information for [Domestic Partner Registration and Maternity Accommodations](#) in the Office of the Dean of Students or on their [website](#). This Office also manages the [Emergency Student Loan \(ESLs\)](#) process. Emergency Student Loans are made available through generous gifts of alumni and friends of the university. The Emergency Student Loan is an interest-free, emergency-based loan repayable to the university within 30 days. Loans are available to enrolled students for academic supplies, medication, food or other expenses not able to be met due to unforeseeable circumstances.

Additional resources for graduate students include [College Liaisons](#) and the [Student Support Resources](#) team. [College Liaisons](#) are senior members of the Division of Student Affairs who work with departments and colleges addressing student concerns across a wide range of issues. College Liaisons are identified on the student SIO page in the Important Contacts list. The Student Support Resources team offers an additional level of support for students who are navigating any of a wide range of life events. [Student Support Resources](#) staff members work in partnership with campus and community resources to provide coordination of care and support appropriate to each student's situation.

The Division of Student Affairs includes (not an exhaustive list):

- [Athletics, Physical Education and Recreation](#)
- [Career and Professional Development Center \(CPDC\)](#)
- [Center for Student Diversity and Inclusion](#)
- [Cohon University Center](#)
- [Counseling & Psychological Services \(CaPS\)](#)
- [Dining Services](#)
- [Office of Community Standards and Integrity \(OCSI\)](#)
- [Office of Student Leadership, Involvement, and Civic Engagement \(SLICE\)](#)
- [University Health Services \(UHS\)](#)
- [Wellness Initiatives](#)

#### [Center for Student Diversity & Inclusion](#)

Diversity and inclusion have a singular place among the values of CMU. The Center for Student Diversity & Inclusion actively cultivates a strong, diverse and inclusive community capable of living out these values and advancing research, creativity, learning and development that changes the world.

The Center offers resources to enhance an inclusive and transformative student experience in dimensions such as access, success, campus climate and intergroup dialogue. Additionally, the Center supports and connects historically underrepresented students and those who are first in their family to attend college in a setting where students' differences and talents are appreciated and reinforced, both at the graduate and undergraduate level. Initiatives coordinated by the Center include, but are not limited to:

- First generation/first in family to attend college programs
- LGBTQ+ Initiatives
- Race and ethnically-focused programs, including Inter-University Graduate Students of Color Series (SOC) and PhD SOC Network
- Women's empowerment programs, including Graduate Women's Gatherings (GWGs)
- Transgender and non-binary student programs

#### [Assistance for Individuals with Disabilities](#)

The Office of Disability Resources at CMU has a continued mission to provide physical, digital, and programmatic access to ensure that students with disabilities have equal access to their educational experience. We work to ensure that qualified individuals receive reasonable accommodations as guaranteed by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. Students who would like to receive accommodations can begin the process through [Disability Resources' secure online portal](#) or email [access@andrew.cmu.edu](mailto:access@andrew.cmu.edu) to begin the interactive accommodation process.

Students with physical, sensory, cognitive, or emotional disabilities are encouraged to self-identify with the Office of Disability Resources and request needed accommodations. Any questions about the process can be directed to [access@andrew.cmu.edu](mailto:access@andrew.cmu.edu), or call (412) 268-6121.

Students with disabilities are encouraged to self-identify with the Office of Disability Resources by contacting Catherine Getchell, 412-268-6121, [getchell@cmu.edu](mailto:getchell@cmu.edu) to access the services available at the university and initiate a request for accommodations.

### **Eberly Center for Teaching Excellence & Educational Innovation**

We offer a wide variety of confidential, consultation services and professional development programs to support graduate students as teaching assistants or instructors of record during their time at CMU and as future faculty members at other institutions. Regardless of one's current or future teaching context and duties, our goal is to disseminate evidence-based teaching strategies in ways that are accessible and actionable. Programs and services include campus-wide Graduate Student Instructor Orientation events and our Future Faculty Program, both of which are designed to help participants be effective and efficient in their teaching roles. The Eberly Center also assists departments in creating and conducting customized programs to meet the specific needs of their graduate student instructors. Specific information about Eberly Center support for graduate students is found at [www.cmu.edu/teaching/graduatestudentsupport/index.html](http://www.cmu.edu/teaching/graduatestudentsupport/index.html).

### **Graduate Student Assembly (GSA)**

The Graduate Student Assembly (GSA) is the branch of CMU Student Government that represents, and advocates for the diverse interests of all graduate students at CMU. GSA is composed of representatives from the different graduate programs and departments who want to improve the graduate student experience at the different levels of the university. GSA is funded by the Student Activities Fee from all graduate students. GSA passes legislation, allocates student activities funding, advocates for legislative action locally and in Washington D.C. on behalf of graduate student issues and needs, and otherwise acts on behalf of all graduate student interests. Our recent accomplishments are a testament to GSA making a difference, and steps to implementing the vision laid out by the strategic plan. <https://www.cmu.edu/stugov/gsa/About-the-GSA/Strategic-Plan.html>.

GSA offers an expanding suite of social programming on and off-campus to bring graduate students from different departments together and build a sense of community. GSA is the host of the Graduate Student Lounge on the 3<sup>rd</sup> floor of the Cohon University Center- a great place to study or meet up with friends. GSA also maintains a website of graduate student resources on and off-campus. Through GSA's continued funding for professional development and research conferences, the GSA/Provost Conference Funding Program and GSA/Provost GuSH Research Grants are able to run, as managed by the Graduate Education Office. As we move forward, GSA will continue to rely on student feedback to improve the graduate student experience at CMU. Students should feel free to contact us at [<gsa@cmu.edu>](mailto:gsa@cmu.edu) to get involved, stop by our office in the Cohon University Center Room 304 or become a representative for their department.

### **Office of International Education (OIE)**

CMU hosts international graduate and undergraduate students who come from more than 90 countries. The Office of International Education (OIE) is the liaison to the University for all

non-immigrant students and scholars, as well the repository for study abroad opportunities and advisement. OIE provides many services including: advising on personal, immigration, study abroad, academic, and social and acculturation issues; presenting programs of interest such as international career workshops, tax workshops, and cross-cultural and immigration workshops; international education and statistics on international students in the United States; posting pertinent information to students through email and the OIE website, and conducting orientation and pre-departure programs.

### [Veterans and Military Community](#)

Military veterans are a vital part of the CMU community. Graduate students can find information on applying veteran education benefits, campus services, veterans groups at CMU, non-educational resources and international military service information through the Veterans and Military Community website. There are also links and connections to veteran resources in the Pittsburgh community. The Naval ROTC and Veteran Affairs Offices are located at [uro-vaedbenefts@andrew.cmu.edu](mailto:uro-vaedbenefts@andrew.cmu.edu), 412-268-8747.

### [CMU Ethics Hotline](#)

The health, safety and well-being of the university community are top priorities at CMU. Accordingly, CMU provides a hotline that all members of the university community should use to confidentially report suspected unethical activity relating to areas below:

- Academic and Student Life
- Bias Reporting
- Environmental Health and Safety
- Financial Matters
- High-Risk Incident
- Human Resource Related
- Information Systems
- Research
- Threat of Business Interruption
- Threat of Violence or Physical Harm
- Title IX

Students, faculty and staff can anonymously file a report by calling 877-700-7050 or visiting [www.reportit.net](http://www.reportit.net) (user name: tartans; password: plaid). All submissions are reported to appropriate university personnel.

**The hotline is NOT an emergency service. For emergencies, call University Police at 412-268-2323.**

### Policy Against Retaliation

It is the policy of CMU to protect from retaliation any individual who makes a good faith report of a suspected violation of any applicable law or regulation, university Policy or procedure, any contractual obligation of the university, and any report made pursuant to the CMU Code of Business Ethics and Conduct.

### Childbirth/Maternity Accommodation

Students whose anticipated delivery date is during the course of the semester may consider taking time away from their coursework and/or research responsibilities. Any student who gives birth to a child while engaged in coursework or research is eligible to take either a short-term absence or formal leave of absence. Students are encouraged to consult with relevant university faculty and staff as soon as possible as they begin making plans regarding time away.

- Students must contact the Office of the Dean of Student Affairs to register for Maternity Accommodations. Students will complete an information form and meet with a member of the Dean's Office staff to determine resources and procedures appropriate for the individual student.
  - Planning for the student's discussion with appropriate academic contact(s) (advisor, associate dean, etc.) may be reviewed during this meeting.
- Students in coursework should consider options for the semester of the anticipated birth such as working with their course instructors to receive incomplete grades, electing to drop to part-time status or taking a full semester leave of absence.
- Students engaged in research must work with their faculty to develop plans for the research for the time they are away and for resuming upon return.
- Master's students who receive an academic stipend funded by CMU are eligible to continue to receive stipend funding for up to six (6) weeks during a Short-Term Maternity Accommodation or a Formal Leave of Absence. Continued academic stipend funding may be extended by two (2) weeks, for a total of eight (8) weeks, if an absence longer than six weeks is medically necessary. To receive this support students must be registered with the Office of the Dean of Students.

### Consensual Intimate Relationship Policy Regarding Undergraduate Students

This policy addresses the circumstances in which romantic, sexual or amorous relationships/interactions with undergraduate students, even if consensual, are inappropriate and prohibited. The purpose of this policy is to assure healthy professional relationships. This policy is not intended to discourage consensual intimate relationships unless there is a conflicting professional relationship in which one party has authority over the other as in the policy.

## **Key Offices for Academic & Research Support**

### Computing and Information Resources

Computing Services provides a comprehensive computing environment at CMU. Graduate students should seek Computing Services for information and assistance with their Andrew account, network

access, computing off-campus, campus licensed software, email, calendar, mobile devices, computer security, cluster services and printing. Computing Services can be reached at [it-help@cmu.edu](mailto:it-help@cmu.edu).

The CMU Computing Policy establishes guidelines and expectations for the use of computing, telephone and information resources on campus. The policy is supported by a number of guidelines graduate students should know. The policy and guidelines are available at:

<http://www.cmu.edu/computing/guideline/index.html>.

### **Student Academic Success Center**

- **Tartan Scholars**

The Tartan Scholars program was created to provide support for limited resourced students through an intentional first year undergraduate experience with the goals of enhancing the cohort's skill and community building through a lens of self-authorship, growth mindset, and a sense of belonging. As part of the Student Academic Success Center, Tartan Scholars are invited to join the University and participate in summer initiatives and pre-orientation activities prior to their first year at the University.

There are opportunities for graduate students to serve as accountability, learning, or development partners, workshop facilitators, and presenters. Contact Diane Hightower at [ddhight@andrew.cmu.edu](mailto:ddhight@andrew.cmu.edu) for more details.

- **Learning Support**

- **Supplemental Instruction:** Supplemental Instruction (SI) is an academic support model that utilizes peer-assisted study sessions. The SI program provides regularly scheduled review sessions on course materials outside the classroom. SI is a non-remedial approach to learning as the program targets high-risk courses and is available in select courses based on data related to past student performance and feasibility.
- **Peer Tutoring:** Weekly Tutoring Appointments are offered in a one-on-one and small group format to students from any discipline who need assistance with a course that may not be supported by our other services. Weekly appointments give students the opportunity to interact regularly with the same tutor to facilitate deeper understanding of concepts. Students can register online through the Student Academic Success website.
- **Academic Coaching:** Academic Coaching provides holistic one-on-one peer support and group workshops to help students find and implement their conditions for success. We assist students in improving time management, productive habits, organization, stress management, and study skills. Students will request support through the Academic Success Center website and attend in-person meetings or meet using video and audio conferencing technology to provide all students with support.
- **"Just in Time" Workshops:** The Student Academic Success team is available to partner with instructors and departments to identify skills or concepts that would benefit from supplemental offerings (workshops, boot camps) to support students' academic success and learning. We are eager to help convene and coordinate outside of the

classroom skill-building opportunities that can be open to any student interested in building skill or reinforcing course concept mastery.

- **Study Partners:** Support for students to create and benefit from their own study groups: The Student Academic Success team assists students in forming and benefiting from peer study groups, whereby all students can reap the benefits of peer-to-peer learning, student agency, and collaboration skill development. Staff from the Student Academic Success Center will be made available to instructors and students to assist with the formation of peer-led study groups. This level of support is open to any course where the instructor requests or agrees such support is appropriate and students are interested in both leading and participating.

- **Language and Cross-cultural Support**

More than 60% of graduate students at CMU are international students, and others are nonnative speakers of English who have attended high school or undergraduate programs in the US. Many of these students want to hone their language and cross-cultural skills for academic and professional success. Students can choose from sessions on:

- how to give a strong presentation,
- writing academic emails,
- expectations and strategies for clear academic writing,
- how to talk about themselves as a professional in the U.S.,
- developing clearer pronunciation,
- using accurate grammar,
- building fluency, and more.

Students can make an appointment with a Language Development Specialist to get individualized coaching on language or cross-cultural issues.

The Student Academic Success Center is also charged with certifying the language of International Teaching Assistants (ITAs), ensuring that nonnative English speakers have the language proficiency needed to succeed as teaching assistants in the CMU classroom. Students preparing to do an ITA Certification should plan to take classes offered by the language support team at the SASC from the beginning of their first semester. Students should start by contacting the language support team at the SASC website or attend a Language Support Orientation at the SASC or in their department.

### [University Libraries](#)

The University Libraries offers a wide range of information resources and services supporting graduate students in course-work, research, teaching, and publishing. The library licenses and purchases books, journals, media and other needed materials in various formats. Library liaisons, consultants and information specialists provide in-depth and professional assistance and advice in all-things information - including locating and obtaining specific resources, providing specialized research support, advanced training in the use and management of data. Sign up for workshops and hands-on topic-specific sessions such as data visualization with Tableau, cleaning data with OpenRefine, and getting started with Zotero. Weekly drop-in hours for Digital Humanities and for Research Data

Research Management are scheduled during the academic year. Students should start at the library home page to find the books, journals and databases they need; to identify and reach out to the library liaison in their field; to sign up for scheduled workshops; and to connect with consultants in scholarly publishing, research data management, and digital humanities.

### [Office of Research Integrity & Compliance](#)

The Office of Research Integrity & Compliance (ORIC) is designed to support research at CMU. The staff work with researchers to ensure research is conducted with integrity and in accordance with federal and Pennsylvania regulation. ORIC assists researchers with human subject research, conflicts of interest, responsible conduct of research, export controls, and institutional animal care & use. ORIC also provides consultation, advice, and review of allegations of research misconduct.

## **Key Offices for Health, Wellness & Safety**

### [Counseling & Psychological Services](#)

Counseling & Psychological Services (CaPS) affords the opportunity for students to talk privately about academic and personal concerns in a safe, confidential setting. An initial consultation at CaPS can help clarify the nature of the concern, provide immediate support, and explore further options if needed. These may include a referral for counseling within CaPS, to another resource at CMU, or to another resource within the larger Pittsburgh community. CaPS also provides workshops and group sessions on mental health related topics specifically for graduate students on campus. CaPS services are provided at no cost. Appointments can be made in person, or by telephone at 412-268-2922.

### [Health Services](#)

University Health Services (UHS) is staffed by physicians, advanced practice clinicians and registered nurses who provide general medical care, allergy injections, first aid, gynecological care and contraception as well as on-site pharmaceuticals. The CMU Student Insurance Plan covers most visit fees to see the physicians and advanced practice clinicians & nurse visits. Fees for prescription medications, laboratory tests, diagnostic procedures and referral to the emergency room or specialists are the student's responsibility and students should review the UHS website and their insurance plan for detailed information about the university health insurance requirement and fees.

UHS also has a registered dietician and health promotion specialists on staff to assist students in addressing nutrition, drug and alcohol and other healthy lifestyle issues. In addition to providing direct health care, UHS administers the Student Health Insurance Program. The Student Health Insurance plan offers a high level of coverage in a wide network of health care providers and hospitals. Appointments can be made by visiting UHS's website, walk-in, or by telephone, 412-268-2157.

### [Campus Wellness](#)

At CMU, we believe our individual and collective well-being is rooted in healthy connections to each other and to campus resources. The university provides a wide variety of wellness, mindfulness and connectedness initiatives and resources designed to help students thrive inside and outside the classroom. The BeWell@CMU e-newsletter seeks to be a comprehensive resource for CMU regarding all wellness-inspired events, announcements and professional and personal development opportunities.

### Religious and Spiritual Life Initiatives (RSLI)

CMU is committed to the holistic growth of our students, including creating opportunities for spiritual and religious practice and exploration. We have relationships with local houses of worship from various traditions and many of these groups are members of CMU's Council of Religious Advisors. We also offer programs and initiatives that cross traditional religious boundaries in order to increase knowledge of and appreciation for the full diversity of the worldview traditions. Our RSLI staff are here to support students across the spectrum of religious and spiritual practice and would be more than happy to help students make a connection into a community of faith during their time at CMU.

### University Police

412-268-2323 (emergency only), 412-268-6232 (non-emergency)

The University Police Department is located at 300 South Craig Street (entrance is on Filmore Street). The department's services include police patrols and call response, criminal investigations, fixed officer and foot officer patrols, event security, and crime prevention and education programming as well as bicycle and laptop registration. Visit the department's website for additional information about the staff, emergency phone locations, crime prevention, lost and found, fingerprint services, and annual statistic reports.

CMU publishes an annual campus security and fire safety report describing the university's security, alcohol and drug, sexual assault, and fire safety policies and containing statistics about the number and type of crimes committed on the campus and the number and cause of fires in campus residence facilities during the preceding three years. Graduate students can obtain a copy by contacting the University Police Department at 412-268-6232. The annual security and fire safety report is also available online at <https://www.cmu.edu/police/annualreports/>.

### Shuttle and Escort Services

Parking and Transportation coordinates the Shuttle Service and Escort Service provided for CMU students, faculty, and community. The [Shuttle & Escort website](#) has full information about these services, stops, routes, tracking and schedules.