

English Graduate Admissions Frequently Asked Questions

Who is eligible to apply?

The following statement is excerpted from the Office of Graduate Education's Admissions Standards webpage:

To be eligible, an applicant must hold or expect to hold prior to matriculation a bachelor's degree from a regionally accredited U.S. college or university, or an equivalent degree from a recognized non-U.S. institution of higher education. At minimum, the applicant needs to demonstrate above average academic performance (B average, usually a 3.0 on a 1.0-4.0 scale) for undergraduate course work and for any post-baccalaureate or graduate course work. Because the number of qualified applicants exceeds the number of spaces available, admission is competitive. Meeting minimum admissions standards does not guarantee admission.

In addition, applicants to the PhD program must hold, or expect to hold prior to matriculation, a master's degree in English or a closely related field.

What is the minimum GPA requirement? Minimum GRE score?

The Office of Graduate Education sets a minimum GPA of 3.0. Our department does not set a minimum GRE score, as our admissions committee evaluates applications holistically. Your Statement of Objectives, letters of recommendation, and writing sample (for creative writing MA applicants and all PhD applicants) typically weigh more heavily in admission decisions than GPA and GRE scores. For applicants who have not had extensive course work in English, the committee will give greater consideration to grades in English classes and GRE scores in order to gain a greater sense of the applicant's skills in English studies. *Note that the admissions committee puts weight on the verbal and analytical writing GRE scores, not the quantitative score.*

My GRE scores are over 5 years old. Do I have to retake the GRE?

We will accept GRE scores over 5 years old, as long as you can either have the scores reported to the Office of Graduate Education or submit a copy of your official score report.

I earned my previous degree in a field other than English. Can I still apply to the program?

Yes, in the past we have accepted students from other disciplines, particularly those that require critical skills similar to those developed in English degrees, if their applications were strong enough. Your statement of objectives should explain why you would like to pursue this degree and how it would fit into your career plans. You would need an excellent writing sample (applicable to creative writing MA applicants and all PhD applicants) and high scores on the Verbal and Analytical Writing sections of the GRE. The GRE Subject Test in Literature is advisable but not required. Finally, it would be most helpful if your three letters of recommendation were from professors in English, or closely related fields, who could attest to your ability to do graduate level work in the discipline.

Individuals who are unsure of whether they would qualify for admission often choose to first enroll in graduate English classes as a post-baccalaureate unclassified (PBU) student. See the **What is a PBU Student?** section at the end of this FAQ sheet.

Can I submit letters of recommendation from employers or professors in fields outside of English?

We will accept these letters. However, be aware that such letters often do not provide the information that the admissions committee needs to best evaluate your potential for graduate study in English. Although your recommenders may be able to attest to your writing abilities, they may not be familiar enough with your ability to interpret or analyze a text, or other such skills that are best assessed in an English class.

Individuals who are not able to obtain recent letters of recommendation from professors in English or closely related fields often choose to first enroll in graduate English classes as a post-baccalaureate unclassified (PBU) student. See the **What is a PBU Student?** section at the end of this FAQ sheet.

What is a critical essay?

Your essay should involve analytical and interpretive writing. It does not need to be a research paper, but your Works Cited should include outside sources.

(For PhD applicants only)

The critical writing sample guidelines specify 15-20 pages. Can I submit an excerpt from a longer work that meets the page guidelines?

Although excerpts are accepted, complete works have the advantage of giving the reviewer a fuller sense of the applicant's writing skills. With an excerpt, the reviewer does not see what precedes or follows it and may not be able to best judge the writer's ability. Our best advice is that you submit what you consider to be your best work. If you choose to submit an excerpt, include an introductory paragraph that summarizes the work, particularly the excluded sections, for the reviewer. MA applicants may not submit excerpts.

How do I apply for the creative writing concentration? Can I be considered for other concentrations if I am not accepted to creative writing?

By submitting a creative writing sample, you are indicating that you are applying for the creative writing concentration. You should also specify your concentration interests in your Statement of Objectives. Since creative writing is an informal concentration within the program, there is no option to specify your concentration on the Graduate Admissions Application form – simply apply for the English program.

If, in the event that you are not accepted to the creative writing concentration, you would like to be considered for another concentration (composition and rhetoric, literary studies, or cultural studies in Asia/Pacific) you should detail your interests in your statement of objectives. In addition, at least one letter of recommendation should attest to your abilities in analytical writing.

How many applications do you receive each year? How many are accepted?

We receive roughly 50 MA and 50 PhD applications each year. Approximately 15-20 MA applicants and 10-12 PhD applicants are offered admission.

How much is tuition? Housing?

Tuition charts are posted on the Registrar's website:

https://manoa.hawaii.edu/records/tuition_fees/tuition.html

See Student Housing Services for housing information: <https://manoa.hawaii.edu/housing/>

Do you have teaching assistantships available? How do I apply for a position?

All applicants are automatically considered for teaching assistantship positions; there are no additional steps to apply. Positions are awarded to the highest-ranking applicants as determined by our admissions committee, so awards are fully dependent upon the strength of your application. For more details on assistantships, see the Financial Aid section of the English Department website: <http://english.hawaii.edu/graduate-program/financial-aid/>

When will admissions decisions be made? How will I be notified?

The English admissions committee typically finishes reviewing PhD applications by early March and MA applications by mid-April. The UHM Office of Graduate Education will mail an official admissions decision letter to the applicant's mailing address on file. Applicants who are accepted to the program will also receive an email from the Graduate Director with details of whether a graduate assistantship position has also been awarded.

I missed the application deadline. What can I do in the meantime?

The English Department only admits students for the fall semesters. Individuals who miss the application deadline often choose to enroll as post-baccalaureate unclassified (PBU) students and take graduate English courses while waiting for the next admission cycle. See the **What is a PBU Student?** section at the end of this FAQ sheet.

What is a PBU student?

Post-baccalaureate unclassified (PBU) students are students who enroll to take classes at UHM but are not admitted to a specific degree program. PBU students are allowed to enroll in graduate English courses (with the exception of ENG 625) with the approval of the instructor and Graduate Director. These courses can later be transferred toward the degree if the student is admitted to the graduate program.

Enrolling as a PBU allows students to demonstrate their abilities in a graduate level English class, become familiar with the faculty and program, and gives them the opportunity to request letters of recommendation from English professors.

Details on how to apply as a PBU can be found on the Office of Graduate Education website:

<http://manoa.hawaii.edu/graduate/content/applying-pbu-student>