



Department of English
ENGL 500—Frequently Asked Questions

WHAT IS ENGL 500?

ENGL 500 is the two-unit culminating experience course required for all MA students in Composition, Rhetoric, and Professional Writing (CRPW) and all MA students in English, including the Creative Writing and Literature concentrations.

HOW WILL I FULFILL ENGL 500?

- **CRPW students** will complete a **thesis** for ENGL 500.
- **Creative Writing** students will take the **Comprehensive Exam** in Creative Writing.
- **Literature** students will take the **Comprehensive Exam** in Literature OR submit a **thesis**. Only students with a GPA of 3.7 or higher are eligible to elect the thesis option.

WHAT ARE THE PREREQUISITES FOR ENGL 500?

Enrollment in ENGL 500 requires the following:

- An approved Advancement to Candidacy on file with the Office of Graduate Studies. You should file your Advancement to Candidacy no later than one semester prior to enrolling in ENGL 500.
- You must have completed, or be in the process of completing, all your graduate coursework during the semester in which you enroll in ENGL 500.
- Your transcript must include no more than one grade of Incomplete.

HOW DO I ENROLL IN ENGL 500?

To enroll in ENGL 500, you must first obtain permission from the English Graduate Coordinator, who will review your eligibility. Permission is obtained by submitting a “Permission to Enroll in 500” form to the Department. Once you submit the form, it will be routed first to your thesis advisors for their electronic signatures (if you are writing a thesis) and then to the Graduate Coordinator. Once the Graduate Coordinator approves your form, the Department staff will enroll you in ENGL 500. **Note:** You cannot self-enroll in ENGL 500.

THESIS STUDENTS (CRPW, LITERATURE)

Please submit the “[Permission to Enroll in 500—Thesis](#)” form together with the following documents:

- A thesis contract, signed by two faculty advisors. Your first reader will furnish you with the contract, which sets out the expectations for completion of the thesis.
- A prospectus
- An unofficial copy of your CSUS transcript.

COMPREHENSIVE EXAM STUDENTS (CREATIVE WRITING, LITERATURE)

Please submit the “[Permission to Enroll in 500—Exam](#)” form together with an unofficial copy of your CSUS transcript.

I AM WRITING A THESIS FOR ENGL 500. HOW DO I FIND THESIS ADVISORS?

If you will be writing a thesis for ENGL 500, you must first arrange a thesis committee consisting of two faculty advisors. To locate thesis advisors, consider those faculty with whom you have taken courses and whose research and teaching interests align with your topic and methodology. You might also wish to consult the program coordinator for your discipline. Please note that thesis advising is an overload duty

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for which instructors receive no additional compensation and that your preferred advisor may not be available to serve on your thesis committee. Please also keep in mind that advisors typically are not available when the University is not in session. You should begin seeking out advisors early in the program and no later than one semester prior to your planned enrollment in ENGL 500.

Reminder: All CRPW students will write a thesis for ENGL 500. Literature students with a GPA of at least 3.7 may opt to write a thesis. The thesis option is not available to Creative Writing students.

WHAT IS THE NATURE OF THE CREATIVE WRITING COMPREHENSIVE EXAM?

All Creative Writing students will take the Creative Writing Comprehensive Exam to fulfill ENGL 500. The exam is given once each semester. Each year, a rotating faculty committee will devise a reading list and exam topics, and then assess submitted exams. The reading list becomes available on the [English Department website](#) one year before the exam is given. The exam consists of two parts: 1) a body of written work that meets the exam committee's specifications; 2) a one-week take-home exam consisting of a variety of questions concerning the material on the master reading list. Creative Writing students who are enrolled in ENGL 500 must attend orientation meetings about the Culminating Exam and must meet with the Creative Writing Program Coordinator.

WHAT IS THE NATURE OF THE LITERATURE COMPREHENSIVE EXAM?

The Literature Comprehensive Exam is administered in a take-home format once per semester. It typically consists of a set of essay prompts drawing from a master list of literary and theoretical texts. Each semester's exam topics and rules are written by a faculty committee, which also assesses the submitted exams. The reading list is comprised of at least 40 primary texts and 5 theoretical or critical works and features works ranging across a wide span of historical periods of British and American literature. The reading list will be made available on the [English Department website](#) one year before the exam. The Graduate Coordinator will hold meetings during the semester for students preparing for the exam.

HOW MANY TIMES CAN I TAKE THE COMPREHENSIVE EXAM?

In accordance with University policy, students may attempt the exam a maximum of two times. Students who fail the exam on the first attempt may attempt it one additional time only.

HOW LONG DOES IT TAKE TO COMPLETE ENGL 500?

Most students taking either the Literature Comprehensive Exam or the Creative Writing Comprehensive Exam complete ENGL 500 in a single semester. Literature students writing a thesis typically require more than one semester to finish.

Once you enroll in ENGL 500, the University requires that you maintain continuous enrollment until your 500 requirement is complete. After one semester of ENGL 500, those students who receive a grade of RP (reasonable progress) can enroll in ENGL 599 (Continuous Enrollment) at a reduced fee instead of registering again for ENGL 500. Students enrolled in ENGL 599 may not enroll in any other courses. After three sequential semesters enrolled in ENGL 599, a student must re-enroll in ENGL 500. To see current fees and apply for continuous enrollment, please visit the OGS form website:

<https://www.csus.edu/graduate-studies/current-students/forms.html>. If you are writing a thesis, you must consult with your advisors as to your completion timeline before enrolling in ENGL 599. Your thesis advisors may not be available to continue working with you if you extend your thesis completion date.

ARE THERE ANY OTHER ADMINISTRATIVE TO-DOS WHEN I AM ENROLLED IN ENGL 500?

The semester you plan to graduate, you must file a [Graduation Application](#) with the Office of Graduate Studies. Please submit a Petition for Exception if your work has deviated from what the information you provided when you filed for Advancement to Candidacy. You must also complete an [OGS Culminating Experience Workshop](#). Consult the OGS website for deadlines; note that deadlines are typically early in the semester.