

Queens College

English MA Handbook

2024–2025

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* For general info on Queens College's academic policies and procedures, please consult the [QC Handbook for Graduate Students](#).

Welcome to the Queens College English MA program! This handbook is designed to help you find your feet at Queens College and plan your progress through the program. It is intended as a summary of important and useful information, not as a replacement for regular conversations with the Director of Graduate Studies (DGS), Prof. Bill Orchard; with the Assistant DGS, Prof. Cliff Mak; and with other members of the English Department faculty, especially those whose scholarly interests and enthusiasms correspond with your own.

You can also find more info on our [department website](#).

Degree Requirements

The QC English MA program is a 30-credit program (see the English MA Advising Worksheet at the end of this handbook). These credits are distributed as follows:

- 2 foundational courses (**English 701** and **English 636**), typically taken in a two-semester sequence during a student's first year in the program;
- 7 elective courses;
- **English 791** (the thesis essay).

English 701: Theory and Practice of Graduate Methodology (3 credits)

This course will introduce students to the skills they'll need to succeed in graduate level coursework and research. It begins by examining scholarship in "English" to understand the kinds of questions, methods, and ideas that have engaged and continue to engage the field today. Like most disciplines, literary scholarship is divided into many subfields. Some are organized by historical markers, such as Victorian or early American literature, and some are organized by approaches, like cultural studies or feminist theory/criticism. One of the goals of this course is to help students navigate their interests within the discipline and begin to carve a place for themselves within subfields and their scholarly conversations. In order to do this, the course may focus on how literary theory, archival work, and close reading (as some examples) are used to generate research questions and intervene in already existing scholarly debates. In part, the work in this course will be technical. Students will spend time exploring journals, books, and databases to learn how to read and manage already existing scholarship. The course will also devote time to students' own writing to prepare them for producing thesis-driven, research-based, and theoretically grounded papers in their courses and, eventually, for their culminating thesis essay project.

English 636: History of Literary Criticism (3 credits)

This course is an introduction to literary criticism and theory. It will consider the ways in which thinkers from diverse disciplines and intellectual traditions have provided answers to the following questions: What is literature? How do we determine the meanings of a text? What is the relationship between an author, a text, a reader, and context? What role does a text play in representing or even producing our conceptions of reality? The course may begin by reading foundational figures like Plato, Aristotle, and Hegel before turning to theoretical perspectives (such as Marxism, psychoanalysis, deconstruction, formalism, new historicism, feminism, queer theory, postcolonialism, critical race theory, affect theory, and disability studies) that inform much of contemporary literary criticism. Literary theory allows us to connect literature to larger political and philosophical questions in the world. To that end, we will strive to understand theoretical texts on their own terms and work to think *with* them so that we can ask more compelling questions about the literary works that we analyze.

Note: In special circumstances, **ENGL 736: Studies in Criticism** may be substituted for the ENGL 636 requirement. To request permission, please email the DGS. If approved, the DGS will submit a Requirement Waiver/Substitution Form to the Registrar on your behalf.

7 electives courses (21 credits)

An elective is any course of your choosing at the 600 or 700 level (excluding the creative writing workshops and craft classes, ENGL 751–763, that are reserved for MFA students). Electives are chosen by the student, in consultation with the faculty and/or the Directors of Graduate Studies. Every semester, a range of electives are offered in British, American, and other Anglophone literatures (current course descriptions can be seen [here](#)). We encourage you to use your electives to begin to develop a specialized area or areas of study and to explore a range of subfields, including but not limited to Gender and Sexuality Studies, Postcolonial and Global Studies, African American Studies, Asian American Studies, Latina/o/x Studies, Rhetoric and Composition Studies, Drama and Performance Studies, Children's and Young Adult Literature, Comics and Graphic Narratives, and Speculative Fiction. [Profiles for all full-time English faculty](#) and their areas of specialization may be found on the English Department website.

English 791: Thesis Course (3 credits)

In their final semester in the program, students work independently on a culminating thesis essay, of publishable article length (25–30 pages), under the guidance of a faculty advisor and in the context of a 3-credit course (ENGL 791). The thesis essay is usually a revision of a paper written for a graduate course or (less typically) a new research project, as judged appropriate by the student's faculty advisor and the Director of Graduate Studies. Students have the opportunity to participate in writing workshops throughout the semester and, upon completing their thesis essay, have a conference (sometimes referred to as an oral

exam) in which they discuss their project with their advisor and a second faculty reader. The semester before you plan to graduate, you will receive a separate Guide to ENGL 791, which includes info on how to sign up for ENGL 791 and details about the thesis essay requirements and process. You can also find more info about the thesis essay at the [Current Students](#) page on the department website (scroll down and click the tab “MA Thesis” to access this more detailed information).

Advising

It is important that you develop strong advising relationships with English faculty members who specialize in the fields of study that most interest you. But for general advisement and for all issues concerning program policies and procedures, it is best to email or make an appointment with the DGS or Assistant DGS.

Prof. William Orchard, Director of Graduate Studies

Graduate Studies Office: Klapper Hall 604

Faculty Office: Klapper Hall 604

Email: william.orchard@qc.cuny.edu

Prof. Cliff Mak, Assistant Director of Graduate Studies

Faculty Office: Klapper Hall 641

Email: cmak@qc.cuny.edu

You can also email the general MA email account at MAEnglish@qc.cuny.edu.

English MA Listserv

Important info about the program, including upcoming deadlines and events, will be announced via the English MA listserv (maenglish@lists.qc.cuny.edu). The Director of Graduate Studies will subscribe students to this list upon entry into the program. To unsubscribe or change your subscription settings, please visit [this link](#). *Note:* If you reply to a message sent to you via the listserv, it will be sent to the DGS, not to the entire list. If you wish to send out a message to the list, you must contact the DGS and receive permission first.

Getting Started

All students enrolled in the English MA program must have a/an:

CUNYfirst account (and CUNY Login)

Your CUNYfirst account gives you access to the registration system, your finances, and academic records. To set up your CUNYfirst account, go to home.cunyfirst.cuny.edu and click on "New User." Be sure to make careful note of your CUNY Login username, password, and 8-digit CUNY ID# (otherwise known as your EMPL ID). Your [CUNY Login](#) will also be used to log into [Brightspace](#) and the [online databases accessed through the library](#). Please note that your CUNY Login username (which usually ends with @login.cuny.edu) is not the same as your QC email address (which usually ends with @qmail.cuny.edu).

Office 365 email account

After claiming a CUNYfirst account, students can access their Office 365 email account, which is used for all official QC correspondence. Office 365 uses the same username and password as CUNYfirst. (If you have trouble logging in, try the same username but with @qmail.cuny.edu instead of @login.cuny.edu.)

CAMS/QC username

You will use your CAMS/QC username account to obtain your ID card, access campus wi-fi, and login to computers on campus and various other QC-specific platforms and apps. To set up your account, go to <https://cams.qc.cuny.edu/>. Your pin # for CAMS should be the last 6 digits of your CUNY ID# (or EMPL ID).

QCard (or QC ID card)

Your QCard will allow you to access campus, enter and check out materials from Rosenthal Library, use Q-Bucks, etc. You can obtain your QCard after activating your CAMS account by first submitting your photo online (see instructions on how to submit an acceptable photo at [this link](#)). Once your photo has been approved, your QCard will be printed out and dropped off with the Public Safety Office located at the campus Main Gate for pick-up. You must bring two photo IDs as proof of identification (e.g., driver's license, state-issued non-driver ID, old college ID, and/or a passport) when picking up your QCard. For more info, see the [QCard information webpage](#).

Planning Your Schedule

All MA classes during the fall and spring semesters are offered in two time slots, 4:40– 6:30pm and 6:40–8:30pm. There is no required course load for students, who are encouraged to take between 1 and 4 classes a semester, depending on their other commitments. The majority of English MA students take 2–3 courses a semester. You are expected to earn your degree within 4 years.

A few English MA elective courses (taught by a combination of full-time and part-time faculty) are also offered during two summer sessions: Session 1 runs for 4 weeks in June (four times a week in the evening), and Session 2 runs for 6 weeks from early July to mid-August (twice a week in the evening).

Preregistration

In your first semester, the Director of Graduate Studies will register you to ensure that you are enrolled in the classes you need and want. In subsequent semesters, the DGS will announce dates and instructions for preregistration, which will give you the opportunity to register early for courses for the upcoming semester. Please look out for these announcements, which will be emailed to you via the MA listserv and publicized on the department website. Course descriptions are also posted on a board outside the Graduate Studies office in Klapper 604.

Additional Coursework Opportunities

The English Department offers a broad range of graduate seminars every semester. But it's also possible to earn elective credit by organizing an independent study and/or by taking relevant graduate-level courses in other departments at Queens College, as well as at other English departments across the CUNY system.

Independent Study (English 795)

Independent studies provide students with the opportunity to work one-on-one with a faculty member on a particular topic or interdisciplinary subfield (as long as the topic or subfield has not been taught recently in our regular course offerings). If you are interested in doing an independent study, you should first arrange a preliminary meeting with a full-time faculty member (if they are available and willing) to talk over the aims, scope, and content of your proposed study. An independent study sign-up form (including the title of the study, short course description, preliminary reading list, and work to be assessed) must be submitted to the DGS for approval by early August for

the fall semester and early January for the spring. To obtain the sign up form, contact the DGS at the beginning of this process. The workload for an independent study should be comparable to a regular 3-credit MA elective course.

While students are encouraged to engage in independent work with English faculty, the MA program is designed for a careful balance between independent and classroom experiences. For this reason, students may register for no more than 2 independent studies during their time in the program. Asynchronous independent studies (where the student and faculty member are not able to meet regularly in-person or virtually) are not permitted.

Taking a course at another CUNY institution

With an ePermit and the permission of both the Director of Graduate Studies and the course instructor, you may take graduate classes at other CUNY campuses, including the Graduate Center. This is a good option if there is a specialized field or emerging subject area that is not typically offered among our department's course offerings, or if there is a professor at another CUNY campus that you especially admire and wish to work with. If you plan to take courses at a university outside of CUNY, you should consult first with the DGS. Note that ENGL 701 and ENGL 636, the two required foundational classes for the English MA, must be taken at Queens College. ePermit classes are counted as transfer credits. Please note that no more than 12 credits total may be transferred from any other programs or campuses. Further info about ePermits can be found [here](#).

Beyond the Classroom

At Queens College, we believe that graduate study should be a collaborative and social endeavor, both in and outside the classroom. Thus, we encourage our students to take full advantage of the dynamic community of writers and scholars in the English Department, on campus, and across the CUNY system. QC's [MFA program](#) hosts a series of lively events every semester, including readings, book launches, and roundtable discussions. You may also want to check out programming at [the CUNY Graduate Center](#), especially if you're thinking about pursuing a PhD. Many of our faculty also teach courses at the GC and are involved in organizing a number of talks and field-specific colloquia. Your Queens College ID grants admission to all events at the GC. We will send announcements via the MA listserv about upcoming events.

MA Conference

Our annual student-organized English Graduate Conference offers a great opportunity to learn about and participate in an important and vital aspect of academic professional life. The conference usually takes place in before spring break, though planning begins early in the fall semester. All members of our graduate student community are invited and encouraged to take part, whether as conference organizers, presenters, or audience members.

Nancy Comley Prize

Named for the long-standing Chair of the English Department, the annual Nancy Comley Prize was established in 2011–12 to honor the best essay written by an English MA, MAT, or MS Ed student. The prize is sponsored by the English Department Alumni Fund. Submission guidelines are distributed via the MA listerv in April, and the winner is typically honored in at the Writing Prizes Ceremony in May.

Rosenthal Library

We recommend bookmarking the [Queens College Library website](#) and referring to it often. The website serves as a library handbook with policies and services and is a gateway to the online CUNY library catalog [OneSearch](#), as well as databases and other electronic resources that can be accessed off campus using your [CUNY Login](#). A service called [CLICS](#) allows you to request a book from any CUNY library and have it delivered to Queens College. If a book or article is not available anywhere within CUNY, then [ILLiad](#) (Interlibrary Loan) is another way to obtain them. [Prof. Leila Walker](#) is the Digital Scholarship Librarian and is affiliated with the English Department. She can help you with any research-related questions; you can email her at leila.walker@qc.cuny.edu.

Academic Policies and Procedures

For more info about the general academic policies and procedures listed below, please consult the [QC Handbook for Graduate Students](#).

Academic Calendar

You can find the CUNY Academic Calendar with important dates and deadlines at <https://www.cuny.edu/academics/academic-calendars/>. You can find the QC-specific calendar at <https://www.qc.cuny.edu/communications/calendar-page/>.

Transfer Credits

Upon entry, the MA program allows you to transfer up to 12 credits for graduate-level English courses that you have taken either at another university or at Queens College within the past 8 years and for which you have earned a grade of B or better. Both the Director of Graduate Studies and the Office of Graduate Admissions must approve all transfer credits that will appear on your graduate transcript without a letter grade.

If you wish to transfer credits, please contact the DGS, who will help you submit an [Advanced Standing Evaluation form](#). For credits earned at another university, you will need to show a copy of your transcripts listing the credits you wish to transfer, as well as course descriptions or syllabi if the course content is not clear from the transcripts. Please do so ASAP, as the College will only permit you to transfer credits during your first two semesters as a matriculated student in the MA program.

Withdrawals

It may happen that you need or decide to withdraw from a course once the semester has started. Withdrawing requires no special approval and can be done via your CUNYfirst. The deadline to drop a course with a grade of W, which does not impact your GPA, is usually the last day of classes. (Please be courteous and let your professor know if you decide to withdraw from their class.)

An unofficial withdrawal (that is, if you simply stop coming to class and do not withdraw before the deadline) will be marked on your transcript as a WU. This grade is the equivalent of an F and will have a negative impact on your GPA.

Incompletes

If you are prevented, for “a good and sufficient” reason, from completing a class, then it is possible to request a temporary grade of “incomplete” (INC) from your professor. Make a plan with your professor to resolve your INC ASAP. All INCs must be completed within 1 calendar year (for example, if you receive a temporary grade of INC in Fall 2022, you must complete all outstanding coursework and receive a letter grade by the end of Fall 2023). Please note that QC is now enforcing the policy for grad students that any INCs not resolved within 1 year will be converted to failing grades (FIN), negatively impacting your GPA. Also note that students who have INCs on their record are not allowed to preregister for classes without approval from the DGS.

GPA Requirement

Students must maintain a **3.0** or **B** average in order to remain in good academic standing in the program and to graduate.

Applying for Re-entry

There is no formal process for taking a leave of absence from the program. If you decide not to register for classes during a regular fall or spring semester, then your record will become inactive and you will need to file for re-entry into the program. [Re-entry applications](#) must be filed online through the Office of Graduate Admissions.

Your application must be filed at the latest by August 15 for fall admission; by January 15 for spring admission; and by May 15 for the two summer sessions. Please note that there is a nonrefundable reentry application fee of \$20. As long as there are no issues on your academic record, you should be accepted automatically. (If there are any issues, such as a long absence or a low GPA, the DGS will need to contact the Dean of the School of Arts & Humanities, cc-ing Grad Admissions, to request approval of your re-entry application.)

Time to Degree

All requirements for the English MA must be completed within 4 years. If you need more time to complete your degree, please contact the Director of Graduate Studies, who will contact the Dean of the School of Arts & Humanities, cc-ing the Registrar, to request an extension on your time to degree. (This is often necessary for re-entry students who have been inactive for a couple years or more.)

Graduation

At the start of your final semester, you must file for graduation via your CUNYfirst.

- For fall, the filing deadline is **November 1** for a January 1 degree conferral.
- For spring, the filing deadline is **March 1** for a May/June degree conferral.
- For summer, the deadline is **July 1** for a September 1 degree conferral.

It is a good idea to confirm with the Director of Graduate Studies when you think you've met all the requirements for graduation. There will be an announcement via the MA listserv about our departmental graduation ceremony, which usually happens every spring immediately after the campus-wide commencement ceremony.

Maintenance of Matriculation

CUNY regulations require graduate students to be enrolled during the semester in which their degree is awarded. If you have completed all your coursework for the degree and are not officially registered for any classes during the semester in which you plan to graduate (which typically happens when students are finishing up INCs from previous semesters), then you must apply for [Maintenance of Matriculation](#) (MAM) in order to be eligible to graduate.

QC Offices and Contacts

English Department

For general inquiries not specific to the MA program (e.g., for faculty contact info), please consult the [English Department website](#) or contact the English Department Office (english@qc.cuny.edu, 718-997-4600). Questions that are specific to the English should be directed to the DGS (MAEnglish@qc.cuny.edu).

QC Hub

The QC Hub is a centralized location with staff from the Registrar, the Bursar, Financial Aid, etc., and is the easiest way to get any financial or registration problems resolved and your bureaucratic questions answered. You can make a virtual appointment with them via the [QC Navigate app](#) (using CUNY Login) or email them at OCHub@qc.cuny.edu. More information on their hours and service is available on the [QC Hub webpage](#).

ITS (Information Technology Services)

For help with online account or tech issues (including setting up your CUNYfirst, CAMS, and Office 365 accounts), contact [ITS](#). You can try [live chat support](#) (Mon–Thu 9am–10pm; Fri 9am–5pm), call them at 718-997-4444 (Mon–Fri 9am–5pm), email support@qc.cuny.edu, or [submit a ticket online](#). You can also check their [knowledge base for potential solutions to common issues](#).

Graduate Admissions

Jefferson Hall 105
718-997-5200 / grad@qc.cuny.edu
<https://www.qc.cuny.edu/ga/>

Counseling Services

Frese Hall, 1st Floor
718-997-5420 / CounselingServices@qc.cuny.edu
<https://www.qc.cuny.edu/cs/>

You can also connect with a trained crisis counselor 24/7. Text CUNY to 741741.

More info about CUNY mental health services at
<https://www.cuny.edu/currentstudents/student-affairs/student-services/counseling/>

Health Services

Frese Hall, 3rd Floor (Mon–Fri 9am–4pm)

718-997-2760 / healthquestions@qc.cuny.edu
<https://www.qc.cuny.edu/health/>

Office of Special Services for Students with Disabilities

Frese Hall 111
718-997-5870 / QC_SPSV@qc.cuny.edu
<https://www.qc.cuny.edu/sp/>

Center for Career Engagement and Internships

Frese Hall 213
718-997-4465 / qc_career@qc.cuny.edu
<https://www.qc.cuny.edu/academics/cei/>

Public Safety

718-997-5912 or 718-997-5911 (available 24/7)
<https://www.qc.cuny.edu/ps/>

Queens College English MA Advising Worksheet

Directors of Graduate Studies:

Prof. Bill Orchard (worchard@qc.cuny.edu) + Prof. Cliff Mak (cmaak@qc.cuny.edu)

Name:	CUNY ID #:
Semester Admitted:	Expected Graduation:

Course Number and Title	Term	Grade
ENGL 701: Seminar in Graduate Methodology		
ENGL 636: History of Literary Criticism (or ENGL 736: Studies in Criticism, with DGS permission)		
Elective 1:		
Elective 2:		
Elective 3:		
Elective 4:		
Elective 5:		
Elective 6:		
Elective 7:		
ENGL 791: Thesis Course		
Date of conference/oral exam:		

ENGLISH 795 –**INDEPENDENT STUDY SIGN-UP FORM**

Submit this form via email to the Director of Graduate Studies at MAEnglish@qc.cuny.edu. All information must be **typed**.

Student Information Name:

CUNY ID# (8-digit):

Contact email:

Independent Study Information (to be filled out by the instructor)

Title of Study:

Instructor:

Description:

Assignments/Expectations:

Instructor Signature: _____ Date: _____