

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT THE Ph.D. IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE

May I apply to both the Ph.D. and the M.F.A. programs?

Yes, but if admitted, you will only be admitted to one. The department also offers a joint M.F.A. / Ph.D. program for those students interested in both programs. Only one or two candidates may or may not be admitted into the joint program each year.

May I submit more than three letters of recommendation?

Please plan to send us three, as required, chosen from those who best know you and your work. Due to the large number of applications the committee receives for a limited number of places in the program, submitting additional letters may or may not enhance your application.

May I visit the department before I apply?

While you are certainly welcome to visit campus and the Ithaca community, interviews for prospective applicants can not be arranged. Rather, once admitted to a program, successful applicants are strongly urged to visit, at which point you will have the opportunity to meet individually with faculty and current graduate students.

Do I need to send copies of my transcript and statement of purpose to both the Grad School and the English department?

No, please submit the transcript directly to the English department, and submit your statement of purpose on-line within your application

What type of information do I include in my statement of purpose and what is the desired length?

The Statement of Purpose is a one- or two-page document which states your reasons for undertaking graduate work and explains your academic interests as it relates to your undergraduate and professional goals.

Should I wait until I have all of my letters of recommendation before I mail them in?

Please complete and submit your application on-line by the December 15 deadline. If your recommenders are delayed in submitting their letters, the committee will accept them only under these circumstances

If I apply to the M.F.A./Ph.D. joint-degree program, is it possible to be admitted only to one of the two programs?

It is possible to be admitted only to the M.F.A. program or only to the Ph.D. program, but applying to the joint-degree program does not increase your chances of being admitted to either program.

If I apply to the joint-degree program, and am admitted only to the Ph.D. program, may I nevertheless enroll in the M.F.A.-Fiction or M.F.A.-Poetry workshops?

The M.F.A Fiction and Poetry workshops are offered exclusively for those students in the M. F. A. program. Only on rare occasions may a doctoral student enroll in the workshops.

Who reads the application materials?

The Admissions Review Committee, comprised of a small group of English professors, assesses the Ph.D. applications.

If not admitted, may I request an evaluation of the manuscripts I submitted or a statement about what part of my application was weakest?

The department receives hundreds of applications and can not respond to such requests. It's thus recommended that unsuccessful applicants review their application materials with their undergraduate advisors who best know them and their work.

May I ask someone at Cornell to read and evaluate my manuscript or statement of purpose before I submit my application?

The Admissions Review Committee may only read application materials once they are officially submitted. It's thus recommended that prospective applicants review their application materials with their undergraduate advisor who best know them and their work.

If I do not take the GRE until December, will my application still be considered?

Yes. The rest of your application materials must be submitted by the December 15 deadline, however, your application will not be fully considered until your GRE scores have been received.

I am an international student. If I get accepted into the program, will I receive funding?

Yes. All admitted students, including international students, are offered the same 5-year financial support.

May I transfer credits from another graduate writing program to the Cornell Ph.D. program?

Once admitted, you may apply to the Director of Graduate Studies to have up to three courses transferred and credited towards your program requirements.

What is the M.F.A./Ph.D. joint-degree program?

Each year one or two students may be admitted to both the M.F.A. program in Creative Writing and the doctoral program in English Language and Literature. In their first two years these students take the M.F.A. writing workshops and Ph.D. seminars and write an M.F.A. thesis to receive the M.F.A. degree. In their third year they proceed toward completion of the remaining requirements for the Ph.D. degree, a normative five-year program. Cornell offers only the scholarly Ph.D., not the Ph.D. with creative dissertation.

Do Ph.D students take courses with M.F.A. students?

Yes, English graduate courses are open to all graduate students.

If I earn a Ph.D. at Cornell, may I then apply to the M.F.A. program?

Yes, you may complete one degree and then apply for admission to the other degree program. However, receiving one degree from the English Department does not necessarily increase your chances of being admitted to the other degree program.

What are your placement results? For what kind of job will I be eligible after I graduate?

Approximately 90% of doctoral degree recipients are employed in tenure track positions in English within 3 years of graduation.

Do you provide any placement assistance?

The department offer a full placement consultation service within the department that mentors students and guides them through every detail of the job search, including:

- assembling dossiers,
- partaking in mock interviews to prepare for real interviews at MLA,
- and detailed advice on campus visits.

For further questions, please email us at english_grad@cornell.edu.