



# PhD in English

Orientation Handbook

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## Welcome to the PhD Programme at Ashoka!

The PhD in English at Ashoka University admits students who are passionate about literature and the world. Students will study diverse modes of analysing texts, enabling them to formulate questions that are both theoretically rigorous and creatively adventurous. We will also train students in pedagogic practice, emphasising at every stage the dialogic nature of all learning and writing. The PhD in English thus aims to produce colleagues who will inject both academic rigour and intellectual adventurousness into multiple worlds of letters.

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

### Roadmap through the PhD

Two years of course-work – 3 courses per semester - will allow students to study a wide range of theories and texts as they move towards formulating their dissertation topic. At the end of their first summer in the programme, students will be expected to pass a **written qualifying exam** based on a mandatory list of texts. At the beginning of the first semester of their third year, students will be expected to take their **Oral qualifying exams**. At the end of their third year, students will need to produce and then publicly **defend a 10-12 page dissertation prospectus** that will then advance students to the dissertation-writing stage. The fourth and fifth years will be spent in researching and writing the thesis. Dissertation defences are due by the end of Year 5.

**You can approach any member of the Graduate Studies Committee with suggestions or requests for advice. We are:**

**Madhavi Menon** ([menon@ashoka.edu.in](mailto:menon@ashoka.edu.in)) – Director of the PhD programme

**Joost Burgers** ([johannes.burgers@ashoka.edu.in](mailto:johannes.burgers@ashoka.edu.in)) – Associate Director of the PhD programme

**Saikat Majumdar** ([saikat.majumdar@ashoka.edu.in](mailto:saikat.majumdar@ashoka.edu.in)) – Director of the MA programme

**Aparna Chaudhuri** ([aparna.chaudhuri@ashoka.edu.in](mailto:aparna.chaudhuri@ashoka.edu.in)) – Associate Director of the MA

**Jonathan Gil Harris** ([jgharris@ashoka.edu.in](mailto:jgharris@ashoka.edu.in)) – Chair of the Department

## General Expectations

You will sign up for 12 credits – 3 courses of 4 credits each – during each semester of your coursework. You will not be allowed to formally enrol for any more than 3 courses per semester. You will also not be allowed to audit any other courses either within or outside the department. The only exception to this rule will be enrolling for a language course which you will need for your PhD.

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 graduate students, professors will not expect to discipline you about fulfilling your course requirements. We simply expect you to fulfil them.

In addition to fulfilling all the logistical requirements for class, you are also expected to participate verbally in the classroom. Professors will rarely lecture – the Ashoka classroom is a more dialogic one. If you are in a class with other PhD students only, then we expect your participation to be full and enthusiastic. If you are in a class with upper-level undergraduate students as well, then we expect you to exercise your judgment: do not silence yourselves, but equally, try not to speak more than the other students in class. As always, be judicious.

If you would like to ask for an Incomplete at the end of a semester, then please discuss it 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. Speak to other PhD students about the successful essays they have written for class.

Make sure your classes work for **you**. Feel free to speak to your professors throughout 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. Keep an open mind about professors with whom you would like to work on your dissertation committee. You can change your topic or area of interest at any point in your first two years at Ashoka. You are not obliged to stick with the proposal you made in your application materials. We expect you to grow and change. Of course, if you would like to stick to your initial proposal, then that's fine too.

## Programme Requirements

### Coursework

#### Overview

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 for the first two years. The course curriculum has been designed to prepare students for the profession through a series of mandatory courses, while also allowing them to explore their own areas of interest through the graduate level courses available in the Department of English. If a student has a specific course requirement they can avail of several opportunities. Students will also have teaching requirements throughout the curriculum.

PhD students must select at least 7 of their 9 elective courses from the department's 4000-level graduate seminars. With the permission of the DGS, students can take two of their electives in the form of an ISM, an upper-level UG course, or a course in another department.

#### *Undergraduate English Courses*

Graduate students taking classes below the 4000- and 5000-level will be asked to do a long final paper– 15-20 pages long –with an enhanced bibliography of secondary (not primary) texts. Other than this, graduate students will also do oral presentations, if the class requires it. These two requirements aside, students will be exempt from doing mid- semester essays, piazza posts, and any other smaller writing requirements for the course. This will make it more like a graduate- level course for all of you across the board. Students will be expected to think deeply across the semester and come up with one well thought- through essay at the end. Attendance and all other policies will remain as specified on the syllabus.

### *Independent study*

Among the total of 12 required courses, students can take up to a maximum of **two independent studies**. Students can avail of this option if the independent study is not directly related to their dissertation, or is on a topic that is not covered by the available course offerings over the period of their required coursework. All independent studies must be approved by the professor and the Director of the PhD Programme.

### *Courses in Departments Outside of The English Department*

The maximum number of courses you can take in other departments is **three** across two years. The PhD Director can provide for exceptions to this rule under compelling circumstances.

## Qualifying Exams

### Written Qualifying Exam

The list for this exam will involve literature stretching from 800 CE to the present. You will be provided with a list of 100 texts from among which you should pick 25, with the stipulation that at least half the texts should date from before 1800. (See Appendix 1 for the list of 100 texts)

### Oral Qualifying Exam

By the end of the fourth semester, students will also have finished compiling a set of three lists of 25 works for their Oral examinations. In all three lists, we emphasise breadth and extensive coverage. These lists must not be used to develop narrow foci of pre-dissertation interest. Rather, these lists should showcase your ability to have extensive conversations across cultures and chronologies.

1. The three lists should focus, one each, on Period, Method, and Genre. Defined as follows:
  - a. Period
    - i. Should span at least a span of 100 years
    - ii. Does not need to be neatly divided into centuries i.e. 1848 - 1968
  - b. Method

- i. extensive investigation into a theoretical paradigm
  - c. Genre
    - i. extensive, cross-cultural coverage of any one of the following genres:
      1. Epic
      2. Short Story
      3. Novel
      4. Poetry
      5. Drama
      6. Film
      7. Creative Nonfiction (including memoir and autobiography)
  - d. Sample lists:
    - i. List 1:
      1. Period: Renaissance
      2. Method: Psychoanalysis
      3. Genre: Drama
    - ii. List 2:
      1. Period: 19th century Caribbean literature
      2. Method: Postcolonialism
      3. Genre: Novel
    - iii. List 3:
      1. Period: 20th century Indian literature
      2. Method: Queer Theory
      3. Genre: Short Story
- 2. It is expected that all 25 of these texts – or the vast majority of them – will be primary texts. But there is a strong expectation that you will also be well-versed in the secondary literature of the field. It would be advisable to have a conversation with your supervisor about the secondary texts you absolutely must read in preparation for your exam.

3. Each list should aim for as much breadth as possible; please remember that this examination marks the end of your coursework, and should display the breadth of your knowledge. Advisers must sign-off on these lists by the end of the second year. Every student is expected to spend the summer studying for the Orals, and then **take the exam no later than the second week of their fifth semester in Year 3.**

### *Exam format*

Length: 1.5 hours divided into 30 minute conversations per list.

Composition: Three list advisors, one of whom will serve as the student's dissertation advisor.

Prerequisites: All professors must sign off on the lists before May 1st.

Timeline: Every student is expected to spend the summer studying for the Orals.

Scheduling: It is the responsibility of the student to schedule the exam **within the first two weeks of their fifth semester in year 3.**

Proficiency: Students should be comfortable having a conversation across and between lists.

Allotted aids: Students may bring in a copy of each list, but no notes.

**Students will need to pass the Orals in order to continue in the programme.** Distinguished performances will earn the grade of Orals with Distinction. As with the written general exam, students will be allowed a maximum of two attempts, 6 weeks apart, at passing the Orals. Students can file a written appeal to the PhD programme director for an additional two week extension under extenuating circumstances.

### Dissertation

#### **Advisor**

By the end of the fourth semester, each student will have chosen their dissertation adviser. This should be the professor with whom the student feels most compatible both intellectually and personally. The adviser can be different from the person students might have thought they would work with before entering the programme.

## Dissertation Committee/ Student Research Committee (SRC)

At some point between the Orals and the Prospectus defence in Year 3, the student must constitute a dissertation committee. Students should consult with their dissertation advisers in order to constitute their committees. Dissertation committees will have a total of four members, including the primary adviser. Two other members of the committee should be from within Ashoka, and at least one of these members should be from within the English department. The fourth member of the dissertation committee should be from outside Ashoka University, and must be an active academic member of the profession. All members of the committee will be expected to provide, within reasonable limits and throughout the course of the dissertation writing process, feedback to the student on their work, as well as support in terms of bibliographic resources and intellectual networks.

## Prospectus

By the end of Year 3 – i.e., by the end of their sixth semester at Ashoka – students will write a prospectus for their dissertation. This prospectus will include a rationale for, and an outline of the stakes of, the proposed dissertation. There should also be a brief chapter breakdown at the end of the prospectus. The student will work on the prospectus – which should be between 10 and 12 pages – in consultation with their dissertation adviser. By the second week of May, students will need to defend their prospectus to a group of their peers and any interested students and faculty at Ashoka. Two weeks prior to this defence, students will circulate their prospectus to their committee, and meet with them as a group so the committee can determine the student's readiness to go forward with the defence. The prospectus defence will begin with a short introduction by the dissertation adviser, followed by a half-hour description of the prospectus by the student. The last 20 minutes or so of the allotted hour will be devoted to Q and A and suggestions from professors who are present. **All students must pass their prospectus defence before being allowed to embark on writing their dissertations.** After completing coursework, passing the Written and Oral Qualifying exams, and their Prospectus defence, students will officially advance to candidacy.

## Defence

Students will be expected to spend the last two years of their PhD writing their dissertation.

By the end of the summer of Year 5, students must defend their dissertations. The dissertation defence will be two hours long, and will involve an initial oral presentation by the student. (Complete dissertations need to be circulated among the committee at least 4 weeks before the defence.) The remaining time will be spent in Q and A and conversations around the dissertation. **Students will need to pass the defence in order to be eligible for the degree of PhD.**

## Teaching

Throughout the programme, students will have an opportunity to develop their pedagogy. In the Spring semester of Year 1, **TA duties** will involve assisting a professor with the logistical requirements of a Gateway course (Forms of Literature or Literature in the Age of Empire), including collating and doing the readings for the course, managing online platforms for classroom posts, responding to student presentations, etc. You will be required to do all the reading for the class, and any presentations and written assignments that the Professor might ask of you. The TA-ship will be listed on your transcript as a Pedagogy Seminar.

Before advancing to **Graduate Assistant**, students will be asked to complete a mandatory pedagogy training. Following the workshop, PhD students will be assigned as **Graduate Assistants** for the undergraduate Proseminar in the Monsoon and Spring of year 2. In addition to attending every session of the Proseminar, GAs will also be asked to lead a discussion section of that class.

The other 3 semesters of teaching will include:

1. Two semesters (Monsoon and Spring of Year 3) of Graduate Assistantship for the MA Proseminar or the mandatory graduate courses in Literary Theory and Academic Writing.
2. One semester (during any of the following two years) teaching a **Critical Thinking Seminar** (CTS) in the English Department.

## Language

During the course of the five years of their PhD, students are expected to **demonstrate reading and writing fluency in any one other language** (Indian or European), as evidenced by the ability to

translate 2-3 pages of text from that language into English. The language requirement exam should be set up in consultation with the Director of the PhD programme.

## Professional Development

### **Student Representative**

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

### **Conference Travel and Research Assistance**

Ashoka University provides support up to Rs 2 lakhs for research and travel to conferences. More details about this grant will be communicated by the Graduate Research Office. The English department too has limited funds to assist with research. Library requests should be made freely, and we will attempt to acquire all the books and journals that you require for your research.

## Programme Outline

### Coursework

#### Year 1

##### Monsoon Semester

###### *Mandatory Courses*

1. Introduction to Literary Theory

###### *Elective Courses*

1. Two elective courses, at the 4000 level; classes at any other level will require special permission from the professor

##### Spring Semester

###### *Mandatory Courses*

1. Research Methods and Ethics

###### *Elective Courses*

1. One elective course at the 4000-level; classes at any other level will require special permission from the professor

###### *Teaching Requirement*

1. Pedagogy Seminar: TA for one undergraduate class

**End of Summer 1 / Beginning of Year 2: Written Qualifying Exam**

## Year 2

### Monsoon Semester

#### *Elective Courses*

1. Three elective courses, including, preferably, a seminar in Advanced Theory

#### *Teaching Requirement*

1. Pedagogy Workshop
2. GA for the ASP Proseminar

### Spring Semester

#### *Elective Courses*

1. Three elective courses, including, preferably, a seminar in Advanced Theory

#### *Teaching Requirement*

2. GA for the ASP Proseminar

#### *Oral Qualifying Exam*

**Take the exam no later than the second week of the fifth semester in Year 3.**

## Year 3

### *Prospectus: End of Spring Semester*

## Years 4 and 5

### *Teaching*

Teach one Critical Thinking Seminar in one semester of your fourth or fifth year

### *Dissertation*

## Deadlines and Important Dates

Year	Date	Deliverable
2	Two weeks before Monsoon Semester	Written Qualifying Exam
2	Beginning Spring semester	Establish Orals Committee
2	May 1st	Confirm Orals list
3	Within first two weeks after Monsoon semester start	Oral Exam
3	Monsoon semester	Establish Dissertation Committee
3	Before second week of May	Prospectus Defence

## Academic Standing and Review

Each student will receive a brief written review at the end of each academic year from the Director of the PhD programme and the Graduate Studies Committee. The review will establish if the candidate's progress has been **satisfactory** or **unsatisfactory**. Should a student violate the code of conduct outside of their annual review, a special review meeting will be held.

Circumstances under which students might be asked to leave the programme include:

1. Receiving multiple **unsatisfactory** reviews.
2. Failing to clear any of the five required stages of the PhD – coursework, the written general exam, orals, prospectus defence, and dissertation defence.
3. Not maintaining a minimum GPA of 3.0 in coursework.
4. Not finishing Incompletes within one semester of the semester in which the course was taken. This includes the summer semesters. If a student has an Incomplete at the end of their fourth semester, then they will have to complete that by the end of the summer following in order to stay in the programme and be eligible for the Orals.
5. Not having a dissertation advisor. Students need to ensure they have a professor with whom they can work on their dissertation before they can be allowed to proceed to the Orals stage.
6. Failing the written general exam or the oral exam. Each student will be allowed two chances to pass the exam. The second attempt must be made no later than 6 weeks after the first one.
7. Displaying dereliction of duty. Such behavior might include missing a series of classes without notice, shirking their responsibility as TAs and GAs, missing pre-arranged meetings without notice, and not completing academic and non-academic assignments.
8. Being found guilty of intellectual dishonesty.
9. Being found guilty of sexual harassment.
10. Being in violation of the University's ethical codes in matters of finance.

## Course Offerings for Spring 2022

Course Code	Name
ENG-1001	Forms of Literature
ENG-2002	Literature in the Age of Empire
ENG-2331	Critical Thinking Seminar: Writing the Self
ENG-2410	Critical Thinking Seminar: Caste Creativity
ENG-2411	Critical Thinking Seminar: Critical Bhakti
ENG-2330	Introduction to Children's Literature
ENG-2360	Introduction to Rhetoric of Social Protest
ENG-2600	Introduction to Drama and Theatre
ENG-2701	Introduction to Poetry
ENG-3051	Chorality
ENG-3060	A Cultural Reading of India and China: Cultural Networks
ENG-3102	Dream Visions
ENG-3202	Shakesqueer
ENG-3340	Fuzzy Cartographies
ENG-3401	Scripting Caste
ENG-3801	Film Theory
ENG-4002	Graduate Proseminar II: Thesis Writing
ENG-4110	Medieval Travellers
ENG-4203	Apparitions of Macbeth

ENG-4340	World English
ENG-4405	Is There a Modern Indian Literature?
ENG-4502	Global Trans Theory
ENG-4612	Performance/Politics
ENG-4701	The Creative and the Critical Workshop
ENG-4801	History on the Couch: Psychoanalysis and Historical Method
<b>PhD Specific Courses</b>	
ENG-5002	Research Writing and Methods
ENG-5004	MA Proseminar II: Thesis Writing

HIS – History  
 IR – International Relations  
 PA – Performing Arts  
 SOA – Sociology and Anthropology  
 VA – Visual Arts

## Appendix 1: Written Qualifying Exam List

**Note: This list is meant to cover English literature from 800 CE to the present, and at least half the texts you pick (at least 13 of the 25) must date from before 1800.**

### Pre-1800

1. Anonymous, *Beowulf* (trans. Seamus Heaney)
2. Geoffrey Chaucer, *The Canterbury Tales* (The General Prologue, Prologue to and Wife of Bath's Tale, The Clerk's Tale, The Nun's Priest's Tale)
3. Anonymous, *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*
4. Margery Kempe, *The Book of Margery Kempe*
5. Thomas Mallory, *Morte d'Arthur*
6. Anonymous, *Everyman*,
7. *Mystery Plays: The Second Shepherd's Play, Croxton Play of the Sacrament, York Plays: From Creation through Noah*
8. John Mandeville, *The Travels of Sir John Mandeville*
9. Thomas More, *Utopia*
10. Philip Sidney, *The Defence of Poetry*; Thomas Wyatt, *Collected Poems* (pick at least 10)
11. Edmund Spenser, *The Faerie Queene* (Books 1 and 2)
12. Christopher Marlowe, *Dr Faustus, Tamburlaine, The Jew of Malta*
13. William Shakespeare, *Hamlet, Othello, A Midsummer Night's Dream*
14. William Shakespeare, *Sonnets, Venus and Adonis*
15. Ben Jonson, *Volpone, Epicene, Bartholomew Fair*
16. *Metaphysical Poets: John Donne, Andrew Marvell, George Herbert* (at least 10 poems across all 3)
17. John Milton, *Paradise Lost* (Books 1, 2, 4, 8, 9)
18. Mary Wroth, *Urania*

19. Aemilia Lanyer, Collected Poems
20. Margaret Cavendish, The Blazing World
21. Aphra Behn, Oronooko, The Rover
22. Alexander Pope, The Rape of the Lock, An Essay on Man
23. Jonathan Swift, Gulliver's Travels, A Modest Proposal
24. Daniel Defore, Robinson Crusoe, Diary of the Plague Year
25. Laurence Sterne, The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy
26. Henry Fielding, Tom Jones
27. Samuel Richardson, Pamela, or Virtue Rewarded
28. Samuel Richardson, Clarissa
29. John Dryden, Aureng-zebe, An Essay of Dramatick Poesie, Absalom and Achitophel
30. George Etherege, The Man of Mode; William Wycherley, The Country Wife; William Congreve, The Way of the World
31. Oliver Goldsmith, She Stoops to Conquer; Richard Sheridan, School for Scandal
32. Eliza Haywood, Fantomina (1725)
33. Samuel Johnson, The History of Rasselas, Prince of Abissinia , Lives of the Poets
34. James Boswell, The Life of Samuel Johnson
35. Thomas Gray, Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard; William Cowper, Selected Poems (at least 10)
36. John Gay, Trivia: or, the Art of Walking the Streets of London; The Beggar's Opera, Polly
37. Richard Sheridan, The School for Scandal; The Rivals; The Critic
38. William Blake, Songs of Innocence and of Experience, The Marriage of Heaven and Hell
39. Matthew Lewis, The Monk
40. Frances Burney, Evelina; Maria Edgworth, Belinda
41. Ann Radcliffe, The Mysteries of Udolpho
42. Lord Byron, Manfred and Don Juan
43. William Godwin, Caleb Williams (1794)
44. William Wordsworth, The Prelude (1805)

45. Samuel Taylor Coleridge and William Wordsworth, *Lyrical Ballads, with a Few Other Poems* (1798)
46. Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *Rime of the Ancient Mariner*, *Kubla Khan*, *Christabel*
47. John Keats, *Selected Poems* (at least 10)
48. Percy Bysshe Shelley, *The Revolt of Islam*, *Ozymandias*, *Adonais*, *The Triumph of Life*
49. Mary Shelley, *Frankenstein*
50. Mary Wollstonecraft, *A Vindication of the Rights of Women*

### Post-1800

1. Jane Austen, *Sense and Sensibility*
2. Emily Brontë, *Wuthering Heights*
3. Charlotte Brontë, *Jane Eyre*
4. William Makepeace Thackeray, *Vanity Fair*
5. George Eliot, *Middlemarch*
6. Thomas Hardy, *Jude the Obscure*
7. Charles Dickens, *A Tale of Two Cities*
8. Nathaniel Hawthorne, *The Scarlet Letter*
9. Elizabeth Gaskell, *Cranford*, *North and South*
10. Robert Louis Stevenson, *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*
11. Alfred, Lord Tennyson, *In Memoriam*
12. Christina Rossetti, *Goblin Market*; Dante Gabriel Rossetti, *Selected Poems* (at least 10)
13. Robert Browning, *The Ring and the Book*; Elizabeth Barrett Browning, *Aurora Leigh*
14. Oscar Wilde, *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, *The Importance of Being Earnest*
15. George Bernard Shaw, *Major Barbara*; *Pygmalion*; *Saint Joan*
16. Walt Whitman, *Leaves of Grass*
17. Henry David Thoreau, *Walden*
18. Emily Dickinson, *Selected Poems* (at least 10)
19. Herman Melville, "Beneto Cereno;" "Bartleby the Scrivener"
20. Henry James, *The Portrait of a Lady*

21. Joseph Conrad, Heart of Darkness
22. James Joyce, A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man
23. Edgar Allen Poe, Selected Stories (at least 5)
24. Modernist Poetry: WB Yeats, Ezra Pound, TS Eliot, Selected Poems (at least 10 across the 3)
25. Virginia Woolf, Mrs. Dalloway. Three Guineas
26. Radclyffe Hall, The Well of Loneliness
27. E M Forster, A Passage to India
28. British Playwrights: Samuel Becket, Waiting for Godot;, Caryl Churchill, Top Girls; Joe Orton, Loot
29. Zora Neale Hurston, Their Eyes Were Watching God
30. Chinua Achebe, Things Fall Apart
31. Doris Lessing, The Grass is Singing
32. N'gugi, Decolonising the Mind
33. William Faulkner, The Sound and the Fury
34. Katherine Mansfield, Selected Stories (at least 5)
35. George Orwell, Animal Farm, 1984
36. Ralph Ellison, Invisible Man
37. Toni Morrison, Beloved
38. American Playwrights: Edward Albee: Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf; Tennessee Williams, A Streetcar Named Desire; August Wilson, Ma Rainey's Black Bottom
39. Ted Hughes, Philip Larkin, Seamus Heaney (10 poems across the 3)
40. Sylvia Plath, Adrienne Rich, Audre Lorde (10 poems across the 3)
41. Tony Kushner, Angels in America
42. V. S. Naipaul, A House for Mr. Biswas
43. Derek Walcott, Omeros
44. Jean Rhys, Wide Sargasso Sea
45. J.M. Coetzee, Disgrace, Waiting for the Barbarians
46. Hanif Kureshi, The Buddha of Suburbia

47. Jeanette Winterson, Oranges are not the only Fruit

48. Zadie Smith, White Teeth

49. Alan Holinghurst, The Line of Beauty

50. Eleanor Catton, The Luminaries