

Graduate Student Checklist – Finishing and Getting the Degree

I. Requirements for the Degree

To graduate with the master's degree in English, students must follow the **Graduation Outline**, which consists of ten (10) 3-unit courses (with various requirements and prerequisites attached), and one 3-unit **culminating experience** course (English 6710 or English 6720). The English MA therefore = min. 33 units.

Your seminars/courses count toward the degree if you receive a final grade of B (3.0) or better in the course.

You are eligible to graduate if you have an **overall 3.25 GPA in the required coursework**.

If you want to begin and finish the degree in two years, you should 1) adhere to the Graduation Outline requirements, 2) take 5-6 courses the first year, 3) take 4-5 the second, and 4) begin work (reading/research) on your culminating experience no later than after two semesters in the program at this pace.

Know CSUB's policies on graduate studies: <https://www.csub.edu/catalog/2023-2024-division-graduate-studies>.

II. The Culminating Experience: Comprehensive Examination, or Thesis, or Project

General Information

Plan on beginning your reading/research/writing well before the semester you intend on graduating.

A culminating experience is **EITHER** the **Comprehensive Examination (English 6710)** **OR** a **Thesis** or **Project (English 6720)**. (See descriptions of your choices, below.)

A committee of three professors, your **Graduate Committee**, will usher you through your culminating experience and, in the case of theses and projects, will be those who sign off on your **Prospectus** and attend your **Oral Defense** (which might take place on Zoom). Choose a chair for your committee and ask them to be your chair; in coming to a decision, feel free to consult with the graduate program director (the Chair is usually the professor whose specialization is closest to your thesis/project topic). See **The Role of the Graduate Committee Chair**, below.

A **Prospectus** presents the scholarly rationale for your thesis or project, and it must be approved by all three members of your Graduate Committee (see the Instructions for Writing a Prospectus, and samples, on our website); do not begin your thesis/project without a prospectus that was approved at least the semester before you intend on finishing and graduating, and keep in mind that professors are unlikely to be able to provide feedback on work presented to them near the end of the semester (many professors will wait until the following semester to review late-semester work, and this goes for thesis/project chapters, as well).

Oral defenses often take place in graduate or other department courses once your committee approves the thesis/project. Consult your committee chair or the graduate program director about scheduling a defense; no matter what, alert the graduate program director of when and where it is taking place so that the entire department (professors, students, staff) can be invited (technically, defenses are open to the entire campus, and we do alert the Graduate Student Center of defenses). During your defense, you will explain and present your thesis/project in a presentation of around 20 minutes and field questions from your committee or other attendees (visual accompaniments welcome). Following a successful defense, the members of your graduate committee will sign the signature sheet for your thesis/project so you can submit it to the Walter Stiern Library fully completed (create a signature sheet by looking at the thesis samples you see on our website, then ask your chair to send it to the department's administrative coordinator, who will send it out for electronic signing). Let your chair know you need to defend in time to generate a signature sheet and meet the **library deadline**, which is always on the university's **Academic Calendar** (see our website and the WSL library website for more information).

The Role of the Graduate Committee Chair

The graduate committee chair is key in assisting you through the culminating experience process. The graduate committee chair will assist you in generating research questions, determining the target literature, helping create the project structure, and selecting an appropriate methodology, while maintaining enough distance to ensure that the culminating experience reflects your own individual intellectual effort. When applicable, the graduate committee chair (or graduate program director) can recommend other professors to be on your committee. The graduate committee chair communicates the expectations and processes you will follow. Once a proposal or plan is approved, the chair will have primary responsibility for the supervision of your work. Your chair will also inform you of the style and format required by the department, program, and university for formatting the final thesis or project, but keep in mind that sample theses and projects have been uploaded to our site.

Enrolling in English 6710 or 6720

Being sure to include your Student ID number in the email, contact the Graduate Program Director when you need to enroll in English 6710 or 6720, which could be the semester you begin working on your prospectus or at least the semester you plan on finishing up. Since you can enroll in the course before you finish your degree requirements, you do not need to worry about a grade (CR/NC) until the semester you actually finish. At that point, contact the Graduate Program Director and make sure that a grade is entered for the course.

The Comprehensive Exam

For the Comprehensive Examination you must take **three essay tests in three different fields** that correspond to our **comp exam reading lists** (see our website for the lists). Students usually take the tests on separate days. For each test you will most likely be given a choice of two questions (that you will not see in advance), and you will have two hours to write (bring a bluebook). You can take the tests in areas of your choosing, including in areas in which you have had a seminar/course. Once you know your areas, ask the professors who specialize in those areas to be members of your **Graduate Committee** (no matter what, a committee must be made up of three professors). Ask one of the professors to be your **committee chair** or the person you can turn to for general questions about the culminating experience. In visiting members of your committee to discuss the readings, be prepared: tell them what you have read and your thoughts on what you have read; and if you have any questions about the readings, prepare those questions carefully; further, be sure to plan any visits with professors in case they need to know in advance what you will want to discuss or want to advise you on what to read next.

The graduate program director can help in scheduling the tests and can also proctor tests if members of your graduate committee are unavailable.

You can take all the tests in one semester or stretch out the process. Each test can be retaken one time if you do not pass (CR/NC). The CSU requires that exams be kept in department records. For more information about the exam, see our department website.

The Thesis or Project

Students who choose the thesis/project option often do so because a class or something they read in a class inspired them to pursue a particular question or topic. Theses/projects can be on literary, linguistic, rhetorical, or pedagogical topics; projects can also include creative portions. See the samples on our website for the range of student interests they represent. As stated above, in **General Information**, you will need a **three-professor Graduate Committee**, and one professor on that committee must be your **chair and mentor** (usually the professor whose specialization aligns most closely with your topic). Also as stated above, you will need to have a **Prospectus** approved before you begin your thesis/project in earnest, and **you will have to defend your thesis/project orally**.

The CSU requires that a pdf/word copy of your thesis/project be kept in department records, so please send a copy to the Graduate Program Director at the same time you submit it to the library. For more information about the thesis/project, and how to submit it to the library, see our department website.

III. Getting the Degree and Diploma

Through Peoplesoft/MyCSUB the university reminds you to apply for graduation/a grad check, which you should do well before the semester you intend on graduating. There's paperwork and record keeping that must be done for you to receive your diploma; keep in mind that you might need evidence of having completed the degree for the job market. The grad check helps students make sure all required courses have been taken (and following the Graduation Outline will also ensure your successful, timely completion of the degree.

For extra help with getting your degree and diploma, contact the Graduate Student Center. Advisors and staff there thoroughly understand the (always changing) administrative processes of the university. Also be aware that the Office of the Registrar is where grad checks take place and degrees and diplomas are generated.