Why GRADUATE STUDIES in ENGLISH?

The English Department at Queen’s University is a professionally-oriented research department whose faculty members are distinguished by both scholarly prowess and teaching excellence. Students in the MA and the PhD programs take courses that involve a wide range of critical methodologies, historical periods, and literary genres; they also take a pedagogical and professional skills course that ranges from academic counselling to grant applications to mentoring undergraduate students.

“I have been at Queen’s for both my MA & PhD, and I can say it’s an outstanding program. The library collections are among the best in the country. The size of the program is ideal […] and, probably most importantly, the faculty are both accomplished and approachable at the same time.”

– Robyn Carruthers, PhD

Why QUEEN’S?

The Master’s and Doctoral programs in English at Queen’s are among the oldest and most prestigious in the country, combining commitment to historical breadth with promotion of methodological and disciplinary innovation. The department’s vibrant intellectual community is developed and sustained by the synergies between the knowledge and passion of our distinguished faculty and the ideas and inspirations of our outstanding graduate students.

Offered by Queen’s since 1942, the PhD in English is designed to foster the scholarly development of our students; we prioritize mentorship, professionalization, and intellectual exchange while maintaining an abiding excitement about our students’ autonomous programs of research. The department is small enough that students get to know our faculty, yet large enough to boast faculty expertise in all major historical periods and a wide array of critical methodologies for literary study.

Fields of STUDY

- Medieval Literature
- Renaissance Literature
- Restoration & 18th-Century Literature
- Romantic Literature
- Victorian Literature
- Modernist Literature
- American Literature
- Canadian Literature
- Indigenous Studies
- Gender Studies
- Postcolonial Studies
- Literary Theory

We encourage you to identify an area of research interest and contact a potential supervisor before applying.

Visit the English Department website to read faculty profiles and learn more about faculty members’ research areas. When you find a faculty member with similar research interests to yours, contact him/her and tell them about your interest in graduate work and related experience. This is also an opportunity for you to find out if the faculty member is accepting new graduate students to supervise. Meet with your potential supervisor at departmental events for prospective students.

Program STRUCTURE

PhD (4 years): course work, two-part comprehensive examination (Field Examination and Special Topic Presentation), and dissertation.
ACHIEVE YOUR ACADEMIC GOALS

- Key priorities include developing relationships with members of your cohort and pursuing courses in your field of study while fulfilling historical breadth requirements.
- Meet early with your supervisor to set expectations and discuss roles, responsibilities, program requirements, resources, research/occupational goals, timelines, and any required accommodation plans.
- Look to Student Academic Success Services and Expanding Horizons for a variety of supports.

MAXIMIZE RESEARCH IMPACT

- Think about audiences for your research.
- Complete ROMEO online module on research ethics if doing research with living people or sensitive topics.
- Apply to SSHRC, OGS, and other funding.
- Attend conferences in your field.

BUILD SKILLS AND EXPERIENCE

- Serve on departmental, faculty or university committees. Talk to the Graduate English Society for tips on getting involved.
- Consider positions in student services, the SGPS, or media outlets like the Queen's Journal, CFRL, and the SBS Blog. Look in the AMS Clubs Directory.
- Use a Teaching Assistant or Research Assistant position to develop your skills and experience.

ENGAGE WITH YOUR COMMUNITY

- Consider volunteering with different community organizations, such as Literary Kingston, Kingston WritersFest, the Wolfe Island Writer's Festival.
- Participate in your graduate and professional community through activities such as graduate student outreach programs, organizing conferences, and research groups like Material Matters.

LAUNCH YOUR CAREER

- Finding career fits starting with knowing yourself. Take a Career Services career planning workshop or meet with a career counselor for help. Check out books like So What Are You Going to Do With That? or The Academic Job Search from the Career Resource Area for advice on various career options.
- Start reading publications like University Affairs and the Chronicle of Higher Education, browse non-academic labour market websites.
- Stay on the lookout for special events like Graduate Student Career Week to explore your career pathways.

YEAR I

- Complete two field exams in your area of specialization in the fall.
- Assemble your supervisory committee (including supervisor and second reader). Set up regular meetings with your supervisor to discuss progress and obstacles to timely completion. Seek experiential professional development opportunities.

YEAR II

- Attend or present at a graduate conference such as Violation Representations in Literature and Culture, an Interdisciplinary Graduate Conference at McGill University.
- Expand your research audience through social media.
- Apply for the Graduate Dean's Travel Grant for Doctoral Field Research.

YEAR III

- Continue researching and begin writing your dissertation. Year III is the one in which students often find the most difficult to be productive.
- Ensure you have completed language requirements and the upper-year elements of ENGL 900.
- Check out the SGPS Dissertation Boot Camp or Dissertation on the Lake for writing help.
- Use conference presentations to create, discuss, and explore ways to disseminate research findings. Learn from the Expanding Horizons: Publishing workshop.

YEAR IV & TRANSITIONING

- Plan date of thesis submission for examination.
- Present your research at conferences and work with supervisor to prepare for defence.
- Review submission and examination guidelines.
- Secure necessary oral defence accommodations.
- Discuss career pathways, references, letters, and publication options with your supervisor.

WHAT WILL I LEARN?

A graduate degree in English can equip you with valuable and versatile skills, such as:

- Knowledge and technical skills
- Effective communication skills
- Research skills
- Time management
- Project management
- Professionalism

WHERE CAN I GO?

A PhD in English can take your career in many directions. In Canada, less than 40% of all PhDs will work in post-secondary education – the majority will work in industry, government, or non-profits.

- Writing
- Editing
- Publishing
- Teaching
- Law
- Civil service
- Business
- NGO work
- Information technologies
- Taking time to explore career options, build experience, and network can help you have a smooth transition to the world of work after graduation.

Visit careers.queensu.ca/gradmaps for the online version with links!
Application FAQs

What do I need to know to APPLY?

ACADEMIC REQUIREMENTS
- M.A. degree with minimum average of B+ (77-79%).
- Cumulative minimum average of A- (80%) in 10 full-year English Literature courses (or equivalent).

ADDITIONAL REQUIREMENTS
- Statement of Intent
- Writing sample to be sent directly to English Department
- If English is not a native language, prospective students must meet the English language proficiency requirements in writing, speaking, reading, and listening. The School of Graduate Studies requires the following minimum scores: TOEFL (paper-based): 550, (2) TOEFL iBT: Writing (24/30); Speaking (22/30); Reading (22/30); Listening (20/30), for a total of 88/120 (applicants must have the minimum score in each test as well as the minimum overall score), or (3) IELTS: 7.0 (academic module overall band score), or (4) PTE Academics: 65.

KEY DATES & DEADLINES
- Application due: January 15.
- Notification of acceptance: March and April.

Before you start your application, please review the Graduate studies application process.

What about FUNDING?

Minimum funding guarantee for PhD students: $20,000/year, throughout years 1-4. The funding package may be comprised of Queen's Graduate Awards, Teaching Assistantships, or named internal Fellowships.

We encourage all students to apply for external funding from OGS, SSHRC and other sources. Queen's will automatically issue a $10,000 award to winners of federal government tri-council awards for PhD studies. For more information, see the School of Graduate Studies’ information on awards and scholarships.