

Prospective Students: FAQ

1. What should I do if I don't have the 15 hours of undergraduate credit in English at the 2000 level or above (or in related fields) required for admission to the M.A. program?

If you don't have the required hours in English, but you do have a bachelor's degree, you can enroll for undergraduate English classes as a non-degree or post-baccalaureate student to complete the necessary hours. You can consult with the graduate advisor about the appropriate admissions category and the registration process. The English graduate program strongly recommends that you take ENGL 3000: Introduction to Literary Studies as one of these preparatory courses. We also suggest that you take other core English courses such as ENGL 3010: British Literature I, ENGL 3020: British Literature II, and/or ENGL 3030: American Literature to make sure you have a strong foundation for graduate study.

2. How does my GPA affect my application? Is there a minimum GPA required to apply for graduate study in English?

Grades for previous coursework, especially coursework in English and related areas, will be one factor that the admissions committee considers in evaluating your potential for success in graduate study. The committee will expect to see evidence of strong academic ability. If there have been extenuating circumstances that impacted your GPA during your previous studies, you may address that in your statement of intent. The College of Graduate Studies requires a minimum undergraduate GPA of 3.0 in order to be eligible for an assistantship and requires that all applicants have an overall undergraduate GPA of 2.75 (on a 4.00 scale) to be considered for admission. Applicants who attended graduate school at another institution must have a minimum cumulative GPA of 3.00 on all graduate work and a minimum of 2.75 on all undergraduate work to be considered for admission.

3. Who should I ask to provide letters of recommendation?

You should ask individuals who can speak directly about your qualifications, preparation, and potential to succeed in graduate English courses. For M.A. applicants, professors with whom you have taken upper-level English courses and for Ph.D. applicants, professors with whom you have taken M.A. English courses would make good choices. Professors for other courses that have involved substantial reading, writing, and research or professional supervisors who could address your qualifications would also be appropriate. Ask individuals who know you and your work well and can speak about your specific strengths as an applicant.

4. How do I submit my admissions materials?

Once you submit your initial application, you will get an email from the College of Graduate Studies with your M number and an MT mail account. With that information, you set up your Pipeline account and submit your admissions materials through the Graduate Student Portal. Your recommenders will be sent a link through which they can submit their letters electronically. Official transcripts can be sent to GradTranscripts@mtsu.edu.

5. What are you looking for in a writing sample?

A strong writing sample will showcase original critical thinking and ability to analyze details of texts. It will demonstrate ability to effectively support arguments and to stake out positions in existing debates by integrating and synthesizing secondary sources. It will provide an example of your writing style and your potential to complete graduate level work. Select an example of your best work that supports any claims that you make in your statement of intent about your strengths and the areas of study you have pursued and/or hope to pursue. Writing samples should be meticulously polished and proofread.

6. What are you looking for in a statement of intent?

The statement of intent provides you with an opportunity to tell the admissions committee why you want to engage in graduate study in English, what you specifically want to study, and the goal(s) you are pursuing. In the **why** portion of your statement, let us see what excites you about the literature you love or the writing you enjoy. The **what** section should focus on the main area or areas to which you are most drawn. Rather than reviewing courses you have already taken, look through the Graduate Catalog of English graduate courses and comment on courses you want to take and why you want to take them. If you have perused the English Graduate Faculty page and noticed a professor or two you would like to study with, say so—and indicate what you would like to study with them. In the **goals** part of the statement, describe how obtaining the degree will shape what you do next, whether further graduate study, personal development, or employment. As with the writing sample, your statement of intent should be polished and proofread meticulously.

7. Do you award graduate assistantships in the Spring semester?

Assistantships are typically awarded in the fall semester. The deadline for applying for an assistantship is February 1 for the fall semester. If you are applying for spring admission, you can still complete an assistantship application in case an assistantship spot does open up. If a spot is not available in spring, you can be considered the following fall when spots open.

8. Can I apply for a graduate assistantship after I start the program?

Yes. You can complete the assistantship application in a later term by going to the [graduate funding web page](#).

9. What can I expect as a graduate assistant?

Graduate assistants are assigned the equivalent of up to 20 hours of departmental work per week. They receive extensive training and support and have a range of possible assignments which allows them to gain experience in a variety of teaching, research, and administrative settings.

M.A.- level GAs are generally assigned as writing assistants in the University Writing Center for 20 hours a week; occasionally they may be assigned as UWC writing assistants for 10 hours per week and as research assistants for particular professors for another 10 hours per week. Once students have completed 18 hours of coursework, they may be assigned to teach English General Education composition classes (ENGL 1010 or 1020). Before their first time teaching, all teaching assistants are required to enroll in the Seminar in Teaching Composition (English 6821/7821), which is usually offered in the Fall semester.

After their first year, graduate assistants may apply to serve as Program Assistants (peer advisors or program assistants) for the UWC, the General Education English program, or the Graduate Program, based on a record of excellence in tutoring and departmental service. After their first year, Ph.D.-level TAs also have opportunities to be mentored by experienced faculty and develop their own general education literature course (ENGL 2020) and to be mentored by experienced faculty in upper-level undergraduate courses in their fields of specialization.

For more details about assistantship opportunities and expectations, please consult the [Graduate Student Handbook](#).

10. Is financial aid available for graduate students?

Yes. You apply for financial aid by completing the FAFSA. You should regularly check the Financial Aid tab in Pipeline to make sure you don't need to supply any additional information or documentation and check your MTSU email for award information. Additional information about the cost of graduate study at MTSU can be found [here](#) and additional information about applying for financial aid can be found at [MTOneStop](#). Using federal loans will impact the timing of your coursework so be sure to tell the graduate advisor if you are using federal loans.

11. Who should I contact if I have other questions about the English graduate program at MTSU or the application process?

You can contact the graduate program director Dr. Rhonda McDaniel at Rhonda.McDaniel@mtsu.edu or the graduate program advisor Dr. Laura White at Laura.White@mtsu.edu. We will be happy to answer questions over email or set up an appointment to talk with you via phone or Zoom conference.

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