



MA in English

Orientation Handbook

August 2022

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I. Welcome to the MA programme at Ashoka!

Here is a brief guide to what we will expect from you as MA students in our programme, and what you can expect from us.

You will need to complete a total of 48 credits, distributed over four semesters, with 12 credits per semester. Each course carries 4 credits. You cannot formally enroll for more than 3 courses per semester. You will be allowed to take one elective outside the department of English.

You are expected to attend all classes, except in case of medical emergencies. Any absences over and above what is permitted by the attendance policies of a class will need to be explained to the professor. In general, please communicate with your professors about any absences, foreseen or unforeseen.

You are expected to arrive in class on time, and to have done all the reading for every class before attending it. Course requirements – which might include online posts, reviews, etc. – need to be fulfilled diligently. Since you are Master's students, professors will not expect to discipline you about fulfilling your course requirements. We simply expect you to attend to them.

In addition to completing all requirements for class, you are also expected to participate verbally in the classroom. Professors will rarely lecture – the Ashoka classroom is a dialogic space.

In case you would like to ask for any extensions on your written requirements, or wish to request an Incomplete at the end of a semester, then please discuss the matter with the professor well in advance. It will be difficult to entertain late requests.

Your end-of-semester essays will take different forms in different classes, but they will all involve producing significant pieces of writing. Again, please speak to your professors about writing your essays.

Make sure your classes work for *you*. Feel free to speak to your professors through the semester about any and all concerns you might have. All professors will have office hours posted on their syllabus. But you can also email professors and ask for an appointment outside those hours, if need be.

The Capstone Thesis Project will be completed under the supervision of an advisor and a second reader. Students must submit and defend a proposal for a Capstone Thesis Project by the end of November in the Monsoon semester of Year 2; they must defend the project by the end of examination week in May of the Spring semester of Year 2.

You have the option of declaring a concentration; if you do, your thesis will be written on a subject that belongs to the subfield covered by that concentration. You can change your concentration at any point. You are not obliged to stick with the

proposal for research that you made in your application materials. We expect you to keep an open mind, and to grow and change. Of course, if you would like to stick to your initial proposal, then that's fine too.

You can approach any member of the Graduate Studies Committee with any suggestions or requests for advice. We are: Rita Kothari (MA director) (rita.kothari@ashoka.edu.in), Alexander Philips (MA Associate Director) (alexander.philips@ashoka.edu.in), Madhavi Menon (menon@ashoka.edu.in), and Jonathan Gil Harris (jgharris@ashoka.edu.in)

II. Programme Overview

The English department's Master of Arts programme will train students to read literature and culture within the framework of an interdisciplinary liberal arts curriculum, under the guidance of internationally acclaimed faculty who are innovative teachers as well as prolifically published scholars. The programme is committed to thinking across boundaries of genre, culture and chronology. Our coursework allows for exposure to a wide array of texts, theories and disciplinary formations from around the world. MA students will also have the opportunity to pursue courses in other departments at Ashoka, thus bringing new lenses to bear on literary studies. Above all, students will pursue their study of literature in relation to the larger world in which we live and ask pertinent questions of it.

Roadmap for the MA Programme

The MA in English is a two-year, four-semester programme. Students are expected to register for and complete 12 credits of coursework per semester. Since each course is the equivalent of 4 credits, this means students will register for 3 courses per semester.

There is one required course each semester: **Seminar in Literary Theory** (semester 1); **Seminar in Writing and Research Methodology** (semester 2); **Graduate Pro-Seminar: Thesis Preparation** (semester 3); and **Graduate Pro-Seminar: Thesis Writing** (semester 4). In addition to these courses, students will take an additional two electives each semester. One of these can be outside the English programme.

The course distribution will, therefore, be as follows:

Year 1, Monsoon Semester:

1. Seminar in Literary Theory (mandatory) (4 credits)
2. Two elective courses, ideally at the 4000-level; classes at any other level will require special permission from the professor (4 credits each)

Year 1, Spring Semester:

1. Seminar in Writing and Research Methodology (mandatory) (4 credits)
2. Two elective courses at the 4000-level; classes at any other level will require special permission from the professor (4 credits each)

Year 2, Monsoon Semester:

1. Graduate Pro-Seminar: Thesis Preparation (mandatory) (4 credits)
2. Two elective courses at the 4000-level; classes at any other level will require special permission from the professor (4 credits each)

Year 2, Spring Semester

1. Graduate Pro-Seminar: Thesis Writing (mandatory) (4 credits)
2. Two elective courses at the 4000-level; classes at any other level will require special permission from the professor (4 credits each)

By the beginning of the third semester, each student must choose their thesis advisor. This should be the professor with whom the student feels most compatible both intellectually and personally. The advisor can be different from the person students might have thought they would work with before entering the programme.

Outline of Required Courses

The four required courses that students will take at specific points across the course of the MA English programme are:

Seminar in Literary Theory: This course will focus on the study of various schools of literary theory. It seeks to examine the bigger questions of literature—ranging from the ways in which texts can engage with various issues to an understanding of how we make meaning—by examining how various theorists have addressed them.

Seminar in Writing and Research Methodology: This course aims to provide clues to read, interpret and write academically. Students will be exposed to methods of gleaning arguments, writing abstracts; identifying archives; learning citation styles and range of methods undertaken to do research.

Graduate Pro-Seminar: Thesis Preparation: The graduate pro-seminar is a two-semester sequence. In the first semester, students will have the opportunity to familiarize themselves with the methodological foundations of thesis writing by engaging with research-active faculty and their writing, learning directly from scholars in the field.

Graduate Pro-Seminar: Thesis Preparation: In the second semester of the graduate pro-seminar, students will workshop their thesis drafts through a series of round tables and conference-style panel presentations, culminating in an academic symposium at which they will present their thesis projects to a larger audience.

Electives

Apart from the required courses, students are free to take elective courses that cater to their individual interests.

The electives offered by the English and Creative Writing Department will vary across several areas and will be taught by our research-active faculty. If students have an area of interest that has not been explored by any of the offered electives, they may also approach faculty to propose the possible creation of an Independent Study Module (ISM) that focuses on the subject in question. The availability of ISMs will depend on the consent of a faculty advisor; these will not be granted simply on demand. Among the total of 12 required courses, students can take up to a maximum of **one** ISM on a topic of their devising.

Among the eight electives students take, **ATLEAST** one must be in seminars whose subjects deal with literatures and cultures from before 1800.

The MA programme emphasizes interdisciplinarity. While students will be exposed to this within English electives, they will also be required to take *one* elective from another department. This will be one of the eight electives they take across the course of the programme, and they may take it at any point across the two years. While one course is the maximum, the MA Director can provide for exceptions to this rule under compelling circumstances.

Requirements for MA students entering from Ashoka's ASP programme in English

Students who are admitted to the MA programme after completing the ASP Advanced Major in English will not receive a diploma for the latter; instead, the ASP year will count as the first year of their MA, the difference being that their ASP capstone thesis will now satisfy the thesis requirement for the MA instead. These students will not have to take any of the required courses during their final year at Ashoka; instead, they will take six elective graduate courses during their one year. A maximum of one of these can be from outside the English programme, and one can be an ISM (with the consent of a faculty advisor).

Concentrations

Within the programme, students have the option of pursuing a **concentration**, and specializing in a particular field. They are also free to follow a general path of literary studies and choose **not** to have a concentration, opting instead to explore various fields. Students who choose to pursue a concentration are required to take a minimum of two electives as well as write a thesis in their field of specialization. Should students select a concentration, it is required that they do so by **the beginning of the third semester**, so that they are able to fulfill these requirements.

The following seven concentrations are being offered for the year 2022-2023:

- South Asian Literatures (SAL)
- Global and Indian Shakespeares (GIS)
- Studies of Gender and Sexuality (SGS)
- Modern Literature and Culture (MLC)
- Global Medieval Studies (GMS)
- Performance Studies (PS)
- Creative Writing (CW)

To know more about these individual concentrations, check the concentrations section at <https://ashoka.edu.in/page/ma-english-280>.

III. Assignments and Assessments

There are many forms of assessed assignments at Ashoka University. These include (but are not confined to) essays, projects, in-class writings, online discussion forum contributions, oral presentations and quizzes. All courses use continuous assessment; any missed assignments will adversely affect your final grade.

Please note also that in-class participation usually counts for a significant portion of your final grade; not contributing to class discussions and/or missing classes will also have a negative impact on your final grade for the course.

Grading System

For every course, you will receive a final letter grade. These grades are calibrated with two numerical scores: the percentage score and the GPA quality points. The grid below decodes the lettered grades that will be followed at Ashoka University, and their relationship to GPA quality points:

Letter Grade	GPA Quality Points
A	4.0
A-	3.7
B+	3.3
B	3.0
B-	2.7
C+	2.3
C	2.0
C-	1.7
D+	1.3
D	1.0
D-	0.7
F	0

Students are expected to maintain a **minimum GPA of 2.7 (B-)** in their coursework, failing which they may not be granted the MA degree at the end of two years.

IV. Plagiarism and Academic Dishonesty

Writing that consciously borrows from another person's work without appropriate acknowledgment challenges the academic integrity of a university community. Clear attribution and acknowledgement of authorship and sources is a practice that Ashoka University seeks to inculcate in its students.

Violating academic integrity is a serious offence. If reported, it will be met with severe disciplinary action and may become a part of your permanent file/show on your transcript.

V. Offices and Centers

Ashoka University has a host of offices and centers with which students can engage. This is a brief mention of the ones that will offer support either in terms of well-being, academics, or both.

Office of Academic Affairs (OAA)

The Office of Academic Affairs (OAA) will facilitate and assist with a whole range of academic functions. They will play a pivotal role in advising and assisting you in navigating your academic pathway towards completing your postgraduate degree. You can write to them at oa@ashoka.edu.in.

Career Development Office (CDO)

The Career Development Office at Ashoka endeavours to help students identify their interests, ascertain their strengths, explore a multitude of opportunities, gain clarity about their goals, and empower them to pursue paths they find personally fulfilling. They offer one-on-one career counselling, internship guidance, and organize multiple career-related events throughout the year, conduct workshops to aid students in perfecting their resumes and cover letters, and prepare them for their interviews. They aspire to personalize the job search for you so that your careers are tailored to your skills and interests. If you have any additional questions or concerns, you may contact them at cdo@ashoka.edu.in.

Office of Learning Support (OLS)

Office of Learning Support (OLS) facilitates academic adjustments and accommodations for students with learning difficulties. The office provides a support system and acts as a resource centre for specific-needs-related information and services at the University. It also works with students who may need help with study skills to manage academic demands in a more effective manner. In case you, as a student, experience any difficulty due to a disability or otherwise, you can always reach out to OLS at ols@ashoka.edu.in.

The Centre for Writing and Communication (CWC)

The Centre for Writing and Communication works with students to help them write cogently and lucidly. They offer one-on-one tutorials, group sessions, or larger workshops that are tailored to specific disciplinary, assignment, and student needs,

including for English language support. Contact them at cwc@ashoka.edu.in or book an appointment with a tutor at <https://ashoka.mywconline.com>.

Ashoka Centre for Well Being (ACWB)

The ACWB is a non-aligned centre offering counselling and psychological support for students, staff and faculty at Ashoka University. The centre provides an emotionally safe space to express your feelings and integrate them with your ambitions, academics and relationships. You can write to them at well.being@ashoka.edu.in or book an appointment with a trained counsellor at <https://acwb.ashoka.edu.in>.

VI. Other Details Related to the MA Programme

Student Representative

Every batch of MA students will elect a representative who will liaise with the Graduate Studies Committee in the department.

Discontinuation

Under exceptional circumstances, students might be asked to leave the programme, or not be granted the MA degree at the end of two years. Such circumstances include the following:

1. Students who do not maintain a minimum GPA of 2.7 (B-) in their coursework.
2. Students who have outstanding Incompletes at the end of the summer after the completion of their fourth semester.
3. Students found to be derelict in their duties as students, TAs and TFs, which include attending classes and meetings, and following up in a timely and responsible manner on matters connected with classes, both ones being attended and taught.
4. Students found guilty of intellectual dishonesty.
5. Students found guilty of sexual harassment.
6. Students in violation of the University's ethical codes in matters of finance.

VII. Graduate Course Offerings for Monsoon 2022

Monsoon 2022

- **Graduate Seminar in Literary Theory:** *Menon and Bazaar** (convening)
- **Masters Pro-Seminar: Thesis Preparation** (capped at 22, team-taught by English faculty; must be taken by 1st-year PhD students and MA students entering from outside Ashoka) *Philips*
- *6 elective Graduate Seminars in English* (capped at 22; taken by ASPs, MAs, PhDs)
 - **Acts of Faith (SAL)**, *Abir Bzaz*
 - **Spectres of Hamlet (GIS/PS)**, *Jonathan Gill Harris*
 - **Film and Psychoanalytic Theory (MLC)**, *Adam Klein*
 - **Fictive Modernities(MLC, SAL)**, *Rita Kothari*
 - **Masculinities in Contemporary Indian Popular Culture(SAL/SGS)**, *Rituparna Sengupta*
 - **Children's Literature(MLC)**, *Geetanjali Chanda*