

**Graduate Student Handbook  
Department of English  
Virginia Tech**

*Policies and Procedures  
2015-2016*

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## Contact Information

### General Contacts

Graduate Life Center at Donaldson Brown MC 0325  
 155 Otey Street  
 Blacksburg, VA 24061  
 (540) 231-8636  
[gradappl@vt.edu](mailto:gradappl@vt.edu)

Department of English MC 0112  
 Shanks Hall 323  
 181 Turner Street NW  
 Blacksburg VA 24061  
 (540) 231-6501

### Department Administration

Joseph F. Eska, Chair  
Anthony Colaianne, Associate Chair  
Jennifer Mooney, Assistant Chair  
Mary Denson Moore, Coordinator of Alumni Relations

### Academic Program Leadership

Charlene Eska, Director of Graduate Studies & Director of the MA Program  
Virginia Fowler, Director of Undergraduate Studies & Director of Literature and Language  
Erika Meitner, Director of Creative Writing-Graduate Program  
Sara Crickenberger, Assistant Director of Creative Writing-Graduate Program  
Matthew Vollmer, Director of Creative Writing-Undergraduate Program  
Carlos Evia, Director of Professional and Technical Writing  
Sheila Carter-Tod, Director of Composition  
Julie Mengert, Coordinator of GTA Education  
Diana George, Director of the Writing Center  
Jennifer Lawrence, Assistant Director of the Writing Center  
Kelly Pender, Director of the PhD in Rhetoric and Writing  
Kaye Graham, Coordinator of Undergraduate Advising  
Jennifer Barton, Internship Program Coordinator  
Jane Wemhoener, Coordinator International Initiatives

### Research Centers

James Dubinsky, Director of the Center for the Study of Rhetoric in Society  
David Radcliffe and Quinn Warnick, Director of Center for Applied Technologies in the Humanities

### Staff

Judy Grady, Fiscal Technician  
Rob Jacks, Undergraduate Program Coordinator  
Patty Morse, Assistant to the Chair  
Sandra Ross, Writing Center Support  
Bridget Szerszynski, Receptionist/Administrative Assistant  
Sally Wieringa, Graduate Programs Support, Web and Publications Support

## Additional Contacts

[Graduate Faculty](#)

[Graduate Teaching Assistants](#)

[Ombudsperson](#)

[Directory](#)

## Calendars

[Academic Calendars](#)

[Course Request Dates](#)

[Timetable Calendars](#)

[Drop/Add calendars](#)

## Department Deadlines

[Grade Deadlines](#)

[Commencement Deadlines](#)

## Registration & Enrollment

### Requirements

Virginia Tech policy requires annually the collection of specific demographic data for each student:

- local mailing address
- emergency contact entry or emergency contact confirmation
- VT Alerts Opt-In or Opt-Out action
- review of the Virginia Tech Student Conduct policy

Students are prohibited from registration until this information is provided. This information can be checked and completed on the “Registration and Schedule” page in [Hokie Spa](#).

### Immunizations

By [Virginia State Law](#) all new students entering Virginia Tech are required to provide an immunization history before the beginning of the second semester or quarter of enrollment. If you do not furnish your immunization history to the [Schiffert Health Center](#), they will place a hold on your schedule that will prevent you from registering or submitting course requests for your second semester. This hold will appear in your listed registration requirements on the “Registration and Schedule” page of [Hokie Spa](#). Please note: oftentimes for graduate students tracking down the proper paperwork takes quite some time, so please be sure to address this issue swiftly.

If there is a medical hold on your schedule:

1. You must complete an Immunization History Form and submit it to the [Schiffert Health Center](#). This form can be [downloaded](#), mailed to you upon request, or picked up from [Medical Records](#).
2. You will also need to obtain documentation of your immunizations signed by a licensed health professional such as your home physician, the [Montgomery County Health Department](#) (540-381-7100), and/or a local Blacksburg/Christiansburg physician. The health center will accept letters or copies of your immunization records as long as they are signed by your

- healthcare provider. In order to avoid confusion regarding acceptable vs. non-acceptable criteria for immunization status, they recommend that you print the Immunization History Form and give it to your health care provider(s) to fill out and sign.
3. To remove the hold on your account, the Immunization History Form and your proof/history of immunization must be submitted in person. They will not accept an email or phone call.

### *Religious and Medical Exemptions*

If the administration of immunizing agents is against your religious or medical tenets or practices, you can fill out the Immunization Religious Exemption Form or Immunization Medical Exemption Form. (Notary services for these forms can be obtained on the second floor of Schiffert Health Center.) Filing for religious or medical exemption means that you understand that in the case of an outbreak, potential epidemic, or epidemic of a vaccine-preventable disease at Virginia Tech, the state health commissioner may order your exclusion from the university for your own protection until the danger has passed.

### *Course Request*

The course request process occurs during an eight-day period in the middle of each semester during which current students may request and be registered electronically for classes for the next semester. Participation in Course Request is critical to your academic planning and a key tool used by the English Department to gauge enrollment demand. Courses that receive a low number of requests may be cancelled while courses that receive a high number of requests may have their capacities increased.

Course Request is accessed in Hokie Spa. You may alter your submitted requests as often as you desire during the allowed timeframe. There is no priority given to processing a request entered on the first day of course request nor is there a penalty for entering a request the final day. However, if you wait until the last day you may experience some difficulty in accessing the system due to the higher volume of activity. Please consult the Course Request dates calendar.

After the department has reacted to the results of the process, you will be automatically registered for the courses you requested. However, the submission of a course request does not guarantee enrollment in any course. After the course request process has ended, make sure to review your Course Request Results and your Class Schedule (both available via Hokie Spa).

### *Drop / Add*

You can make adjustments to your schedule using the web DROP/ADD feature available through Hokie Spa. The Add Period is restricted to a short period at the beginning of the semester while the Drop Period lasts for a larger portion of the semester. Deadlines for these electronic transactions are published in the drop/add calendars for each semester.

You may search for available class sections by using the class timetables, which are also accessed through the Registration and Schedule tab in Hokie Spa. Class locations printed in the timetables are subject to change in accordance with capacity adjustments and actual class enrollments.



### Force Add

When a class is at capacity (listed as Full), the only way you can add it to your schedule is by force-adding. Those authorized to force-add students and the procedures to do so vary depending on the course in question. In general, for graduate level English courses you must contact the Graduate Secretary ([Sally Wieringa](#)). Departments may not Force-Add over published room capacities.

### Late Adds

In rare cases students may add research hours after the add period (within the same semester). If a student who is not enrolled contacts his/her advisor late in the semester for the purpose of continuing research or work on a project, the department should Late Add the student electronically (minimum of 3 credits of research) and have the advisor send an email to the Graduate School explaining the extenuating circumstances that led to the late enrollment.

For regular courses (not research or thesis hours), Late Adds after the semester in which the course was offered are not permitted except under extenuating circumstances that are beyond the control of the student and the advisor. Such Late Adds must have a Graduate Dean's approval.

### Auditing Procedures / Classes Outside of the Program

Audit hours do not count toward the credit hour requirements for full-time enrollment, and courses required for the degree program cannot be audited. Though audited courses do not carry a letter grade (and therefore do not affect your GPA), they are contingent on instructor approval and still cost the same in terms of tuition and fees. Please consult the instructor of the course you wish to audit in order to properly register for his/her course.

### Credit for Previous Coursework

Each graduate student is entitled to transfer up to six equivalent course hours for credit toward his/her degree. Graduate Teaching Assistants with relevant previous coursework should contact Sally Wieringa and Charlene Eska for preliminary approval before the start of their first semester at Virginia Tech in order to see if previous coursework can apply toward the eighteen hours required for completion in the first semester. Previous coursework will officially be credited in the Spring semester of the first year at Virginia Tech with the completion of the Plan of Study paperwork. If you have any questions regarding your eligibility to transfer credit hours from previous coursework, please contact your advisor.

### Justification of Old Work

Any academic work must be "current." Courses, including transfer credits, that are more than five years old at the time the Plan of Study is submitted require a justification for inclusion into the plan. This process is formalized by submitting the Course Justification Request. The Justification form also requires the Major Advisor and Advisory Committee to explain how the student will update her/his knowledge for out-of-date courses. For more details, look over the procedural guidelines.

When accepted, those justifications remain valid throughout the degree unless the student is out of enrollment for a period exceeding one calendar year. Being out of enrollment causes problems not only for transfer credits, but also with regards to courses that may have been taken while in residence at Virginia Tech. Consequently,

students must do their utmost to stay continually enrolled and to remain in close contact with their Major Advisor and Advisory Committee.

## Leaving / Returning Mid-term

### Military Accommodations

The university has a number of accommodations in place for students called to active military duty. For details please consult the [registrar's webpage](#), or call (540) 231-6252.

### Maternity / Sick Leave/Leaves of Absence

A student may request a Leave of Absence to suspend activities associated with course work or thesis/dissertation research. The [Request for Leave of Absence Form](#) must be submitted two weeks before the beginning of the semester for which the leave is requested. The leave of absence must be approved by the student's advisor and the Department Head or Graduate Program Director before submission to the Graduate School. If a graduate Dean approves the leave, the continuous enrollment requirement will be relaxed during the period of leave. The Leave of Absence Form indicates the time when the student will return to the program and any conditions the department or the Graduate School may stipulate for the student's Readmission within that time. International students should consult the immigration advisors in the Graduate School before taking a leave of absence.

Additionally, students may seek [academic relief](#) in cases of extreme medical issues.

Schiffert Health Center places holds on schedules of students who have resigned from school for medical reasons. Schiffert Health Center also uses medical holds and readmissions for medical resignations. In order to remove this hold, the student must provide a letter from a professional health care provider (e.g. a cardiologist, pulmonologist, neurologist, or other physician) who is treating him/her for the medical condition. The letter must support readmission to the university. For further information, please consult the [Schiffert Health Center](#).

## Readmission & Reinstatement

Graduate students who have not been enrolled for more than one year must formally [apply for Readmission](#). Graduate students previously admitted to a degree who will be returning to the same degree level and the same degree program may apply online for Readmission. A \$25 non-refundable fee is required.

If you need to apply for readmission, please follow the instructions on the form linked above. If you have any questions, please consult with your advisor or call the Graduate School at 540.231.8636.

### Change of Admissions Status

A change from one type of degree status to another, while remaining in the same major, requires a [Change of Status Form](#). An example of a status change is Master's to Ph.D. in the same major. (International students in F1 or J1 status should consult with the international advisors in the Graduate School for the proper SEVIS changes.)

For departments where the non-thesis option is available, a master's degree candidate is allowed to change status from the thesis to the non-thesis option (or vice versa) only once. The [Thesis Option Change Form](#) requires accompanying documentation from the department approving the change of status.

A change from Commonwealth Campus or Non-degree status to Master's or Ph.D. requires an Application for Admission and submission of official transcripts (if these weren't previously submitted) and all other required application materials ([apply on-line](#)).

Students classified as Commonwealth Campus (a type of non-degree status) who are requesting admission to degree status must submit a new online application to enter a degree program.

A \$65 non-refundable fee is required.

## Course Withdrawal & Department Withdrawal

### Drops & Withdrawals

Within the drop period, a student may withdraw from individual courses electronically via Hokie Spa. Doing so removes the course from the student's transcript, and the course is considered "dropped." [Tuition refund rules](#) apply.

"Withdrawals" from courses after the drop period are identified as Graduate Withdrawal. These carry a WG designation on the transcript and do not affect the GPA. For the process of graduate withdrawal, please consult the [university registrar's webpage](#) under the tab "Resignation and Withdrawal Information."

### Part-time / Full-time Status

Full-time graduate students are defined as:

- Fall or Spring Semester: 9 or more credit hours in A-F option, P/F option, or equivalent.
- Summer terms: 3 credit hours each term.

Full-time enrollment for graduate students, for purposes of tuition and fees, consists of a minimum of 9 credit hours during academic year semesters. However, the Commonwealth of Virginia does not count students as full time unless they are enrolled for at least 12 credits. Therefore, in most cases, students will take 9 credit hours of course work plus 3 credit hours of dissertation/thesis work. The maximum number of credit hours is 18 during academic year semesters. Overloads (19 credit hours or more per semester, or more than 6 per summer session) require permission from a graduate Dean.

### Resident / Non-resident Status

Students may seek reclassification of their initial tuition classification, but residence or physical presence in Virginia primarily to attend the University does not entitle students to in-state tuition rates. Please note that if a student enters the University classified as an out-of-state student, she/he must present clear and convincing evidence to rebut the presumption that she/he is residing in the state primarily to attend school.

For most graduate students in a full-time, assistantship-funded capacity, out-of-state tuition is waived for the first year only. In order to establish in-state residency (and

therefore gain in-state tuition rates), it is necessary to complete the [Graduate In-State Tuition Request Form](#) before your second year.

## Student Privacy Rights

The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) affords you certain rights with respect to your education records. If you have not already done so, visit the [registrar's page on privacy](#) to review further explanation of these regulations and pertinent contact information. FERPA allows you the right to review, to control access, to request amendments, and to file complaints in regards to your educational record at Virginia Tech.

Note: FERPA allows release without written consent of non-directory information in the following cases: health and safety of student or others; judicial court order(s); and accrediting agencies carrying out their accreditation function.

### Confidentiality of Records

You may choose to designate some or all of your directory information confidential. Students often choose to mark their address or email confidential to decrease the receipt of mailings from third party vendors. However, choose carefully the option of marking your entire record confidential. Doing so will result in the following:

- Student Name and Address excluded from web and printed directories
- Student Name and degree information excluded from all commencement programs and dean's lists and award listings
- Verification of enrollment, graduation, or degrees awarded will not be provided to third parties, including potential employers

### *How to mark your record as confidential*

You may mark part or all of your record as confidential via [Hokie SPA](#). In Hokie SPA, choose the Hokie PLUS menu, and click on "Confidentiality Options." Read the instructions carefully before processing. Confidentiality designations remain in effect until you remove or request removal including after graduation or discontinuation of enrollment at Virginia Tech. Note: to mark your ETD confidential, please reference the Thesis and Dissertation Approval Form.

## Student Conduct

All graduate students are expected to adhere to the [Student Code of Conduct](#) and [Principles of Community](#).

### Graduate Honor System

The [Graduate Honor Code](#) establishes a standard of academic integrity. The code demands a firm adherence to a set of values and is founded on the concept of honesty with respect to the intellectual efforts of oneself and others. It is the obligation of all members of the academic community to [report alleged violations](#) of the Graduate Honor Code. According to the GHS Constitution, "reporting the observance of a Graduate Honor Code violation shall not be optional; it shall be mandatory." Suspected violations of the Graduate Honor Code must be reported within ten (10) University business days after the date of discovery. Only under very special circumstances shall exceptions to this policy be granted, and then only at the discretion of the Chief Justice and the Graduate Honor System Advisor. Violations should be reported to the Chief Justice or

the Graduate Honor System Advisor in writing, using the [report form](#). Submit the form and relevant attachments to the Graduate Honor System, c/o Graduate School (0325), 117 GLC.

The receipt of an Honor System referral is acknowledged in writing by a letter to the accused student(s) and the referrer.

## Academic Requirements & Policies

### GTA Requirements

In order to remain eligible for their assistantship, all Graduate Assistants (GAs, GTAs, and GRAs) must meet the following requirements:

- Must be enrolled in 12-18 credit hours
- Maintain a 3.0 GPA
- Make satisfactory progress toward degree as defined by academic departments and the Graduate School
- Meet requirements to be eligible for employment in the U.S.

If any of these eligibility requirements are not met, students may lose their assistantships or be placed on probation. Students may regain their assistantships when their GPA is brought back up to requirements or the student enrolls in the proper number of credit hours. Students not meeting these requirements should consult their academic advisors immediately.

### Continuous Enrollment Policy

Virginia Tech enforces a continuous enrollment policy meaning that any student working on his/her degree (including working with his/her advisor on the thesis, dissertation, or project and report) should be registered for the minimum of 3 credit hours per semester of the appropriate "research" course (ENGL 5974-Independent Study and ENGL 5994-Thesis for English graduate students). Summer registration is not required unless the student is taking the preliminary exam or defense during a summer session. You must be enrolled/registered at the beginning of any semester when you are working with your advisor on your capstone project. If you have completed your project by the beginning of the fall or spring semester and are defending early (i.e. within the first three weeks of the semester), you can request [Defending Student Status](#). DSS enrollment can be used by students defending at any time during the summer sessions. Students must be enrolled during the semester in which they graduate.

### Graduate Credit

Students must have a recognized status with the Graduate School (i.e., have been admitted to graduate studies) and be officially enrolled in a course to earn graduate credit in that course. Graduate courses at Virginia Tech are numbered 5000 or higher. Instructors should not allow students to attend if they are not enrolled in a course (i.e., are not on the official Class List). Students should resolve all enrollment problems before the end of the Add Period to be able to obtain credit for a course.

### Grading Requirements

All courses taken at Virginia Tech that satisfy degree requirements must be taken for a letter grade (A/F) except for those courses offered on a pass/fail (P/F) basis only (e.g., Independent Study courses and most seminars). Courses on the Plan of Study with

grades below “C-” must be repeated. Courses on the Plan of Study, once taken, cannot be removed from the Plan of Study.

Graduate students are permitted to take additional courses on a pass/fail basis only if those courses are not on their Plan of Study, are outside the department, and are approved by the student’s advisor. Such courses may not be used to satisfy minimum degree requirements. Under the graduate P/F grading option, a “P” is granted for earning a “C-” or better in a course. Once credit is received for a course taken P/F, the course may not be repeated under the A/F grading system.

### Minimum GPA

All English graduate students must obtain a 3.00 GPA, both overall and for courses on the Plan of Study in order to graduate. Courses that are listed on the approved Plan of Study but are not used to establish the minimum degree requirements must be completed with a grade of C- or better. A GPA of less than 3.0 in two consecutive semesters will result in academic suspension and will threaten eligibility for Graduate Teaching Assistant positions and financial assistance.

### Repeating Courses

Courses originally taken on the P/F option in which a grade of “F” is earned may only be repeated on a P/F basis. Courses may not be repeated if a “P” grade is earned, or without permission of the Graduate School if a grade of “C-” or better is earned.

When a course is repeated, the grade for the earlier enrollment when the course was first taken will be listed as a “Repeat Graduate” grade of “RG” (defined as a grade of “C-” or lower) or “RP” (defined as a grade of “C” or higher) and will not calculate into the GPA. Only the grade earned for the final enrollment in the course will receive a letter grade and be calculated in the GPA. If a student wishes to repeat a course in which the first grade earned was a C- or higher, permission for a policy exception must be obtained from the Dean’s office prior to taking the course a second time.

### Auditing

An audit is a mechanism for a student to attend a course without an evaluation of their performance. Thus, it requires the approval of the instructor. If the student or the instructor expects evaluation of coursework, then the student must enroll either as a P/F option or for a letter grade. If a faculty member wishes to restrict the participation of auditing students in selected activities, then it should be stated in the syllabus. Students are assessed the same rate of tuition and fees for audited courses as for courses taken for credit. Audited courses do not count toward full-time enrollment. After the final day to add classes is over, registration for an audit may not be changed to credit (or vice versa) without an exception to policy by the instructor, the student’s major advisor, and the Dean of the Graduate School.

### On-line Courses / Independent Study in Absentia / Continuing Education

On-line courses offered for graduate credit from accredited universities may be considered for transfer credit. Independent study (5974) or Graduate Research credits (5994 or 7994) completed while the student is residing at a distance from the instructor’s Virginia Tech location must have regular faculty consultation by means such as email or regular telephone calls. No credit toward graduate degrees may be obtained by correspondence study or from continuing education courses.



Full-time students who do not hold an assistantship and who are not employed normally carry nine to twelve hours each semester. Part-time students may carry as few as three hours. According to university policy, Graduate Teaching Assistants (GTAs) and others with Instructional Fee Scholarships must be enrolled for a minimum of twelve hours each semester.

## Annual Review, Probation, & Appeals

### Annual Review

Students and Advisors should be conversant with the Graduate School's policies on Annual Reviews of Student Progress, found [here](#).

The Department of English and Graduate School require an annual review of each continuing graduate student. The review consists of two parts: a self-assessment by the student and an assessment of the student by the faculty advisor. Students should have their portion of the report completed and to their advisor by the **second Friday in April**. Advisors should forward the form, once they have completed their portion, to the Graduate Secretary, Sally Wieringa, no later than the **fourth Friday in April**. The student being reviewed should also be sent a copy of the document complete with their evaluation.

Review criteria include the following:

- Timely completion of degree requirements
- Timely completion of paperwork
- Course choices consistent with the goals of the relevant graduate program
- Grades

Occasionally, an advisor might find it necessary to provide a negative evaluation of a student's progress. The Graduate Catalog provides the following guidance for responding to an unsatisfactory review:

#### *What needs to be done when a review is Unsatisfactory:*

The nature of the problem(s) needs to be explained and constructive advice about the remedies needed to correct the situation, should be put in writing and communicated orally to the graduate student.

Need follow-up the next semester (a year is too long a period before the next review in cases where there are problems). Students who are having problems are the ones most in need of committee support and guidance.

In the difficult situation where a student has not improved performance in a reasonable period of time following an Unsatisfactory rating and constructive guidance, the department has a documented case for dismissal from the program at the time of the second Unsatisfactory rating.

In the event of a negative evaluation, all students should immediately seek a meeting with their advisor and the relevant program director to discuss the remediation steps and set a second meeting to assess the remediation, typically at least six months from the date of the negative evaluation. It is especially critical for MA students (who typically follow a 2-year program and file their annual review at the end of the first year) to

arrange for a second evaluation in the subsequent fall semester, no later than October. The student's advisor—typically the program director in the first year of study—will need to specify directly following the negative evaluation in April of the first year what is necessary for the student to remediate. If this includes specific coursework, it may be necessary to coordinate this with the instructor of record. Written documentation of the remediation steps, signed by the student, the advisor, and the relevant graduate program director, will be entered into the student's file and referred to during the second meeting to assess whether the remediation has been effective.

If the advisor and graduate program director determine that the student's attempts at remediation have not been successful, steps may be taken to dismiss the student from the program. Other steps are also possible, dependent on the specific situation. Dismissal of graduate students is conducted in consultation with the department chair. Appeal of dismissal from the program should be directed to the Dean of the Graduate School.

### Probation due to Unsatisfactory Grades

Students whose cumulative GPA falls below 3.00 will be placed on probation by the Graduate School. Enrollment for one semester of probation normally is permitted to remedy an unsatisfactory GPA. If the student does not achieve a 3.0 GPA within one semester after being placed on probation, the Graduate School will consult with the English department about dismissal of the student from Graduate School. The English department can appeal to the Graduate School for additional time for the student to achieve a 3.0 GPA, providing the student is making reasonable progress in raising the GPA. If an appeal is made to the Graduate School for additional time it should come from the departmental Graduate Program Director or the Department Head. If extra time is granted, the student should be informed in writing of the amount of additional time allowed for achieving a 3.0 GPA. If the department does not support a time extension, the student will be dismissed from the Graduate School.

### Scholarly Ethics & Integrity

The Commission on Graduate Studies and Policies Resolutions 2012-13B requires that "all graduate students show a record of the student's participation in the particular ethics and integrity activities delineated by the...department..." Required topics include:

1. Plagiarism and other violations of the Graduate Honor Code
2. Proper use of professional conventions in citation of existing research and scholarship, accurate reporting and ownership of findings, and acknowledgement of contributions to the work
3. Ethical standards in teaching, mentoring, and professional activities
4. Available avenues for reporting alleged misconduct

**Topic 1:** All incoming graduate students, commencing Fall 2014, will be **required** to attend the Orientation session held on the Friday prior to the first week of classes; be sure to sign the sign-in sheet. Included in this session will be a half-hour presentation by a representative of the Graduate Honor Court. All incoming graduate students will also need to complete **GRAD 5014 Academic Integrity and Plagiarism** for 1 credit hour



**Topic 2:** Incoming students will be required to attend a panel in Fall Semester in which a Library representative discusses the issues of fair use and copyright. Again, this will be a required activity with attendance monitored through a sign-in sheet.

**Topic 3:** We propose to address the topic of **Ethical standards in teaching, mentoring, and professional activities** through a session at the Incoming Graduate Student Orientation and with a panel comprising faculty from each of our three graduate programs providing examples of problems that they or others have encountered in teaching, mentoring, or other professional contexts and working through possible and actual solutions to them. For this panel, we will make use of the Modern Language Association's **Statement of Professional Ethics** document ([http://www.mla.org/repview\\_profethics](http://www.mla.org/repview_profethics)). Attendance will be required.

**Topic 4:** Please review the material accessed through a link in Our Graduate Student Handbook (<http://www.graduate.english.vt.edu/forms/grad-handbook.pdf>) to the Research Integrity Office's brochure on "Research Misconduct — What it is and How to Avoid It" (<http://www.research.vt.edu/research-integrity-office/brochure/misconduct-brochure.pdf>). In addition, our Handbook contains a section that addresses avenues for appeal in a grievance process:

### Appeals Process

Graduate students, faculty, and administrators should familiarize themselves with the "Expectations for Graduate Education" section of the Graduate School web site, found [here](#).

A student who wishes to initiate an appeal should review the [relevant section](#) in the Graduate Catalog.

As stated there: "It is assumed that most problems involving graduate education will be discussed informally and reconciled at the departmental level. Indeed, most discussions of this kind will commonly occur among the student, the Chair of the student's Advisory Committee, and the other members of the Advisory Committee. However, from time to time serious questions may arise that place the student's status in jeopardy. On these occasions it is important that the university provide full opportunity for the student's grievance to be reviewed in a judicious manner."

The first level of the appeal process, then, should be the **Departmental Appeal**, which is detailed in the same place:

When a graduate student believes that any work has been improperly evaluated, or believes that there has been unfair treatment, it is expected that the student will take up the questions directly with the faculty member involved. This may be the student's Advisor, other faculty members, or an instructor responsible for a course. If, after earnest inquiry, the matter remains unreconciled, the graduate student will be expected to appeal the question to the Department Head (the Graduate Program Director also may be involved in this level of appeal). If the Department Head is a party to the grievance, the Dean of the academic college will assume this responsibility. The Department Head, in consultation with the college Dean, shall take all reasonable and proper actions to resolve the question at the departmental level. The student shall be informed in writing of the

results no later than one month after the appeal to the Department Head. In some matters, the Faculty Handbook provides additional relevant information, for example, “the assigning of grades is the responsibility of the individual instructor in every case. The basis on which grades are assigned rests on his/her judgment alone....”).

In the English department, the Graduate Director should be consulted, if necessary, before taking the appeal to the Department Chair.

## Financial Issues

### Cost of Attendance

Overview of tuition and fees for Virginia Tech and university funding opportunities (not department specific)

### Financial Aid

Funding opportunities via Graduate School

Graduate Assistantships

Graduate School Fellowships and Scholarships

Graduate School Financial Aid

Teaching assistantships

University scholarships

Student loans

### Work Life Grants: Financial Assistance for Expectant Graduate Assistants

The Graduate School, in collaboration with the College Deans and the Provost, has established a Work-Life Grant Program to provide temporary financial assistance to departments to enable them to continue support for female graduate students during pregnancy and childbirth. For more information on these grants, please consult the link above.

### Direct Deposit

Direct deposit of pay is mandatory for all wage and salary employees. Set up Direct Deposit via Hokie Spa by clicking “Hokie Team” in the top tab menu and then clicking “Direct Deposit.” You will need your bank’s name, account number, and routing number. (This information is usually available on your online account with your bank or can be found on one of your checks.) If you would prefer, you can also sign up for Direct Deposit via paper form available here and in the University Bursar’s office. You will receive an email confirmation once your Direct Deposit request has been processed.

### Stipends

Graduate students with assistantships will receive tuition remission and a stipend. First year students and students beginning new assistantships will be mailed a packet of information and a contract which must be signed and returned before the start of the semester. This will contain the amount of your stipend and the term of your contract. Stipends may vary between programs.

### Travel Funds

In order to encourage presentations at significant disciplinary conferences, both the English Department and the Graduate School provide travel funds. For English

Department funds, please keep in mind that you need to file paperwork before you travel. For the Graduate School funds, you can file before or after you travel depending on the cycle dates.

### *English Department*

Travel funds can be obtained in three simple steps:

1. Once accepted to a conference **but before traveling**, you must fill out the Travel Request Form. This form is unique to graduate students, requests approval for department support of your conference travel, and must be signed by the department chair.
2. Once approved for travel, you must fill out the Travel Approval Form. This form requires you to make estimates of your travel costs, and must be signed by the department chair. (You may notice some redundancies with the Travel Request Form; this form is used for both faculty and graduate students.)
3. After attending the conference, be sure to retain all receipts and turn them in to the department bookkeeper (Judy Grady) along with the Travel Reimbursement Form (which will again require a signature). She will then provide you with a travel voucher to sign, after which you will be reimbursed. Please note: the process can take several weeks, so plan accordingly.

### *Graduate School*

The funds available through the Graduate Student Assembly are incredibly competitive. The funding process occurs in two cycles—Fall and Spring—and requires approval and endorsement by your advisor.

The process is described on the GSA Travel Funds page. You must submit your request online. If approved, you then need to notify Judy, who will process your reimbursement through the department, and then obtain the funds from the GSA.

## Prizes, Contests, & Awards

### *Virginia Tech Honors and Awards*

<http://www.universityawards.vt.edu/university.php>

#### Ruffner Medal

#### *Awards for MA's*

*Caroline Pace Chermiside Award:* For the best independent study or thesis by a graduate student in English. Committee directors or readers nominate projects in early April each year. The award, up to \$1,000, is selected by the MA Committee.

*Richard Hoffman GTA Award:* For superior teaching by a GTA. Selected in April each year by the Graduate Committee in consultation with the GTA advisors and Director of Composition. \$250.

#### *Creative Writing Awards*

##### *Emily Morrison Prize in Fiction*

Submit 10-25 pages of fiction, either a short story or a section of a novel. All entries must be submitted to Sara Crickenberger by March 15. Entries should be submitted in standard format with reasonable margins and font size—unless, of course, there are

creative reasons for deviating from standard formatting. Submit entries as a PDF or MS Word document. Title the file as follows: [first word of any title]EMP.pdf/doc. (If your story is titled “Blues for Mr. Blue,” the file would be labeled “BluesEMP.pdf.”) Send entries to Sara (smcrick@vt.edu) as an attachment to email. The subject line of the email should read: “Emily Morrison Prize in Fiction.” In the body of the email, include the title of the piece and your contact information. Do not include your name or any identifying information anywhere on the manuscript. Prize is \$1,000.

### *Emily Morrison Prize in Poetry*

Submit three poems. The submitted manuscript should be no more than ten pages in length. All entries must be submitted to Sara Crickenberger by March 15. Entries should be submitted in standard poem format with reasonable margins and font size—unless, of course, there are creative reasons for deviating from standard formatting. Submit entries as a PDF or MS Word document. Title the file as follows: [first word of any title]EMP.pdf/doc. (If one of the poems in your submission was titled “Blues for Mr. Blue,” the file would be labeled “BluesEMP.pdf.”) Send entries to Sara (smcrick@vt.edu) as an attachment to email. The subject line of the email should read: “Emily Morrison Prize in Poetry.” In the body of the email, include the titles of the poems and your contact information. Do not include your name or any identifying information anywhere on the manuscript. \$1,000.

### *VT Fiction Prize*

Awarded for the best short story or novel excerpt written by a student currently enrolled in the MFA program. There are no limitations on length or restrictions on subject matter. Short stories, however, generally range between 5,000 and 10,000 words, and fiction significantly under 5,000 words or over 10,000 words runs the risk of being considered a short-short fiction or a novella, neither of which is eligible for this prize. All entries must be submitted to Sara Crickenberger by October 15th. Students may enter only one work of fiction. Entries should be submitted as a MS Word or PDF document (double-spaced, reasonable margins and font size). Title the file as follows: [first word of title]VTFP.pdf/doc. (If a story titled “Goodbye Hello” were submitted as a MS Word file, it would be labeled “GoodbyeVTFP.doc.”) Send entries to Sara (smcrick@vt.edu) as an attachment to email. The subject line of the email should read: “Virginia Tech Fiction Prize.” In the body of the email, include the full title of the story and your contact information. Do not include your name or any identifying information anywhere on the manuscript. The stories will be judged by a writer who is not a member of the Virginia Tech English Department. The winning fiction will be announced before December 1st. There will be a small cash award, equal to the amount of the Virginia Tech / Poetry Society of Virginia Prize.

### *Virginia Tech / Poetry Society of Virginia Prize (aka The Academy of American Poets Poetry Award)*

Awarded for the best poem written by a student currently enrolled in the MFA program. There are no limitations on length or subject matter (though we do expect you to be reasonable and not turn in a book-length poem). All entries must be submitted to Sara Crickenberger by October 15th. Entries should be submitted as a MS Word or PDF document (single-spaced, reasonable font size). Title the file as follows: [first word of title]VTTP.pdf/doc. (If a poem titled “Miss Breakdown” were submitted as a PDF file, it would be labeled “MissVTTP.pdf.”) Send entries to Sara (smcrick@vt.edu) as an attachment to email. The subject line of the email should read: “Virginia Tech Poetry Prize.” In the body of the email, include the title of the poem and your contact

information. Do not include your name or any identifying information anywhere on the manuscript. The poem will be judged by a writer who is not a member of the Virginia Tech English Department. The winning poem will be announced before December 1st. There will be a small cash award to be determined by the Academy of American Poets, which is the funding organization for this prize.

### Awards through the Graduate School

In addition to departmental awards, the Graduate School offers a number of awards each year, open to graduate students of all disciplines.

## Certificates

In conjunction with earning their degrees, students may earn a 9-hour or 12-hour graduate certificate. Some attractive certificates for students in English are *Preparing the Future Professoriate* and *Women's Studies*. Two courses from either certificate program may be used as the 6 hours of transfer courses permitted for the MA.

List of all certificates

## Health Matters

### Insurance

For those students with assistantships, health insurance through the university is provided by Aetna and funded by your assistantship at 90%. Generally, representatives from Aetna are available during GTA training (through the Graduate School); however, students can also enroll online.

In addition, Schiffert Health Center is located on campus and available for basic appointments. Please note: in order to be referred to specialists, you must go through Schiffert in order to obtain the lowest in-network rates for co-pays and co-insurance.

Health insurance policies will run from the date of registration (must be signed up by September 30) through the end of July. However, Schiffert Health Center only services students who are currently enrolled in classes; in the summer, students not currently enrolled in classes are required to pay a fee of \$90.50 for summer-long access or \$59 for one day of access or a referral. Please note: you may go in to the health center for a free referral for an outside family doctor or specialist any time you are currently enrolled in classes, so it is recommended that you get a referral during the fall or spring semester if you would like to see a physician during the summer months without paying the Health Center summer fee.

### Immunizations

All incoming students must turn in their completed Immunization History Form (PDF | 386KB). This is a Virginia state law requirement and if you procrastinate on turning it in, you could experience a medical hold on registering for spring semester classes.

### Counseling

Cook Counseling Center provides free counseling for all registered students (you must be registered for the current semester in order to take advantage of this service). In

addition to their permanent offices in East Eggleston, Cook provides weekly walk-in services at the Graduate School. For information on those hours, please watch for the “Weekly Services in the GLC” email from the Graduate School. (You are automatically added to this list as a VT graduate student.)

### Disability Services

If you have a disability, you are able to receive accommodations only if you register with the SSD (Services for Students with Disabilities) office, located on the second floor of Lavery Hall (not far from Shanks). You must make an “intake appointment” with an SSD employee, and bring documentation of any physical, mental, or learning disability. Once you are registered with the SSD office, you can request accommodation letters each semester. Due to privacy laws, it is the student’s responsibility to provide these letters directly to his/her professors—all information you share at the SSD office is kept confidential.

## Technology-Related

Student Getting Started Guide webpage.

### PID

The very first step is generating your PID. (You can do this before registering for classes; a code should have been sent to you with your acceptance letter from the graduate school.) Your PID will log you in to many services across campus, using the CAS system. Key sites include:

- <http://my.vt.edu>—Provides access for course registration, transcripts, and university accounts.
- <http://scholar.vt.edu>—the course management system used at Virginia Tech. This is where many professors will post resources and assignments, and is also where certain key information can be found for some assistantship projects.
- <http://Hokie Spa.vt.edu>—Hokie Spa provides access to the payroll system, financial aid, and more.

### Using Personal Computers on Campus

If you require/desire laptop access, you are responsible for providing your own laptop as well as any related software. You are also required to operate under the standards of acceptable use.

In order to be able to connect to and access VT’s Wireless Internet anywhere on campus, follow these steps: to configure your computer to connect automatically when you are on campus, choose the CONNECTtoVT-Wireless network and open a web browser pointed to [www.vt.edu](http://www.vt.edu). Follow the onscreen instructions. After the initial configuration of each device, make sure you are pointing to VT-Wireless; you should not have to do this configuration again. If you run in to trouble, then contact ITSU 231-9203.



## Email

When you sign up for your PID, you will create an email address which will ultimately be yourpid@vt.edu. VT email addresses are powered through Google, so you can use your email address for other related Google services such as Docs/Drive and Google Sites. University, department, and program announcements and emails will be sent to your VT email address.

## Grad-Announce

All graduate students admitted to degree programs in English will be added to grad-announce, the listserv for announcements for graduate students (<mailto:grad-announce@vt.edu>). If you suspect that you are not receiving these announcements, make sure to contact the Graduate Secretary (Sally Wieringa) as soon as possible to be added to the list. Many of these announcements are important and you don't want to miss them.

## Xeroxing/Copying

The English Department wishes to help faculty prepare photocopy materials for use in the classroom, in activities related to research and publication, and in the preparation of administrative and committee work. But, given our resources, we must set some limits on what we can do. The guidelines below are extremely generous, but they do set limits.

### *First, Some Recommendations:*

- Please turn in work order forms at least 24-hours before you will need copies, remembering that there are 140 people wanting copies and two staff members to make them.
- Consider using the web to post your syllabi and class handouts.
- Consider using the University Copy Centers (Burruss 132 and Smyth 142) for classroom packets.
- Consider asking your students to make and bring multiple copies of their work to class when it's their turn to have their work discussed.
- Because copying books is very time-consuming, the department asks that you bring in an original copy and do not ask the staff to copy from a book.

### *Classroom Materials*

Syllabi, tests, exams, one- or two-page handouts (such as "A List of Critical Terms"), and brief student essays of two or at most three pages. (By using back-to-back printing, you may do, in fact, six sides.) No more than eight different student essays per semester.

### *Research Materials*

One copy of a book manuscript (use the copy center at 1425 South Main Street with an IPR from Judy, signed by the Associate Head), two copies of an article or story or cluster of poems, one copy of an article or chapter written by another person if under twenty-five pages, and one copy of correspondence related to research. No more than eight articles/chapters by another person per semester.

### *Administrative/Committee Work*

Minutes, reports, etc. should be distributed via the department e-mail list.

### *Other Material*

The English Department expects all other material (e.g., personal coursework) to be printed or copied at the cost of 5 cents per page (which is the cost to the Department). All personal copies will be billed on a monthly basis along with telephone bills. The Department asks that you remember, however, that the copiers are for professional use first. Personal copies will be done only after legitimate professional copying is completed and as time permits.

### **Printing**

Printers are provided on each floor of Shanks Hall for shared use of GTA's and faculty members. Work-related printing can be done free of charge. Any printing for personal use should be paid at 10 cents a page (money box in printing room). Additionally, every print job should be recorded on the print roster in the printing room which asks for the name of the person who printed, the number of pages, and the amount paid (if applicable). Please do not do large print jobs involving multiple copies (such as class syllabi or course readings) on the department printers. These jobs should be given to Bridget in the main office at least 24 hours ahead of time (see copying rules above).

## **Shanks Hall Amenities**

### **Scheduling an Event in an English Department Room**

To schedule an event, you should first look up previously scheduled events for the Shanks Hall common rooms. Common room schedules and lists of department-sponsored events may be found online [here](#).

When it comes time to actually schedule the use of these rooms or post to the Events calendar, you should contact the secretary in the English Department office (Bridget), the Graduate Programs Coordinator (Sally), or the Assistant to the English Chair (Patty). Be sure that the description of the event is something that can be posted for all to see on the web. For example, you probably wouldn't want to supply the name of a job candidate during interview season. Also be sure to indicate if your event should be posted to the [department event calendar](#), the College of Liberal Arts and Human Sciences ([CLAHS](#)) [event calendar](#), and/or the [university event calendar](#).

When you are making these arrangements, you might also consider whether your speaker or activity will require use of the projector, plasma screen, or sound system so you can arrange for tech support.

### **Journal Library**

In Shanks 370/380 there is an extensive journal library free for use for all faculty and students. Please be aware that meetings and events take place in this room and should not be interrupted for use of the journal library or other amenities in 370/380.

## **Information for Graduate Teaching Assistants**

### **Compensation/Stipend for GTAs**

Those who serve as graduate assistants while pursuing master's or doctoral degrees provide a valuable service to the university. Virginia Tech strives to provide competitive compensation to graduate assistants to reflect this value. As a result of this commitment,



total graduate student compensation has evolved over the years to include a stipend, tuition remission, out-of-state tuition differential waiver if applicable, a fixed stipend supplement to assist in covering a portion of university assigned costs, and a subsidy to cover 90 percent of health insurance premiums.

### **Additional Employment for Students Holding a Graduate Assistantship**

Unless specified otherwise in the assistantship agreement contract, graduate students on full assistantships may seek additional employment. Students should consult with their academic advisor and/or assistantship supervisor regarding the fulfillment of their assistantship and graduate study responsibilities. Students must notify the Graduate School about any additional employment, including the period of employment, name and contact of employer, and job title or short description of duties

### **Enrollment Requirements**

Graduate Assistants (GAs, GTAs, and GRAs) must enroll for at least 12 credit hours per semester to be eligible for their assistantship. Students on full assistantship are expected to work an average of 20 work hours per week for the assistantship and are considered to be 50% employed. Graduate students on assistantship can enroll for up to 18 credit hours of course work in academic year semesters and up to 6 credit hours during each summer session.

### **GTA Workshop**

GTAs are required to attend and be enrolled in the GTA Workshop (GRAD 5004, 1 cr., P/F) in the first fall semester of their teaching appointment at Virginia Tech. Other students who hope to qualify for a GTA appointment in the future should take the workshop in their first semester at Virginia Tech. The workshop consists of Phase I (two half days, Monday and Tuesday of the week before classes start in August) and the participation and completion of three Phase II sessions during fall semester.

### **1st-Year GTA Practicum Requirements**

#### *Advisor*

As a GTA, you will be assigned to a faculty member who then becomes your GTA advisor. This person does not take the place of your academic advisor. Your GTA advisor exists to answer GTA-related questions, provide helpful feedback, and monitor your progress as a GTA. Your GTA advisor also has final say over your syllabus, and he/she is responsible for assessing your performance in ENGL 5034 - Practicum. Multiple students may be assigned to a single GTA advisor, forming a GTA practicum group.

#### *Small Group Practicum Meetings*

Your GTA advisor will hold small group meetings to talk about your teaching experience, ask questions, seek solutions to problems, brainstorm ideas, and share pedagogical methods. If there are particular topics you would like to discuss in these meetings, you should let your advisor know.

In general, you will meet in your small groups once a week for the first six weeks, and then every other subsequent week. The primary criterion for assessment in ENGL 5034 is attendance for these weekly meetings. If for some reason you cannot make a meeting, you must alert your advisor and explain why you cannot be there.

### *Class Observations*

In the spring semester, you are required to visit at least two 1106 class sessions and submit an observation form for each visitation to your advisor. These observations help you develop as a teacher by allowing you to see firsthand how experienced instructors navigate pedagogical issues. You may observe one graduate student as part of your observations, but all other official observations must be of faculty members. Make sure to request permission before you show up to observe a class.

Although you need formally respond to only two class sessions, you are free to visit as many other teachers' classes as you like—as long as you receive permission to do so.

The first observation should be completed by early February, and the second by mid-late March. Observation forms should be submitted to your advisor.

### *Advisor Visitations*

Early in the semester, you must schedule dates for your advisor to visit your classroom in addition to dates and times to discuss the visits. Before each visit, be sure to convey to your advisor what you would like him/her to focus on about your teaching. These are chances for you to get some honest feedback about what may or may not be working, and about what you can do to help your students learn better. Additionally, the notes that your advisor takes may serve as a valuable resource when composing recommendation letters for your future employment. In general, your advisor will visit your class at least twice over the course of the semester.

### *Before the Semester Begins*

Review with your advisor your syllabus, calendar, and major assignments. For each major writing assignment, consider the WPA outcomes the assignment addresses, as well as a description of your specific grading criteria for that assignment. Give your advisor each of these documents either in paper or electronic form before the semester begins. In addition you will also need to submit a copy to Julie Mengert and Bridget for their records.

Prior to your first teaching assignment, the English Department will provide you with a blue grade book. The Department does not resupply this book to GTA's each semester, so it is in your best interests to use it economically. Departmental policy requires that you maintain at least one physical copy of your grades and this is an easy way to do so.

### *Graded Paper Review*

After grading your first set of papers, you must schedule a date and time to review them with your advisor before returning them to your students. Remember that papers should be returned in a timely fashion: two weeks at the maximum. Reviewing subsequent paper sets will be at your advisor's discretion. In any event, you should feel free to approach your advisor with any and all paper-grading concerns, whether it be the amount of time it takes you to grade, the effectiveness of your comments, or the difficulty of assigning a numerical grade. You will have to submit your grading of student papers to your advisor at least twice over the course of the semester which may affect your timeframe in returning graded work to students. Plan accordingly.

### *Grade Book*

You must maintain at least two copies of your grade book and at least one of these must be a hard copy.

### *Professional Development*

Sharing ideas, troubleshooting, creating, and networking with other professional teachers is crucial for your success as a teacher and academic. The Composition Program at Virginia Tech brings two visitors to campus each semester as a way to stimulate conversations about writing theory, pedagogy, and practice.

Over the course of the semester, you are required to attend both of the Composition Speaker Series talks. The degree to which these talks apply directly to your teaching will vary, but their value lies not just in practical application but also in the fact that they will introduce you to some of the major ideas and figures in the field of Rhetoric and Writing. This kind of professionalization is a significant asset in the highly competitive job market for writing teachers.

Keep track of the sessions that you attend as your attendance at these events as you will want to reference them in your mid-term/end-of-term self-evaluations.

### *Composition Workshops (“Brown Bag” Meetings)*

In addition to the Composition Program Speaker Series talks, the department will occasionally schedule composition workshops or “brown bag” meetings. These events are designed to address specific issues all instructors face in the composition classroom. Your attendance at these workshops is also required. If they occur during a week where you have a practicum meeting planned, they should take the place of that meeting. Ultimately, this issue will be left up to individual practicum advisors. If you become aware of an event not advertised that you think should be included as “professional development,” please let your advisor know.

Keep track of the sessions that you attend as your attendance at these events as you will want to reference them in your mid-term/end-of-term self-evaluations.

### *Self-Evaluations*

The self-evaluations provide opportunities for you to reflect upon your growth as a teacher. As part of this process, many teachers find it helpful to elicit comments from their students about what’s working for them and what’s not. You may also find it useful to talk about your reflections with your GTA group or one-on-one with your advisor. While your primary audience for these self-evaluations is your advisor, be aware that other program administrators may also read them. The format for these self-evaluations should be announced by mid-semester. In general, your end-of-term evaluation will be due to your advisor in early May.

### *Final Grades*

You must submit your final grades and a copy of your grade book to your GTA advisor before you enter them into Hokie Spa at the end of the semester.

### *GTA Partner System*

Your practicum adviser may recommend or require you to pair up with one of your fellow GTAs to set up a partner system. With this pairing, in the event that one of you cannot

teach a class session, the GTA partner will serve as a substitute instructor for his/her partner's class. If you are having trouble finding a GTA partner, you can use Hokie Spa to look up the current semester's timetable of courses for your course (ENGL 1105 or 1106) and compare your course time with those of the other GTAs to find a potential partner.

### *Students Requesting to Force-Add Your Composition Class*

If your ENGL 1105 or 1106 class is at capacity (listed as "FULL" in Hokie Spa), some students may contact you requesting to be force-added to your class, usually for scheduling reasons. However, **as a GTA you cannot force-add a student**. Force-adds to your composition classes must be handled through Suzanne Reisinger, and it is the student's responsibility to see that his/her request is submitted appropriately. Submitting a force-add request does not guarantee that a student will be registered for his/her preferred section. The filling of empty seats in other sections of composition takes priority over force-adding students to classes at capacity. Also, the department may not force-add over published room capacities.

### *Exemption from Practicum Requirements*

While all first and almost all second-year MAs and MFAs are required to register for the composition teaching practicum course (ENGL 5034), some third year MFA students and some PhD students may be eligible to opt out. In general, all GTAs must register for ENGL 5034 unless they meet all of the following requirements:

1. Completed ENGL 5004 (or received credit for an equivalent course elsewhere)
2. Taught composition for two years
3. Completed two consecutive semesters of ENGL 5034 at Virginia Tech

Those who are eligible to opt out of Practicum must still attend the GTA training provided through the Graduate School.

### *Class Cancellations*

If you will have to miss class for any reason (including professional conferences such as CCC and AWP), you must find a substitute. You may not simply cancel class. This policy is covered in the [GTA Handbook](#). When you are going to miss class, you need to give the name of your substitute to your GTA advisor. Note: You *are* allowed to hold individual student conferences in the place of class, as this is an important part of writing instruction, but are advised to keep your number of non-instructional class periods to a minimum.

### *Mass Copying and Printing*

Please make sure you have your syllabi copied by Bridget in the main office. The department printers cannot be used to print 20-40 copies of everyone's syllabus and schedule.

### *Previous Requirements for 1106 Students*

Please remind your 1106 students that they must have passed or been placed out of 1105 before they can take 1106.

### *Reporting Concerns about Students*

Virginia Tech Early Academic Referral System (VT EARS) is available to you on [Hokie Spa](#). This system can be used by faculty and graduate students to report undergraduate

students who you are concerned about who are not coming to class, have missed quizzes, exams or a significant amount of homework. Once you submit a referral the student's academic dean's office has five business days to review the referral and act upon it. If they don't act upon it in five days, the Director of Academic Advising on campus will review it and try to work with the student. You should get a confirmation of what has been done once the person in the academic dean's office reports that the referral has been reviewed. In the case of any CLAHS student, VT EARS tries to get them to see their academic advisor so that the advisor can also know what is going on with their advisee. The goal of VT EARS is to help the student early on in the semester and try to get them to address any problems that they are experiencing sooner rather than later.

To get to the referral system go to Faculty Access and click on the Faculty and Advisor Student Menu and the top of the next menu of functions is the link to the VT EARS system.

You can also file a report through the Dean of Students. You can use the online system, though the office recommends calling (540-231-3787) or speaking to someone in the office in person (109 E. Eggleston Hall).

### **Tentative Final Grades for Seniors**

We rarely have seniors in 1105 or 1106, but it does happen. If you have any seniors, you must give them a tentative grade by the proper deadline. (Otherwise, they get a note saying they may not graduate!)

#### *Instructions for Entry of Tentative Grades*

1. Tentative Grades, defined: Tentative Grades are required for any student (associate, undergraduate or graduate) who is a candidate for graduation for Spring Commencement. A tentative grade is the grade that the professor/instructor expects the student to earn based on work completed to this point and projected to earn to the end of the semester. Degrees are conferred based upon the tentative grade. (Reminder: tentative grade listings on your displayed grade sheet reflect only those students who have applied for the Spring completion.) Failure to enter a tentative grade for a graduating student will result in that student not receiving their diploma at the ceremony. Per University Policy, all students are required to take final examinations. See Number 10 and 11 below for instructions on raising or lowering tentative grades.
2. Deadlines: Check here for current grade deadlines. The system is available daily (from 7:30 AM. until approximately 3:00 AM.) until the deadline for entry.
3. Listing of students: Your listing on the web will display candidates for Spring Commencement. Students walking through the ceremony, but who are candidates for Summer or Fall, will not appear. You do not need to submit tentative grades for these students. Tentative grades are only for students who are completing with a term of Spring. For example, your course has an enrollment of 25 students. However, when you view your Tentative Grade Listing, only three students appear. Do not be alarmed – only three students are candidates for Spring graduation and you are requested to submit three grades. If you have no graduating students, you will receive the error message, "There are no graduating students registered for XXXXX".
4. Web browser: You should have the most up-to-date Web Browser to access Faculty Access. For PC users, Internet Explorer 5.0 is a minimum requirement.

- For Mac users, a software incompatibility between the university web server and the Internet Explorer 5.x browser causes the website to not run in a secure manner. The university thus recommends that Mac users access Faculty Access with an alternate browser (such as Camino, Firefox, or Safari).
5. Entry Instructions: Go to [Hokie Spa](#). Enter your PID and password (contact 4-Help if you need your password reset); choose Faculty Access. Click on Faculty Grade Sheet Menu; click on Tentative Grade Entry Worksheet; you will be required to enter your employee identification number. Click Submit: Choose appropriate course from list displayed, click submit CRN. Note: you must be the faculty member of record or have special department access for update of grades. Two entry choices are available: direct entry via the web worksheet or upload of an external grades file. (See number 6 and number 7 for further instructions.)
  6. Direct Entry Via the Web instructions: Tab to the Grade column of the first student on your grade worklist. Using the pull down arrow, select the appropriate grade choice. Click the “submit grades” button appearing at the bottom of each web page. You will receive a message at the top of your worklist, “Your grade entries were saved successfully” after each click on “submit grades.” You are done! If you need to alter a grade already submitted, you may do so until the deadline for submission of tentative grades; simply return to the work list, alter grade, and click submit again.
  7. Lower than tentative grades: Original tentative grades will appear on your web grade worksheet for FINAL grades. You should change the original tentative grade to a LOWER than tentative grade within 48 hours of your final examination, but no later than noon on the final day of exams. No additional paperwork is required. Simply locate the grade for the specific student on your final grade work list; enter the new grade; click on submit grades button. The lowered tentative grade will be processed as final. Any lower than tentative grades submitted after the noon deadline will NOT be processed as final and will revert to the recorded grade.
  8. Raising a Tentative Grade: Follow the instructions for “lower than tentative grades” in number 10. The deadline for raising a tentative grade is the same as the deadline for final grades.
  9. Posting of Tentative Grades: Students should be directed to Hokie Spa for viewing of their tentative grades. Tentative grades are available for viewing approximately 24 hours after the submission deadline. Faculty may not post grades in a grade-listing format using any portion of the student identification number or name. For options on posting grades, visit the [registrar’s website](#); click on Faculty/Staff (right hand side); scroll to Maintain Students’ Privacy; open Posting of Grades.

### Faculty Grade Upload

To enter midterm, tentative, or final grades, go to [Hokie Spa](#). Log in and click the “Faculty Access” tab at the top of the page. Click the Faculty Grade Sheet Menu and select the appropriate option for the type of grade you would like to enter. Follow the instructions on the worksheet and click submit.

### Student Perceptions of Teaching (SPOT) Evaluations

The Student Perceptions of Teaching (SPOT) system is an online anonymous review system submitted by students for each class. SPOT provides students the opportunity to



give feedback on the instructor, assignments, their own performance as students, and the environment of the physical classroom. While the university-wide response is generally about 70% each term, some instructors have taken steps to achieve online response rates of 80% or better. Instructors who receive high response rates tend to do the following.

Communicate with students about SPOT:

- Direct all students to the [login page](#). After login, they will see a link to the SPOT survey for each of their classes.
- Share examples of how you have modified class content or instruction based on past student feedback.
- Teach students what it means to provide constructive feedback (e.g., keep comments narrowly focused and include suggestions for improvement).
- Impress upon students that practicing constructive feedback is part of professional development—it is a learned skill that will show its value long after graduation.

Provide Class Time for SPOT:

- Ask students to bring their laptops to class and offer 10 minutes for them to complete the SPOT survey.

Assure Confidentiality:

- No identifying information is associated with responses when they are shared with instructors. Knowing this may help students to be more comfortable with responding.

Your SPOT reviews will be available for viewing on [Scholar](#) a week or two after the semester ends. After you receive your evaluations, you must submit two copies: one to the secretary in the English Department office (Bridget) in Excel (XLS) format and another to the Coordinator of GTA Education in Adobe Acrobat (PDF) format. You can obtain both of these files from the SPOT evaluation system online by viewing the reports for your classes and clicking “Export PDF” and “Export Excel” near the top of the screen.

## Obtaining Letters of Recommendation

When you are finished with your studies, you may find that you need to obtain letters of recommendation for moving on to another graduate program, or for securing a faculty position. The graduate faculty members recommend that you consider the following advice when requesting recommendations:

- Choose recommenders appropriately. A good place to start is with your dissertation or capstone director, or other members of your committee. Be sure that the people you approach have worked with you enough to make an informed recommendation, and that they have positive experience to draw from.
- Be explicit in your request. Ask, “Can you write me a *strong* letter of recommendation for [a faculty position/graduate program]?” Asking for a “strong” letter allows the faculty member to determine whether or not they feel comfortable writing a very positive letter for you, and ensures that you will receive the best possible recommendations.
- For academic job searches, it is best if you can hire a credentials service (such as Interfolio). This allows faculty to produce one letter of recommendation, and for it to be sent from a third party to several different job search committees.

There is a cost to this service; however, it is recommended if you are planning to apply to a large number of positions.

## Graduation

### Graduation Clearance Procedures

Students anticipating degree completion or certificate award must file an Application for Degree (AFD) form or an Application For Certificate Conferral to obtain a diploma or certificate and to have their names appear in the Commencement Bulletin.

The AFD should be submitted electronically through Hokie Spa. Schedules for those wishing to complete their degrees in time to attend Commencement are posted here.

### Requirements for Graduation

Commencement Deadlines

Other commencement information

## Master of Arts in English

### Overview

The MA in English requires 36 graduate credit hours, distributed as described in the following sections. The 36 credit hours include either an independent study or a thesis as a capstone project.

### Required Courses

ENGL 5014: Introduction to Literary Research (3 hours)

ENGL 5024: Critical Theory in English Studies (3 hours)

[For students entering the program Fall 2014 and subsequently]

#### One of the following:

ENGL 5074 Digital Humanities (3 hours)

ENGL 5464 Intro to Medical Humanities (3 hours)

ENGL 5474 Teaching Literature (3 hours)

and

GRAD 5014 Academic Integrity and Plagiarism 1 hour (see above under Scholarly Ethics & Integrity)

Capstone Project (one of the following):

ENGL 5974: Independent Study (3 hours)

ENGL 5994: Thesis (6 hours)

Students with Graduate Teaching Assistantships (GTAs) must also complete these 9 hours of courses in their first semester:

ENGL 5004: Theory and Practice of University Writing Instruction (6 hours)

GRAD 5004: GTA Training Workshop (1 hour)\*

GRAD 5124: Library Research Skills (English section, 1 hour—only if no graduate hours have been transferred)

ENGL 5994: Research Hours (1 non-degree hour)\*\*



\*The Graduate School will carry out your registration for GRAD 5004,

\*\*Unless graduate hours have been transferred, GTAs are required to register for 1 hour of ENGL 5994 their first semester which does not count toward their degree requirements. This hour is added so that first semester GTAs will reach an 18-hour threshold. This 18-hour requirement was mandated by SACS (Virginia Tech's accrediting agency – the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools) as the minimum number of credits a student must take before they may teach in a classroom as a GTA.

### Practicum

Graduate Teaching Assistants (GTAs) receive academic credit for the ongoing training associated with teaching responsibilities by registering for ENGL 5034: Practicum in Teaching College Composition each semester they teach. However, this course does not count towards their degree. GTAs are expected to enroll in the Practicum every semester (except their first) in which they hold a GTA position in order to maintain full-time student status of 12 hours of enrollment and to continue their development as teachers.

### Other courses

The master's degree offers an opportunity to develop broad competence – mastery – of the subject matter, methods, and theories of English Studies. Thus, students are given the freedom to use their other coursework to fill gaps in historical periods, genres, theories, or methods based on their prior study. The master's degree also offers the opportunity to explore new areas of English Studies.

Beyond the Required Courses, GTAs must take a minimum of 18 hours of courses in the major while non-GTAs must take a minimum of 24 hours of courses in the major for a minimum total of 36 semester hours. This number will increase by 3 hours for GTAs and non-GTAs alike if they select an Independent Study as their capstone. Students are free to select any 5000-level English courses they wish to reach this requirement. However, with special permissions, these hours may also include transfer courses from other departments or universities, 4000-level courses, and independent or special study courses.

### Transfer Courses & 4000-Level English Courses

Each graduate student is entitled to use up to six hours of relevant previous coursework and/or 4000-level English courses toward their degree plan. Note that no more than six hours will be counted toward the student's degree plan. See the Credit for Previous Coursework section of this document for more information on that approval process. In order to get approval for a 4000 level English course at Virginia Tech, you must fill out the form found on the [Forms](#) page on the English Department website. Please note: this form will need approval signatures from your advisor, the course instructor, and the Director of Graduate Studies. This form should be completed and returned at least two weeks prior to the start of the semester.

### Independent and Special Study Courses

With the approval of a graduate faculty member who directs the Independent Study and the Director of Graduate Studies, a graduate student may pursue a subject of study not covered by regular course offerings. Graduate students are limited to a maximum of two independent or special study courses: ENGL 5974: Independent Study and ENGL 5984: Special Study. Additional independent or special study courses may be taken but do not

count toward the minimum hours required for the degree. This maximum includes the required capstone project when the student chooses the Independent Study option.

Students must complete the request form at least two weeks before the semester begins. The request includes a justification for why this course should substitute for a regular course, a bibliography, and a plan for meeting the requirements of graduate study.

### Capstone Options: Independent Study or Thesis

The capstone project allows students to develop and demonstrate the research and analytical skills achieved through the courses in the MA program and to contribute their own knowledge to a problem in English Studies. Such problems may be interpretive, pedagogical, textual and bibliographical, archival, or theoretical. Students may anticipate their projects early in the degree program, but the capstone project represents the culmination of study for the MA and the student's most mature academic work. Thus, it is completed in the semester of graduation (or, in the case of summer graduations, in the spring preceding graduation).

Both the independent study and the thesis require substantial research. They also require students to position the current study within existing knowledge. Students must choose the topic and director by the end of their first year of study (or, for part-time students, at least two semesters before graduation).

Sample projects, both independent studies and theses, are available for review online through the Virginia Tech library in the ETD (Electronic Theses and Dissertations) database. Several independent study projects are available through the English Department website, graduate program division, or in hard copy from the graduate secretary. These samples will help students determine the expectations, scope, and possibilities for capstone projects.

### Independent Study Option

The independent study offers 3 hours of credit (ENGL 5974) toward the master's degree. In it, a student may pursue work begun in a regular course, or the student may pursue a topic not available in regular courses. The independent study culminates in a substantial essay (modeled on an academic article or extensive literature review) which offers a critical analysis of the work reviewed. The estimated length is 25 pages. The independent study requires a faculty director and one additional reader from the graduate faculty.

Students may invite a graduate faculty member to direct the independent study and will discuss possible methods and directions with this director. Considering the advice of the director and the student, the Director of Graduate Studies will locate and appoint the second reader. Work on the independent study can be spaced throughout the student's remaining time in the program, but the student should actually register for Independent Study hours during the term in which the readers will approve it. For most students, this will be spring semester.

### Thesis Option

The thesis offers 6 hours of credit (ENGL 5994) toward the master's degree. Compared with the independent study, the thesis is more ambitious, requires more thorough research, and is more substantial than the independent study essay. The length may

reach or exceed 50 pages. Those students who hope to pursue a PhD may choose a thesis to do some preparatory work for a possible dissertation and to manage a project that exceeds the scope of a course paper or article. The thesis also invites and enables extended exploration of a significant problem. The thesis committee includes a faculty director and two additional readers from the graduate faculty. Students defend their theses before their thesis committee and the Director of Graduate Studies.

### Evaluation Criteria

In the capstone project, students should demonstrate:

- Ability to frame a problem and research question relevant to English Studies
- Knowledge of recent trends in critical theory and ability to apply relevant aspects of theory in their work
- Ability to use appropriate methods of inquiry and interpretation to answer the type of question asked in the study
- Knowledge of the scholarship related to the research question and ability to connect to existing studies
- Mature academic writing
- Using evidence and examples to develop the study
- Organizing information
- Interpreting significance
- Writing good prose

### The Capstone Process

#### *Basic Outline*

1st year (Spring):

Plan of Study - due by end of March

Preliminary Capstone Proposal - due early April

2nd year:

Capstone Proposal - due early September

Revised Capstone Proposal Form - due late September

Draft of Capstone Project - due mid February

Request to Schedule Final Examination - due two weeks before a proposed defense date (mid/late April for a Spring graduation)

Oral Defense of Thesis - at most early May (to meet Spring graduation deadlines)

Capstone Final Draft & ETD - due within two weeks after the defense (mid/late May)

Specific dates per the calendar year are emailed out to students throughout the academic year. For all Capstone forms, visit the [Forms](#) page on the English Department website.

#### *1st and 2nd Semester Planning*

While you are not required to make any official progress on your capstone during the first semester, it is highly recommended that you start talking with your academic advisor, English faculty members, and other students (especially those in their second years and above) about your scholarly interests and possible capstone projects. Also, contact the department and faculty about tentative course offerings in the future. Course descriptions are often not generated until the semester prior to enrollment, but getting an unofficial understanding of what courses will be offered in the coming semesters can be extremely useful in the planning process.

If you have not yet done so by the start of your 2nd semester, try to schedule time with your academic advisor or other faculty members to discuss your goals and prior coursework. This in turn will help you select courses to create a coherent program. By the mid-point of your second semester, you should know what courses you will be taking in the coming year and whether your capstone experience will be a thesis or independent study.

### *Plan of Study*

All English graduate students must submit a Plan of Study that meets at least the minimum requirements for an English Master's degree (see Degree Requirements). Completing and submitting this form is your first major step toward your capstone project, and it is due in late March at the end of your second semester. The Plan of Study form lists all of the classes you have taken and will take in the future to fulfill your degree requirements. You will also indicate here whether your capstone experience will be a thesis or independent study and who will be the director of your project. While you are not required at this time to have found readers for your project, it is highly recommended that you do so. If you do not have any readers indicated here and you have still not found any by the time you complete your preliminary capstone proposal (also due at the end of your second semester), then the Director of Graduate Studies will appoint readers for you considering your recommendations and the recommendations of your project director.

All courses on the Plan of Study, including supporting courses, must be taken on a letter grade (A-F) basis except for those courses approved to be graded on a pass-fail (P/F) basis only. Audit courses cannot be included on the Plan of Study. All English graduate students must obtain a 3.00 GPA for courses on the Plan of Study in order to graduate; if you receive a "C-" on a course listed in your Plan of Study, you will have to repeat it. Courses on the Plan of Study, once taken, cannot be removed from the Plan of Study.

This form must be approved and signed by your academic advisor, your capstone director, your readers, and the Director of Graduate Studies. It can be quite difficult to obtain all these signatures in a short amount of time, so plan accordingly. Once you have completed the form, it may be submitted to the Graduate Secretary (Sally Wieringa).

After approval by your advisory committee (your director and readers) and the Director of Graduate Studies, the Plan of Study should be entered and sent electronically to the Graduate School for approval by the end of the second academic semester.

After your Plan of Study has been approved, any changes you wish to make to it will require a "Plan of Study Change" form to be approved by your academic advisor and the Director of Graduate Studies and submitted to the Graduate School.

### *Preliminary Capstone Proposal*

This form starts the formal process of confirming your capstone project with the department and graduate school. Here, you will designate whether you will be completing a thesis or independent study, identify your project committee members (your director and readers) and provide a brief (100-200 word) description of your proposed study. You are also required here to attach a bibliography of at least 12 items.

This form must also be signed by you, your project director, the Director of Graduate Studies, and your readers. Like the Plan of Study form, it can be quite difficult to obtain all these signatures in a short amount of time, so plan accordingly.

This form and your revised proposal (due in early September) are required for enrollment in the coming semester. It should be submitted to the Graduate Secretary (Sally Wieringa).

### *Capstone Project Proposal*

This proposal expands and provides details about your capstone project as you described it briefly in the Preliminary Capstone Proposal. It also provides a basis for discussion of the proposed project with your project committee, anticipating the Project Conference that will follow soon after you complete this form.

This Capstone Project Proposal should be at least 3 pages long (but 10-12 pages is not too long). A thoroughly developed proposal will enable your committee to provide more direction than a sketchy idea. The words of a well-developed proposal are likely to become part of the project, perhaps its introduction, and good work now will minimize the work you have to do for the revised proposal due a couple weeks later.

This proposal is much less structured than the Preliminary Capstone Proposal you submitted previously. However, it should cover a number of key areas:

- A clear statement of the problem that invites or requires study. Often the “problem” is a need to reinterpret, to fill in gaps in knowledge, or to correct misinformation.
- A literature review. You may be able to describe the problem by referring to previously published work, but you should at least indicate how your work will connect to existing work. This literature review can be tentative and preliminary, but it should establish that your project connects to work in English Studies.
- A methods section that describes how you will conduct your study. You may use a variety of methods so long as they are appropriate for the research including (but not limited to) literature review, close reading, interview, and textual editing.
- A bibliography that identifies at least 12 relevant sources.

This form must be signed by you, your project director, and the Director of Graduate Studies and submitted to your director and the Graduate Secretary (Sally Wieringa) by early September (about 2 weeks after the start of the semester).

### *Capstone Project Conference*

You will have about 2 weeks between the due date of your Capstone Project Proposal and your Revised Capstone Project Proposal. During this time, you should plan to meet with your capstone committee members to discuss your project and your proposal. Here, you and your committee may agree to modify the project scope, direction, or methods.

### *Capstone Project Revised Proposal*

After meeting with your committee members, you will develop and revise your Capstone Proposal to incorporate the suggestions of your committee at the Project Conference. In addition to an updated proposal, this form provides a section for your director to add recommendations and advice about procedures (meeting times, deadlines, role of second reader), methods, project scope, or any other pertinent advice that will help you complete your project successfully. Keep in mind that you will have to allow your director some time to complete this section of the form.

A revised copy of your project proposal and a completed Capstone Project Revised Proposal form (which includes your advisor's completed "recommendations" section and signatures from your entire committee and the Director of Graduate Studies) must be submitted to the Graduate Staff Coordinator (Sally Wieringa) by mid/late September (about two weeks after the Capstone Project Proposal is due). You should also provide a copy of the revised proposal to your committee members.

This revised proposal becomes the contractual arrangement between you and your committee for the project you will complete in the spring semester of your graduating year.

### *Capstone Draft & Writing Process*

There are no formal requirements or due dates for drafts of your capstone project, but if you want your project to be eligible for awards, the Graduate School deadlines for nominations are usually mid-February and the Department award (\$1000) requires a nomination from your director by mid/late March. Accordingly, you will want to have at least a very good draft completed by these dates to be eligible.

Having a draft of your project completed by mid-February will also give your project director a couple weeks to make comments on the draft, after which you will have a couple of weeks to make changes and give the revised text to your entire committee. The committee will then have a couple weeks to get their comments back to you, and you will still have time after that to make final revisions (and even complete the oral defense of your project) by mid-April.

In any event, you should communicate with your director after the first chapter or introduction of your project is complete to make sure you and your director agree that the project is developing in the way you both intend.

You should also be working with your committee during this process to set a defense date and get the relevant paperwork to the graduate school at least two weeks in advance (see Defense).

### *Oral Defense*

Whether you have selected a thesis or an independent study, you must perform an oral defense of your capstone project before your project director and readers. All final non-thesis and thesis/dissertation oral examinations must be scheduled online through the Signature Approval System (<https://gradexam.stl.vt.edu/>). Students sign into this system to request their final examination and upload their ETD (if a thesis/dissertation student). Advisory committee members will sign into the system to approve the final examination request as well as electronically sign the examination card.

To schedule your Oral Defense, log in to the Signature Approval System (<https://gradexam.stl.vt.edu/>) and submit a "Request to Schedule Final Examination." Your request must be submitted at least 2 weeks prior to the examination date. It is important that you plan in advance with your advisory committee to ensure that all advisory committee members can attend the examination for the date/time requested. If any member of the advisory committee does not approve your final examination request, you will need to resubmit with a new date/time.



Requesting a room in the examination request DOES NOT reserve the room; you must reserve the room through the building room coordinator. If you are reserving a room in Shanks, contact an English Department secretary or administrator.

At the latest, you must complete the oral defense of your Capstone Project by early May (specific deadlines for your year of graduation may be found at [http://graduateschool.vt.edu/academics/commencement\\_deadlines](http://graduateschool.vt.edu/academics/commencement_deadlines)). Ideally, aiming for a defense by mid-April will provide you and your committee with sufficient flexibility to ensure these deadlines are met.

All members of your Advisory Committee are required to participate in your final examination. Depending upon the technological resources available, committee members may participate from a remote location.

After conducting the examination, your director and readers will indicate through the online Signature Approval System whether they consider your performance to be “Satisfactory” or “Unsatisfactory.” If a committee member does not approve the thesis/dissertation, that non-approval will be designated on the ETD. A successful candidate is allowed, at most, one negative vote, regardless of the size of the Advisory Committee. You can check the status of your approvals by logging in to the Signature Approval System (<https://gradexam.stl.vt.edu/>) and viewing your exam request.

### *ETD Submission*

After successfully defending your capstone project, you will then submit the final version of your thesis (approved by your Advisory Committee) as an Electronic Thesis and Dissertation (ETD) to the Graduate School. You must submit the ETD no later than two weeks after the successful completion of your oral defense.

Formatting requirements for the ETD may be found here: <http://etd.vt.edu/etddev.html>  
It may also help to view approved ETDs from former students, catalogued here: [http://scholar.lib.vt.edu/theses/browse/by\\_department/e.html](http://scholar.lib.vt.edu/theses/browse/by_department/e.html)

ETDs are submitted via the same system by which you scheduled your defense. When you are ready to submit your ETD, log in to the Signature Approval System (<https://gradexam.stl.vt.edu>). Under “exam requests submitted” in the far right column, you should see two small boxes labeled “view” and “etd.” Click the “etd” box to begin the submission process.

If you do not see the clickable “etd” box, then the graduate school may have not yet confirmed that your thesis committee has approved your oral defense. After your completed oral defense, your thesis director should log on to the system and indicate that your committee members have approved your exam. The system will then send out requests to your readers to confirm their approval. To check this, click the “view” box to view your final exam request. Under the “Graduate Committee” section, you should see green check marks in the “SCHEDULE APPROVAL” “EXAM RESULT” and “RESULT APPROVAL” columns for all members of your committee. If some boxes still read “pending,” check with your director and committee members to confirm that they have submitted their approval. It can sometimes take a day for the system to register this. If you still cannot submit your ETD, contact the Graduate School at [grads@vt.edu](mailto:grads@vt.edu).

After submitting your ETD, the Graduate School may require you to revise the document before giving their approval. If this process of ETD revisions extends beyond the posted deadlines for a semester, you will be enrolled for 1 credit of “Defending Student Status” (DSS) in the later semester when degree completion occurs.

### Graduate Teaching Assistantships

Graduate Teaching Assistantships are available on a competitive basis. Students who are appointed as graduate teaching assistants (GTAs) fulfill their teaching responsibilities in first-year composition or in the Writing Center. They receive Instructional Fee Scholarships that pay tuition as well as stipends for teaching. Reappointment depends on satisfactory progress in meeting degree requirements as well as on evaluations by teaching mentors. First-year GTAs do not teach during their first semester of enrollment, but they do participate in a practicum and work with a mentor in preparation for teaching.

Students who are applying for admission may apply for a teaching fellowship by noting their interest in this kind of support on their admission paperwork. Admitted and enrolled students should inform the Director of Graduate Studies by February that they are interested in appointments for the following year.

### Graduation Clearance Procedures

Students anticipating degree completion or certificate award must file an Application for Degree (AFD) form or an Application For Certificate Conferral to obtain a diploma or certificate and to have their names appear in the Commencement Bulletin.

The AFD should be submitted electronically through Hokie Spa. Schedules for those wishing to complete their degrees in time to attend Commencement are posted here.

### *Summary of Procedures for a candidate for the master's degree:*

1. Students must be enrolled at Virginia Tech in the term in which the degree is awarded.
2. Submission of the Request to Schedule Final Examination, two weeks before the proposed examination date for students who have been enrolled during the last year. For those who have been out of residence for more than a year and require Readmission, the Readmission process should be completed before requesting the Final Examination.
3. Taking Final Examination
4. Filing of Application for Degree, payment of fee. This form makes an individual degree completion checklist available to the student on Hokie Spa
5. Submitting the final version of the thesis or dissertation, approved by the student's Advisory Committee as an Electronic Dissertation or Thesis (ETD) within two weeks after the defense
6. Submitting the completed and signed Thesis/Dissertation Approval form
7. Submitting any applicable supporting documentation for the ETD, i.e.: copyright permission letters to reproduce items from other publications, Institutional Research Board approval or exemption notices (if appropriate), UMI form, Survey of Earned Doctorates
8. Payment of the archiving fee which is required of students at the time the ETD is submitted



9. Degree Completion requires ETD approval by the Graduate School and completion of all other requirements for the degree.

### *Commencement Participation*

Master's students who have completed their degree requirements, and those nearing completion, can participate in Commencement. However, diplomas are not issued until all degree requirements are met. Summer graduates may attend either fall or spring commencement but must confirm their attendance through Hokie Spa.

Information on master's regalia is available from the University Bookstore, Clothing and Gifts department, 540/231-5991.

### *Degree Conferring Dates*

In addition to the traditional twice-a-year commencement, two additional "Degree-Conferring Dates" have been established. These dates appear on the diploma for qualified graduates. These additional degree-conferring dates fall on the last day of final examinations of First Summer Term and Second Summer Term. No commencement ceremonies are conducted during the summer. Students who complete degree requirements during summer may attend the next commencement; students must confirm commencement attendance via Hokie Spa. All degrees conferred between commencements are listed in the next commencement program. Diplomas will be mailed to graduates by first class mail.

### *Thesis Grade Requirements / Exceptions*

Research toward a thesis, dissertation or major paper (the last is generally designated as Project and Report credits) is assigned equivalent credit hours (EQ grade) when satisfactory progress has been made. The "NG" grade can be given when progress on a thesis or dissertation has not been satisfactory.

### *Advising*

Advisor information is found on Hokie Spa, under "View Your General Student Information."

### *Academic Advisor*

The Director of the MA program will assign MA graduate students an advisor in the first year of enrollment. This advisor will work with the student on course selection and plan of study and help the student decide whether to choose a thesis or independent study project. The advisor and student may also discuss ways to enhance course performance, continuing graduate study after the master's degree, career options, participation in professional activities, or other such topics that will help a student accomplish his or her goals for graduate study in English. The academic advisor must approve all requests for independent studies that substitute for regular courses. In the MA program, the advisor's approval of requests to enroll in 4000-level courses must precede enrollment.

Once a student selects a director for the capstone project, that faculty member will become the student's new academic advisor.

### *Annual Review*

The Department of English and Graduate School require an annual review of each continuing graduate student. The review consists of two parts: a self-assessment by the

student and an assessment of the student by the faculty advisor. Students should have their portion of the report completed and to their advisor by April 12th. Advisors should forward the form, once they have completed their portion, to the Graduate Secretary, Sally Wieringa, no later than April 26th.

As part of the completion of degree requirements, students are expected to develop their knowledge of recent trends in critical theory and traditional research methods and the ability to apply aspects of these foundational studies in their work. They should also develop their knowledge of the body of literature in English Studies and their competence in academic writing.

Review criteria include the following:

- Timely completion of degree requirements
- Timely completion of paperwork
- Course choices consistent with the goals of master's-level study
- Grades

In addition, students are encouraged to participate in the intellectual life and governance of the university by attending events and meetings or by accepting leadership roles; to develop their professional identities by joining appropriate academic organizations; to develop technical knowledge related to learning, research, teaching, and publishing; and to collaborate in research with faculty members when opportunities are available. All students are expected to adhere to the Virginia Tech Principles of Community.

## MFA in Creative Writing

### Requirements

The MFA in Creative Writing is designed to be completed in three years. Students may specialize in either fiction or poetry. A minimum of 48 hours is required for this terminal degree. A series of creative writing workshops, courses in form and theory, new media writing, composition pedagogy, and literature and theory electives are designed for students wishing to pursue careers as writers or writer/scholars at the college level. Students also have the opportunities for editorial work on *The Minnesota Review* and on *The New River: a Journal of Digital Writing and Art*. A creative thesis and a final exam are required.

Please see the [MFA Policies](#) document for details on Course Requirements, the Creative Thesis, Annual Reviews, important forms and documents, etc.

### Forms

Many forms are available [online](#) to print individually and turn in hardcopy form or to fill out electronically and email. Other forms may be emailed to students throughout the year or be made available in hardcopy form.

### Transferring Credits (For students with MA degrees)

Six credits from your M.A. degree can be transferred and can also be used to fulfill some of your literature requirements for the MFA degree (which is the equivalent of 2 courses).

You will still have to be enrolled in our composition pedagogy course as well as practicum, during your first semester, despite any prior teaching experience—this is because our composition program is its own unique entity.

However, you will only have to enroll in 12 course hours (total) in your first semester (which is the usual semester load) as opposed to the 18 credits our first-year students normally have to take in the first semester (so that they're eligible to teach, which has to do with SACS accreditation—the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools requires all Instructors to have at least 18 credit hours in their subject before entering the classroom).

### Thesis Committees

The thesis committee includes a director and two additional faculty readers. First year MFA students will put in a request for first and second choices of thesis directors, along with readers, in the spring of their first year, when Erika Meitner (Program Director) puts out a call for these. Once directors and committees are established, students will have them sign the [MFA Thesis Committee Form](#) in the spring semester of their first year. Typically graduate faculty members only take on a limited number of committee positions a year. If you have not worked with a faculty member before but would like to ask them to be on your committee, consider providing them with a writing sample and scheduling a time to meet with them in person to talk about your writing. Also bear in mind that some faculty members may be out of town or on leave when forms are due, so try not to put off getting signatures until the last minute.

## On Literary Journals

Our MFA program currently has two literary journals that students have the opportunity to work on. Incoming students can work on any number of journals in any capacity they'd like.

*The New River*: The oldest journal associated with the MFA program is *The New River* (which is a hypertext journal of digital writing and art). Usually there are a few students who take Ed Falco's New Media course who become interested in editing this journal at some point while they're here. These students go to Ed (usually 2 a semester), and they work with Ed in an independent study where they are fully in charge of editing the journal—everything from work selection to how it looks (and they get credit for it at the same time). Josette Torres (MFA '10) is the web administrator for *The New River* (i.e. the person who puts the finished issue on the Web).

*The Minnesota Review*: We've recently inherited *The Minnesota Review* here at VT. The MFA program is responsible for the selection of the poetry and fiction for the journal. We've set up a literary editing course, which various MFA faculty teach, and each professor has different policies on editorial structure, but at this point we've standardized how to do submission selections, write acceptance and rejection letters, etc. All of the students who enroll in the course are considered part of the editorial staff. Students run an active blog for the journal, as well as a Facebook page and Twitter site for it.

## Readings & The Literary Scene

We have a small but tenacious literary scene in Blacksburg, one that's been growing each year thanks to the efforts of the students and faculty. Here are some of the events you have to look forward to:

Visiting Writers Series: Each year, the department brings several established writers to read, host workshops, and give craft talks. These writers include those selected as part of the Soniat Series, which allows MFA students to decide on two young writers they'd like to bring to Tech. Check out this year's lineup of our official Visiting Writers Series.

Our Speakeasy Series has additional authors who happen to be coming through town, or come to us via partnerships with other departments or programs like Women's Studies, Africana Studies, or campus groups like the LGBTA of VT.

Connecting Ridges: In 2010, students from Virginia Tech and Hollins started a reading series that would provide a stage for MFA candidates in their final year to read in Blacksburg and Roanoke. It's still going strong, with four events per year.

PolyPerformance, also started by Virginia Tech students, is a great way to get reading experience under your belt, and to hear the work of your peers. Poets, writers, musicians, rappers, and magicians have all been known to appear on stage at this lively event, usually held in a gallery or coffee shop downtown.

Glossolalia, the Literary Festival at Virginia Tech: An undergraduate literary festival. The event, started by Bob Hicok in 2012 and coordinated largely by undergraduates and a few MFA students, spans two days of readings and festivities.

## Teaching Fellowships (Graduate Teaching Assistantships)

All MFA students accepted into the program are awarded Teaching Fellowships. Graduate Teaching Assistants (GTAs) fulfill their teaching responsibilities in first-year composition or in the Writing Center. They receive Instructional Fee Scholarships that pay tuition as well as stipends for teaching. Reappointment depends on satisfactory progress in meeting degree requirements as well as on evaluations by teaching mentors. First-year GTAs do not teach during their first semester of enrollment, but they do participate in a practicum and work with a mentor in preparation for teaching. MFA students teach a 0-1, 2-2, 2-1 load; in their final semester, MFA students teach an introductory creative writing course.

Students who are applying for admission to the MFA program should be sure to apply for a teaching fellowship on their admission paperwork. Admitted and enrolled students should inform the Director of Graduate Studies by February that they are interested in appointments for the following year.

## PhD in Rhetoric and Writing

### Scholar & Important Documents

The most pertinent information regarding policies, program requirements, exams, and dissertations can be found on our PhD Scholar site, which you were added to upon entering the program. Look under “project sites” for “PhD in Rhetoric and Writing.” These documents are updated regularly, so please continue to check the site for relevant information.

To avoid redundancy, most of that information is not repeated here. However, additional procedures, supplemental information, and links to forms can be found below. Each section heading is linked to the Scholar resource on that topic.

### Overview/Mission

### Faculty

### Goals

### Important Dates/Deadlines

More information on deadlines (e.g., the exam process) can be found at other links below, as well as links to important forms used throughout the program. Remember that with each of these forms, it is smart to keep copies (with a received date stamp, if possible), and to follow up on any form submissions to ensure you have taken care of your obligations. This way, if for some reason paperwork is lost at the graduate school, you have a copy to prove you met the required deadline.

Here are links to a few forms mentioned in the timeline on Scholar:

- [In-state tuition form](#)—During the summer after your first year, if you maintain residency in Virginia, you can fill out this form to waive out-of-state tuition.
- [Plan of Study form](#) (be sure to select the PhD form) Please note: it is on this form that you list the members of your dissertation committee.
- [Plan of Study Change form](#)

## Annual Review Process

Each year, all graduate students are asked to take part in an evaluation process that is part self-evaluation and part evaluation by your advisor. The Annual Student Review Form (be sure to select the PhD version) is usually emailed to all graduate students each March, and generally due around April 15<sup>th</sup>. Requirements for this process can be found at either of the links above.

## Degree Requirements & Course Descriptions

Here are the general descriptions of the core course requirements for the PhD program. Some of these offerings are topical, and therefore are not listed here. However, your advisor will be able to provide information on these offerings. Also see course descriptions.

In most cases, you should have been able to transfer a decent amount of your credits toward fulfilling the requirements for this program. Upon entering the program, please sit down with the Director of Graduate Studies to determine if there are some course requirements you have already fulfilled. In general, during your two years of coursework at the PhD level, you will take 3 courses each semester and register for 3 credits of “research and dissertation” (ENGL 7994).

## Academic Policies

Includes information on GPA requirements, recommended credit loads, independent studies, and incompletes

## Assistantship/Practica

A number of different assistantships are offered every year. Generally, there is an application process in which you apply for your most desired position. Forms are usually due around March 1<sup>st</sup>, and you will be notified of open positions and the official due date via email. Further information on assistantships is available on the graduate school website.

## Processes & Relevant Forms

In your second year, you will begin to form your committee (which is submitted with your Plan of Study). In your third year, you will submit your literature review, take your exams, and submit your dissertation prospectus. In your fourth year, you will finish your dissertation (and presumably go on the job market). Instructions for these processes can be found on the Scholar site (click the link above). In addition, we've included a few helpful tips and links below.

- Representation
- Committee Formation, Exams, and Dissertation Process
- Preliminary Exams (“Comps”)
- Change of Committee Member/Advisor Form
- Request to Admit Candidate to Preliminary Exams (As of 2013, this form requires signatures from each committee member.)

Again, it is important to remember to give yourself plenty of time to submit these forms (due no later than two weeks prior to your exam, but better to get it in earlier), and to obtain dated photocopies of receipt (if these forms are done in person and not electronically). This can be a stressful process, and ensuring the paperwork flows smoothly can go a long way toward reducing stress and eliminating obstacles.

## Graduation—Dissertation Defense, ETD Process, and Commencement Ceremonies

In order to prepare for commencement, you need to submit the [Application for Degree](#) (you can also submit it online through Hokie Spa). This will trigger a “Graduation Requirements Checklist” menu on Hokie Spa. This checklist is fairly self-explanatory, includes links to the forms you need to fill out, and displays green checkmarks as you complete each part of the process. The Application for Degree sets everything else in motion, so you should plan to apply for it fairly early in your final semester.

No less than two weeks before your defense (listed on most forms as your “final exam”), you should submit your Final Exam Request Form through the [signature approval system](#). This system will also help facilitate the final processes of graduation for you, as it will allow your committee to provide electronic signatures for all of the forms. It is highly recommended that you submit your Final Exam Request a month before your defense so as to avoid any problems.

Once your defense has been completed and approved, you will begin preparing your dissertation for the [Electronic Thesis and Dissertation \(ETD\) database](#). The instructions for this process are fairly clear; however, it has been noted that you should pay special attention to the formatting instructions provided. They are quite particular, and strictly enforced. Once you make your initial submission, don’t do anything until you hear back from the ETD staff (generally about two weeks). They will provide further instructions for you, as well as edits you are required to make.

When you have made your final edits and are prepared to make your final ETD submission, you will include a ProQuest Form/UMI Agreement (which, as of 2013, still requires a physical signature). It should be noted that the default for ProQuest is for an open process, which allows anyone to look up your project. If you wish it to remain unsearchable, be sure to note that appropriately. Once your dissertation is published, ETD staff will send you a link to your file.

Commencement ceremonies are generally held the Friday and Saturday after the exam period. The Friday service is for the entire graduate school, and the Saturday ceremony is simply for the Department. Further instructions will be sent to you in the final months of your final semester.



## Graduate Life/Campus Life

### Associations and Organizations

#### Graduate Student Assembly

The Graduate Student Assembly (GSA) is the governing body of approximately 4,000 on-campus and 2,000 off-campus graduate students. The GSA represents students' concerns and serves as their liaison with the University Administration. GSA members also serve on a variety of University commissions and committees. In addition, the GSA administers a grant program to directly promote research and educational efforts of its members. The GSA strongly promotes graduate student community across departments by providing social events to encourage graduate students to come together. Every year the GSA governing board and delegate body work to improve campus life, scholarly development, and graduate community by creating and implementing goals based on the issues and concerns of graduate students on campus.

#### English Graduate Student Organization (EGSO)

VT-EGSO is Virginia Tech's English Graduate Student Organization, comprised of students from the English Department's MA, MFA, and PhD programs. EGSO is responsible for putting on a variety of events and activities each year, including a welcome event at the beginning of each academic year and the book fair each spring. EGSO officials are elected at the end of the Spring semester each year.

#### Graduate ambassadors

#### Search for student organizations by area of interest

### Committees

#### *Graduate Committee and Student Representation*

The Graduate Committee determines all policies governing the graduate program (subject to the approval of the department chair). Graduate students' interests and concerns are represented by the graduate student members of the Committee. These two representatives are elected by the graduate students. Students are advised to voice their questions, concerns, or complaints about the graduate program to their representatives on this committee.

Changes in policies affecting graduate students and graduate study are announced in the minutes of the Graduate Committee. These minutes are distributed through the grad-announce email list.

#### *Professional Writing Committee*

The Professional Writing Committee is responsible for developing and coordinating undergraduate courses in professional writing. The committee oversees the Professional Writing Option of the major in order to insure programmatic coherence and integrity according both to departmental values and initiatives and best practices of professional writing beyond the university. In collaboration with the Undergraduate Committee, it assesses the curriculum in professional writing. It also oversees service courses in business and technical writing. The committee is responsible for developing faculty hiring plans in professional writing. The committee is also responsible for developing programs and opportunities that support and enhance student and faculty experience, including, but not limited to, visiting lecture series, student awards in professional writing,

student conference participation, and internships as well as professional development of faculty teaching PW courses. In addition, the committee encourages outreach and diversity efforts related to professional writing.

Recommendations by the committee involving major program or policy changes that require approval by the College Curriculum Committee and/or the University Core Curriculum Committee are taken through the Undergraduate Committee.

The Director of Professional Writing, with the guidance of the committee, convenes the whole faculty teaching professional writing courses at least once a year for discussion of issues, professional development, strategic planning, and implementation of initiatives.

The committee is chaired by the Director of Professional Writing, who is appointed by the Department Chair. The committee is composed of all the professors with a primary appointment in professional writing plus three elected faculty members, two of whom must be instructors, serving two-year, staggered terms. In addition, the Assistant to the Director of Professional Writing serves as a voting member. At his or her discretion, and with the advice of the Director of Professional Writing, the Department Chair may appoint one or two additional faculty members for purposes of distribution of representation or for projects that require specific expertise. In addition, the committee includes one student member, graduate or undergraduate, who is appointed by the committee chair, in consultation with the committee.

### *Composition Committee*

The duties of the Composition Committee include determining policies, curricula, and outcomes for English 1105, 1106, and 1204H. The committee also oversees the development of the custom composition textbook and works with the Director of Composition to invite and host visiting scholars in composition as well as other professional development opportunities for faculty teaching composition courses. In addition, the committee explores and encourages diversity efforts in composition classrooms and in the program overall.

The Composition Committee is chaired by the Director of Composition, who is appointed by the Department Chair, and includes the Director and Assistant Director of the Writing Center and Assistant Director of Composition. One Composition Program Assistant selected by all Composition Program Assistants serves a one-year term with voting rights.

The committee includes three elected faculty members: one professor of any rank from among the Rhetoric and Writing faculty and two instructors. The electorate for all of the faculty positions is the faculty as a whole. All of the elected members serve two-year, staggered terms. In addition, at his or her discretion, the Department Chair may appoint one additional faculty member of any rank to the committee for a one-year term. Two GTAs are elected (one from the PhD program and one from the MA or MFA program) to one-year terms as nonvoting members. The electorate for the PhD student consists of GTAs in the PhD program. The electorate for the MA/MFA student consists of all GTAs from the MA and MFA programs.

### *MA Committee*

The MA Committee is responsible for the general administration of the MA degree in English. It is chaired by the Director of the MA Program, who is appointed by the Chair of

the department. It is composed of five faculty members of professorial rank, inclusive of the Director of the MA Program. At least two of the remaining four members of the committee must be of tenured rank. Three are elected by the MA faculty and one is appointed by the Chair of department. One non-voting student representative is elected by the MA students from their population. The Graduate Program Staff Specialist also serves as a non-voting, *ex officio* member of the committee and may attend meetings as necessary.

The MA Committee is charged with calling for proposals for MA courses to be taught in the succeeding year, establishing policy for the program, evaluating and selecting candidates for admission to the program and for GTA positions within the program, selecting winners for the MA student composition teaching award (in consultation with the Director of Composition) and the MA independent study/thesis award, and gathering assessment data.

### *MFA Committee*

The MFA Committee is responsible for the general administration of the MFA degree in Creative Writing. It is composed of all creative writing professors who teach in the MFA program. It is chaired by the Director of Creative Writing, who is appointed by the Chair of the department. The Assistant Director of Creative Writing serves *ex officio* and is a non-voting member of the committee. One non-voting student representative is elected by the MFA students from their population. The Graduate Program Staff Specialist also serves as a non-voting, *ex officio* member of the committee and may attend meetings as necessary.

The MFA Committee works with the Director and Assistant Director of Creative Writing to develop and coordinate courses to support the degree program, establish policy for the program, evaluate and select candidates for admission to the program, administer the Visiting Writers Program and graduate-level writing competitions, select winners for MFA writing awards, gather assessment data, and oversee the approve the budget of the program.

### *PhD Committee*

The PhD Committee is responsible for the general administration of the PhD degree in Rhetoric and Writing (RW). It is composed of faculty who teach in the RW program and/or advise RW students and volunteer for service on an as-needed basis. It is chaired by the Director of the PhD Program, who is appointed by the Chair of the department. One non-voting student representative is elected by the PhD students from their population. The Graduate Program Staff Specialist also serves as a non-voting, *ex officio* member of the committee and may attend meetings as necessary.

The PhD Committee works with the Director to develop and co-ordinate courses to support the degree program, establish policy and procedures for the program, evaluate and select candidates for admission to the program, gather assessment data about the program, and generate programming to foster the intellectual and professional development of RW faculty and students.

### **Service Opportunities**

[Becoming a writing center coach](#)

[VT Engage](#)

## Multicultural Programs and Services

Find information about advised student organizations and more

## Resources for International Students:

The VT Cranwell International Center

The Graduate School's International Student Office

An independent guidebook for international students in Blacksburg

## Religious Organizations

Catholic Campus Ministry and the Newman Community

Intervarsity Christian Fellowship

Muslim Students Association

Jewish Student Union

Religious Organizations in the New River Valley

Places of Worship in the New River Valley

## Athletics

Map of the athletic facilities

Recreational Facilities include two pools, gyms, tennis courts, racquetball courts, volleyball courts, basketball courts, and more.

Group exercise, personal training, small group training, and other services are also available.

VT has Intramural Sports for everything from golf to bowling to Fantasy Football to Table Tennis Singles.

There are also Sports Clubs for everything from Equestrian to Fencing to Gymnastics to Competitive Cheerleading (see the difference between Intramurals and Sports Clubs here).

Venture Out provides equipment rentals and hosts outdoor adventures and programs and events related to outdoor activities like hiking, camping, scuba diving, horseback riding, etc.

Want free tickets to Virginia Tech Football games? Enter the student lottery!

Keep up with all things Hokie Sports, find tickets and schedules, and more here.

## Parking Services

All vehicles that will be parked on campus must be registered via Parking Services including motorcycles, mopeds, and bicycles.

You can buy your permit online for the current permit period with EZ-Biz! Avoid the long lines and go to www.parking.vt.edu and click on "Purchase Permits." Only Visa and MasterCard are accepted online. To purchase a permit in person, go by the Parking Services Office, located at 455 Research Center Drive or the satellite office in the Perry Street Parking Garage. You will need to fill out the permit form for the current school year. These are available online or at the Parking Services Office.

Graduate students will purchase the Graduate Student Tag. Two or more graduate students who choose to ride with each other can get a carpooling tag together which is substantially discounted from the Graduate tag full year price. Carpoolers must register

together in person at the Parking Services office. Each person in the carpool must complete a Commuter Alternatives Program form with the carpool box checked and present a Hokie ID. Each carpool applicant must provide proof of separate vehicle ownership. Graduate students with carpool permits will receive a special parking permit allowing them to park on the Drillfield from 5-8 p.m., Monday through Friday. Carpooling spaces are available at the front of most large parking lots. Carpoolers will also receive five free daily permits per semester (for days that carpooling won't work). Emergency Ride Home is available through Parking Services. This provides carpoolers with a ride to their vehicle or local residence in case of an emergency. The service is available Monday through Friday, from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

Permits can be purchased for the entire year, per semester, for the summer, or for the day. Please note that there is a replacement fee of fifteen dollars for lost tags.

### **Alternative Transportation**

If you do not own a car—or would simply prefer not to drive it to campus—there are a number of options for getting to campus. [VT Alternative Transportation Services](#) promotes these options, and provides links to additional services (such as Zimride and Uhaul Car Share). Carpooling and mixed transportation methods—such as [Bike, Bus and Walk](#), which provides you with 15 discounted daily parking permits per semester—are also available. In order to register for this service, you will need to fill out the [Commuter Alternative Program Permit](#), and register in person with [Parking Services](#).

### **Bus Service**

[Blacksburg Transit](#) is the public transportation service that provides bus transportation from Blacksburg and Christiansburg to campus. You can show your Hokie ID to use this service without paying the per-ride fees. Check out their website for transit maps and schedules for your area, and be sure to pay attention to the calendar on their home page for times when they are on reduced service (or are closed).

The [Smart Way Bus](#) is available for those who choose to live in Roanoke or other outlying areas. It is also convenient for car-free individuals who need an inexpensive way to get to the Roanoke Airport.

### **Bicycling**

As of 2013, Virginia Tech is recognized as a Bronze Level Bicycle-Friendly University and is continually making improvements to accommodate bicycle commuters. There are many trails to campus, and bicycle racks are available next to most buildings (some of them covered). In addition, emergency bike repair kits are available [at various locations around campus](#).

Before bringing your bike on campus, it is necessary to [register it](#) with Parking Services (bicycles not registered can be fined or impounded). Registration is free, and each student can register an unlimited number of bikes.

Other pertinent bicycle links:

[Greater Campus Bike Trail Map](#)

[Huckleberry Trail Map](#)

[Alternative Transportation Campus Biking Information](#)

## Virginia Tech Police Department

The VT Police Department handles crime and security on campus. Call 540-231-6411 to report a crime or suspicious activity. They recommend programming this number into your phone.

Dial 911 for emergencies. If you do not have the VT Police phone number available, but would like to contact the VT Police, dial 911 and ask to be transferred to the VT Police department.

Safe Ride is a nighttime safety escort service. This service is available to all students, faculty, staff, and visitors to the university. Safe Ride operates from dusk until dawn and provides transportation or a walking escort, upon request, to persons who must cross campus during the nighttime alone. Safe Ride may be contacted by calling 540-231-SAFE (7233).

VT Police also offers a 12 hour Rape Aggression Defense course (for women only). The RAD System is a comprehensive course for women that begins with awareness, prevention, risk reduction and avoidance, while progressing on to the basics of hands-on defense training. RAD is not a Martial Arts program. This course is taught by certified RAD Instructors and provides you with a workbook/reference manual. This manual outlines the entire Physical Defense Program for reference and continuous personal growth.

Men and women interested in taking a 1 1/2 hour lecture on self-defense, personal, property and residential safety should send an email to Officer Marshall Hamilton with your request. When the class fills up, you will receive an email back with dates, times and locations. Topics included will be all types of weapons, situational awareness, crime prevention, and answers to questions pertaining to the above.

Sign up for VT Alerts. VT Alerts is Virginia Tech's Emergency Notification System. In a campus emergency, Virginia Tech will use several information delivery methods to reach you because, at any given time, one form of communications might be better to reach you than another. VT Alerts will deliver messages using some or all of the following channels:

- The Virginia Tech homepage
- Broadcast e-mails to all vt.edu accounts
- Electronic message boards in classrooms
- The weather/emergency hotline (540-231-6668)
- Campus sirens and loudspeakers
- VT Phone Alerts
- VT Desktop Alerts

## Welcome to Blacksburg—Information for Incoming Students

### General Information:

The Hokie Wellness website has a number of good resources for people new to Blacksburg. Their 'living in Blacksburg' section is especially helpful



For answers to basic questions about living in Blacksburg, see the [Town's FAQ site](#).

### On Blacksburg

Blacksburg is a town of about 42,000 people (~24,000 of that number is college students) located in Southwest Virginia, in the mountains (right between the Blue Ridge and Alleghany mountain ranges). Our closest interstate is I-81. We're 45 minutes from Roanoke, VA (the closest city), about 3 hours from Charlotte NC, 4.5 hours from Washington DC, and about 2.5 hours from Winston-Salem and Greensboro, NC and Charlottesville, VA. The closest small airport is in [Roanoke](#) (ROA), and the closest international airport is in [Charlotte, NC](#) (CLT). The [Smart Way Bus](#) runs from Blacksburg & Christiansburg to Roanoke. The closest Amtrak station is in Lynchburg (about 90 miles away), and there's a bus-to-train via the aforementioned Smart Way Bus site. The latest addition to the local transportation arsenal is the [Megabus](#), which is super-cheap, has wireless, and runs usually twice a day (~2:30am & 2:30pm) from Christiansburg to downtown Washington DC (and there's also a bus to Knoxville, TN). You can also transfer in DC to another bus to NYC.

### Housing:

Most of our students live in the town of Blacksburg, within walking distance to campus (Shanks is on the NE corner of campus, closest to North Main/Turner St. intersection) or on the bus line, in apartments, houses, or townhouses. Rentals in town start at about \$500-600 per month for a one-bedroom apartment (though there are slightly more luxe places that run a bit higher - ~\$700), and about \$600-700 is average for two bedrooms. Town-homes, duplexes, and slightly larger places generally start at \$700, and can run well over \$1,000. Often our graduating students pass on their places to other students.

The [Graduate School website](#) also offers a fairly comprehensive site that discusses housing options.

The university does not offer family housing, but does offer graduate [student housing in dorms](#) at the Graduate Life Center for students who wish to take advantage of it.

Some students have preferred to live in surrounding towns, and/or out in the country. The main surrounding towns are Christiansburg and Radford. Christiansburg rents can be a bit cheaper, but it's a 15-minute drive to VT (and sometimes longer, depending on traffic). Radford is a full 30 minutes of driving to get to VT, though it's charming. You can live in 'the country' in Blacksburg and still be somewhat close to campus. The "Ellett Valley" area is quite scenic and close to campus, and many students and faculty live down that way (take Main Street North to Patrick Henry Drive, turn right on Patrick Henry and take it to the end, turn left on Harding Avenue, and take Harding down to Luster's Gate Rd. Stay left at the fork onto Luster's Gate you're in the Ellett Valley).

### Other housing websites:

[VT off-campus housing site](#)

<http://www.blacksburgrent.com/>

<http://www.renttnt.com/>

<http://www.townside.com/>

<http://blueridgerealestate.org>

<http://cmgleasing.com>



<http://blacksburg.craigslist.org/>  
<http://www.findgreatapartment.com>  
<http://www.appt-guide.com>

### *Ways to Rent*

Property Management Companies:

The “rental season” for property management companies begins in January/February for leases beginning that summer (i.e. look & sign lease in Jan. 2014 for lease beginning summer 2014). Most property management companies have strict no-pet policies or restrict pets to breed, size, and weight (generally under 35lb). In addition to the nonrefundable deposit, you’ll probably wind up paying an additional \$35-50/month in “pet rent.” Alternately, private owners often lease to responsible graduate students with pets for a refundable/non refundable pet deposit due at lease signing.

Private Owners & Pet-Friendly Places:

Many owners advertise in *The Roanoke Times*, on Craigslist, or through the VT off-campus housing site. Most of their properties are available 2-3 months before the lease start date.

### **Finding Summer Jobs**

Job listings on “simply hired”

City jobs

Craigslist

VT

Upward Bound

The CTY programs (Center for Talented Youth)

Duke University TIP Program

Blue Ridge Writers Project, which is sometimes able to offer short-term summer employment to MFA students. Check with Aileen (Aileen@vt.edu) for details.

### **Recreation**

#### *General Recreation:*

The Lyric Theatre, on College Avenue downtown

Virginia Tech Ticket Office in Squires Student Center

Virginia Tech Student Centers

Center for the Arts at Virginia Tech

Virginia Tech Calendar

Town of Blacksburg Calendar

Downtown Blacksburg, Inc. (festivals, concerts, art gallery walks):

NextThreeDays.com (calendar of NRV events and food/drink specials):

@BlacksburgStuff on Twitter (tweets about VT/Blacksburg-related news and events, weather updates, and local randomness—heavy on @replies & retweets):

Virginia Tech YMCA Open University offers courses in everything from whittling, to tango, to language instruction

Virginia Tech Recreational Sports

Blacksburg Parks and Recreation (if you’re looking for a hot tub, the Blacksburg Aquatic Center has one)

Christiansburg Aquatic Center (including both public and competition pools, short drive from campus)

Montgomery-Floyd Regional Library (books, free movies, other programming—check out their tiny book sale section for deals)

### *Outdoor Recreation*

The New River Valley (NRV) is a great place to live if you love outdoor recreation. There are many great hiking trails surrounding Blacksburg (popular hikes include The Cascades, Dragon's Tooth, and parts of the Appalachian Trail). There are also trails through various parts of Jefferson National Forest. The university is also nearby to the New River, which means there's easy access to various water-based sports too. The Eastern Divide Ranger Station, located at 110 South Park Avenue (near the intersection of 460 and South Main Street), is a great place to pick up information and maps. From the NRV Ranger District website: "Approximately half the district's trails, 150 miles, are part of the Appalachian Trail System. In fact, the New River Valley Ranger District has more miles of the AT than any other district from Maine to Georgia." The NRV also has a variety of great canoe and kayak floats, as well as fantastic trout fishing.

Here are some links to get you started on local outdoor activities:

NRV Hikes

More NRV Trail Info

More hiking info

Virginia Tech Outdoors Club

The VT University Union rents all sorts of outdoors & camping equipment for adventures

Mountain Lake Conservancy (great hiking & views!)

New River Trail State Park

Tangent Outfitters (New River Water Sports)

Pandapas Pond (trails for running, mountain biking, and a nice paved 1-mile trail around a pond for walking)

### *In & Around Roanoke*

Salem Red Sox Baseball

Taubman Museum of Art

Jefferson Center (Roanoke, concerts, jazz)

Salem Civic Center (concerts, Monster truck jams, etc.)

Roanoke Civic Center

The Virginia Museum of Transportation (old trains)

### *In Floyd, Radford, & on the Blue Ridge Parkway:*

General guide to Floyd (cool artsy town in the mountains nearby)

Floyd Country Store (awesome Bluegrass shows)

The Blue Ridge Wine Trail

Chateau Morisette Winery

The Sun Music Hall (Floyd)

Floydfest (music festival) & wine/beer festivals

### **Information for Incoming Students who are Parents**

#### *Public Schools*

The public schools in Blacksburg are reliably good. Blacksburg High School consistently ranks in the top 500 high schools nationwide according to Newsweek.

Individual school "report cards"

Full list of local schools

**Busing:** The public schools provide free busing from your house (or a bus stop right near your house) to school. Pick-up times for elementary-aged children range from 7:40am to 8:30am, and for Middle School children ranges from 6:40am to 7:20am. Drop off times for elementary schools range from 3:40pm to 4:30pm, and for the middle school ranges from 2:40pm to 3:15pm.

**Extended-day Programs:** Four of the elementary schools (Beeks, Prices Fork, Harding, and Kipps) offer a before and after school program called Adventure Club that starts at 6am (with before-school care) and goes until 6pm if you did need extended-day care for your elementary-school-aged child. Gilbert Linkous has a similar program called E-squared that's run through the school itself that's basically the same thing—you can get more information on this program by calling them at 540-951-5726.

Rainbow Riders Childcare Center also offers aftercare (and beforecare) for school-age children, and will cover snow days

### *Health Care for Kids/Families*

Often students with children are eligible for FAMIS, which is government health insurance for low-income families. If you qualify, they cover almost everything.

### *Class and Teaching Schedules for Parents*

In terms of class schedules, you will be able to get a good idea of when most graduate classes are scheduled by looking at the timetable of courses (select ENGL in the drop-down menu—grad classes are 5000 and 6000-level).

The Department tries to offer as many classes during the day as possible, but there's at least one evening workshop or grad class per semester (and often more). The department does try to make sure that there is a fair number of daytime options, but scheduling does get complicated due to the students' teaching schedules (as the composition classes that students teach are generally always daytime classes). Also, visiting writers' readings are always in the evenings. As for teaching schedules, in addition to the fact that students almost always teach during the day, Jennifer Mooney (the assistant chair and scheduler) does try to accommodate the parents in the department. Before you begin teaching in your first year, do make Jen aware of your particular circumstances (jenmoon@vt.edu).

### *Daycare and Preschool*

Finding full or part-time group daycare for babies and toddlers can be a challenge in Blacksburg. While there are many part-time programs for toddlers age 2 and up, there are very few places that take babies under 18 months, and most of these places have years-long waiting lists. If you know you'll need care for your infant or toddler, it's best to call and put your name on the waiting lists as soon as possible, and call places back regularly to see if there's been movement on any of the waiting lists. Full-time group care for infants and toddlers from 6 weeks to two-years-old generally runs about \$500-750 a month, depending on the facility. Once children hit pre-school age (2 and above) there are more part-time options (half-day), as well as full-time options, though space in the full-time programs is still tight. Here is the most updated resource for childcare providers in the area.

Recently the Graduate School has begun a childcare program for students with families. The program is fairly new and expanding. More information about the program and the range of childcare options provided can be found here:

<http://blogs.lt.vt.edu/childcare/>.

*More on Child-Care and Other Resources:*

Free Babysitting (evenings): The VT Women's Center, each semester, offers free sitting one night per week for potty-trained children (age 2 to 12), sponsored by Chi Delta Alpha Sorority. This semester (Fall 15), it's Thursday nights from 6-8:30PM at the Women's Center. It's called Kids' Night Out, and the person to contact for the information on it each semester is Jessie Meltsner (The Women's Center, Phone: 540-231-7806, Email: <mailto:jmelts@vt.edu>).

Working Moms Email List: The Women's Center also runs a Working Moms email list that graduate students can get on by emailing Christine Dennis ([cdennis@vt.edu](mailto:cdennis@vt.edu)). It's a great resource for asking other moms about stuff in town (childcare, doctors, etc.).

## Credits

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