

FAQs

Why do people get an MA in English?

In our experience, students get an MA in English because they love English-language literature or English writing, composition, and rhetoric. They also love being in the classroom and exchanging ideas with their classmates and the professor. Of course, they may also have career plans related to English—though some students just get the MA for the fun of it or for personal growth.

What do people with an MA in English do?

Our students (apart from the ones who are just getting the MA for fun) fall into two main groups: those who move into a career generally or specifically related to English, and those who go on to get a PhD in English. There are many careers related to English. The most obvious ones are specifically in teaching (especially at the community college level) and writing (writing grants or manuals, editing and copyediting, etc.), but there are many other general skills you learn in the MA program that can be applied to careers, e.g., critical thinking, research, organization, etc.

Do you have scholarships or fellowships or opportunities to work?

Unfortunately, we do not have scholarships or fellowships that cover tuition. We do, however, have about a dozen merit-based awards in the department, for instance for the best essay in English Education, the best short story, the best paper in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century studies, etc. Keep an eye out for announcements about those! The awards range between about \$500 and \$2,000. We also have several opportunities to gain some experience and earn some money along the way, all of which are competitive.

Are there job opportunities during the program?

Yes, we have various job opportunities, but they are all competitive, i.e., we can't guarantee anything. Most prominently, we have the TMAC (Teaching Master of Arts Candidate) program where students teach a section of our first-year composition course, ENGL 100B, under the close supervision of one of our faculty in Rhetoric and Composition. The TMAC program only happens in the fall; applications are sent out and selections are made late in the spring semester. Similarly, many of our students work as tutors in our University Writing Center (UWC).

In addition, there are programs like the Equity Scholars or federal work-study—the Graduate Advisor will send out information on those. Finally, we have occasional opportunities like tutoring in other colleges at CSULB, being a graduate assistant, or doing internships at community colleges in the area. All of these are announced in messages from the Graduate Advisor.

How long does the program usually take?

For most students, the program takes four or five semesters. In other words, students take about 8-10 units per semester, and then some take their comps the fourth semester, while others wait until the fifth semester. If you finish your MA program with a thesis, that usually adds a semester or two.

What's the difference between a Master of Arts Degree and a Master of Fine Arts Degree?

The Department of English offers two graduate degrees; each program has its own admissions and degree requirements. The MA in English emphasizes the critical study of literature and writing in English. An MA is the basic requirement for teaching at the college level, especially in junior and community colleges. The MFA in Creative Writing emphasizes the writing of fiction, poetry, and creative nonfiction. An MFA is the standard terminal degree

in creative writing and is accepted by most colleges as the basic credential for teaching.

How much work does the program require?

For every unit of coursework, you usually spend about one hour in class and two hours outside class (reading, writing, researching) per week. So for a four-unit class, for instance, you'll spend four hours per week in class, and you'll probably spend about eight hours per week studying. Of course, the exact number of hours depends on each student, on the time of the semester (usually, there's more work towards the end when you work on your final papers), on your expectations for yourself, etc. We also hope that you'll be reading on your own, independently, in whatever field you find interesting.

How many pages will I have to write for each class?

That depends on the level of the course and each professor's requirements. Most professors require some weekly writing in their seminars, often a mid-term essay or essay exam, and the major writing assignment for most seminars is a 15-20-page research paper.

What if I want to pursue a PhD program after my MA?

Many of our students go on to do PhDs in English or related fields, and we've placed students in PhD programs in places such as UC Riverside, UCLA, USC, UC San Diego, Oregon, Emory, Syracuse, Harvard, etc. As you probably know, however, PhD programs are really competitive to get into. As a matter of fact, even a really good GPA isn't sufficient: you need to become the student who really stands out in terms of their quality, commitment, and work ethic, both in class conversation and in written work. If you're interested in pursuing a PhD, please start bringing that up with your professors early in the program. There's no particular cut-off, but the earlier you can start working on what it takes to get into a PhD program, the better.

Can I do the program online?

We are not big proponents of online education: of course, some students might benefit from it, but the way our courses are structured (mostly around class discussion of the reading assignments) is almost impossible to recreate online. In other words, in our assessment not much learning happens in online graduate courses in English studies. For that reason, you cannot do our MA program online.