



COLLEGE OF
LIBERAL ARTS & SOCIAL SCIENCES

**ENGLISH LANGUAGE
& LITERATURE**

CENTRAL MICHIGAN UNIVERSITY

Graduate Student Handbook 2026-2027

ENGLISH

is *the* practical degree.

Versatile.

Marketable.

Transformative.

Congratulations on your admission to Central Michigan University Master's degree program in Creative Writing! This guide will help you move through the normal procedures for obtaining your Master's degree.

Program Faculty:

Jeffrey Bean, MFA, Poetry: bean1j@cmich.edu

Darrin Doyle, PhD, Fiction (Interim Department Chair, Fall 2026): doyle1d@cmich.edu

Robert Fanning, MFA, Poetry: fanni1rj@cmich.edu

Matthew Roberson, PhD, Fiction: rober1m@cmich.edu

Kat Moore, PhD, Creative Non-Fiction: moore23k@cmich.edu

Steven Bailey, PhD, Creative Non-Fiction (Department Chair, Spring 2027): baile1sk@cmich.edu

William Wandless, PhD, Literature: wandl1wh@cmich.edu

CMU's Office of Graduate Studies' Resources for Graduate Students:

<https://www.cmich.edu/offices-departments/office-research-graduate-studies/graduate-studies/student-services>

PLANNING YOUR COURSEWORK

Meet with your advisor to discuss your plan for graduate study.

You will be assigned a Creative Writing faculty advisor upon admission. We recommend meeting with this advisor before registering for classes to discuss your coursework options.

Here is a link to the MACW curriculum: <https://cmich.smartcatalogiq.com/en/2024-2025/graduate-bulletin/colleges-and-departments/english-language-and-literature-department-of/creative-writing-m-a/>

Please remember that **you are required to earn at least 15 credits of coursework at the 600-level** in order to complete the MACW degree. Therefore, while 500-level creative writing workshops **will** count toward your degree, you should always first try to enroll in the 600-level workshops.

You are allowed to take up to two MA courses (6 credits) in a discipline besides English. For example, students who have an interest in screenwriting might want to take MCA 506 (Writing for the Small Screen), or those interested in U.S. History might take HST 513. These can count toward your electives. However, please note that such courses *must* be at the 500-level or above. Also, these classes may get canceled due to low enrollment, so it would be wise to have a back-up plan. We recommend consulting with your faculty advisor if considering taking a course in another discipline.

REGISTERING FOR CLASSES

Be sure to register early for graduate classes! These classes are often the first ones cancelled because of low enrollment numbers. We are required by the Dean to have a certain number registered for a class in order for it to be taught (8 for 600-level courses and 15 for 500-level courses). **You have the option of registering for the entire year, and it's a good idea to take advantage of this opportunity.**

- Registration for the following academic year usually opens in mid-February and stays open through the first week of classes in the following term.

- To register for special classes, such as an independent study, ENG 697, you must submit a registration exemption request after first obtaining chair approval of the Independent Study Proposal. This proposal should be completed in consultation with the faculty member who will be directing the independent study.

Policy on Continuous Registration

The University policy on Continuous Registration is that students are not required to register for ENG 619 to maintain their graduate status. However, if circumstances require that you discontinue your graduate coursework for a period of time, please read the language carefully:

<https://cmich.smartcatalogiq.com/2026-2027/graduate-bulletin/admission/duration-of-admission-status-time-for-completion-of-degree>

Be aware that students may lose access to email, library search databases, etc.. when not enrolled. If you plan to skip one semester, registering for the following semester may prevent losing access to basic functions.

Important note: the student must complete the degree within the time-to-degree limitations set forth under the degree requirements presented under **Duration of Admission Status** in the *Graduate Bulletin*. This is, with rare exceptions, **seven years**. Any coursework completed outside the seven-year limit must be re-taken.

COMPLETING THE PLAN B EXIT PORTFOLIO FOR THE MACW

Students in the MACW must complete 30 hours of coursework and submit a Plan B portfolio of written materials. The Exit Portfolio is intended to serve as a representative sample of your best, most finished, most successful, and most polished work and as an illustration to potential employers, graduate programs, and the like, of your strengths and abilities as a creative writer.

Understanding the Expectations for the Exit Portfolio

1. The material in the Exit Portfolio will allow the program's faculty to assess your progress and quality of performance over the course of the program.
2. The material constituting the Exit Portfolio should be a representative sampling of your creative work, which cumulatively offers an understanding of the quality and variety of your performance and abilities in writing.
3. The portfolio will consist of approximately 15-30 pages (exact length decided upon by the student and their advisor) and should include the following:
 - a. One 1,250 to 1,500 word *reflective essay* that functions as an introduction to the portfolio and focuses on your achievements in the MACW program. This reflective essay should
 - introduce the pieces included in the portfolio,
 - identify the relevance of the pieces to your program of study, and
 - discuss the elements of craft illustrated in the creative work as well as the pieces' strengths and weaknesses.
 - b. Polished and complete selections of prose fiction, poetry, and/or creative nonfiction, or some

combination of these genres, which could include the following:

- short stories
- poems
- novel or novella sections
- literary reporting
- memoir, lyric essay

4. The Exit Portfolio will be evaluated on the quality of the materials submitted, including the evidence of mature creative work, mastery of craft, facility with language and style, and command of text presentation skills (copyediting and proofreading) as well as the promise of growth in writing ability.

Preparing the Exit Portfolio

1. By the ***second week of the semester in which you wish to graduate*** (preferably earlier, in the semester prior to this), ask a Creative Writing faculty member to serve as a portfolio sponsor to help in compiling the portfolio. In consultation with the portfolio sponsor, choose an additional faculty member to serve as the second portfolio reader. **Note:** Faculty usually are unavailable during the summer to work with students on the Plan B portfolio.
2. Based on feedback from the portfolio Sponsor, prepare the portfolio, revising any of the materials as the Sponsor deems necessary.
3. ***By the end of Week 10,***
 - a. If your Sponsor determines that the materials meet or exceed the minimum criteria, he/she/they will submit the portfolio to the second reader for review, along with the signed “Departmental Plan B Sign-Off Form” attesting to his/her/their approval.
 - b. If your second reader accepts your portfolio, your Plan B will be marked as completed in the Degree Progress System. In the case of approval with revision, you will be returned the portfolio with the comments and an agreed upon date for your to submit the revisions.
 - c. If the second reader rejects your Plan B portfolio, he/she/they must provide a rationale. If the two readers disagree on the quality of the portfolio, it will be read by a third Creative Writing faculty member who will cast the deciding vote, and, in the case of rejection, must also offer reasons for the rejection. In the case of rejection by both readers, you will be returned portfolio with the notification of rejection stated on the “Departmental Plan B Sign-Off Form” and a copy to the sponsor. If your portfolio is rejected, you may revise and resubmit it the following semester, but this will be considered a separate Plan B submission. **Note:** Each student is limited to no more than three separate Plan B paper submissions.

Plan B Portfolio Tasks	Fall 2026 semester	Spring 2027 Semester
Identify and meet with a Creative Writing sponsor to decide what to include in your portfolio.	September 11	January 29
Complete revisions and submit portfolio to your sponsor.	October 30	March 19

After you complete any sponsor-recommended revisions and edits, your sponsor submits the portfolio to a second CW reader.	November 13	April 2
Your sponsor and the other reader complete their evaluations; if revisions are requested, your sponsor will notify you.	November 27	April 16
(If needed) You complete revisions and re-submit portfolio to your sponsor.	December 4	April 23
Final, approved Plan B must be submitted to the Department and checked off in the Degree Progress System.	Dec 18	May 7

IMPORTANT POLICIES & PROCEDURES

For the most up to date information on policies and procedures, consult the Office of Research and Graduate Studies website at <https://www.cmich.edu/offices-departments/office-research-sponsored-programs/graduate-studies>.

Submit your graduation application using the Degree Progress system. You can also access it through the Registrar's web page.

After the Registrar's office receives your application, they will conduct an audit to make sure you have completed all the degree requirements and will inform you and your advisor of the results. That means your advisor can help you troubleshoot any last-minute problems or missing information/forms.

Regular Admission with Stipulations

Sometimes students are admitted on a conditional basis, particularly if they don't have the undergraduate background to meet the requirements for regular admission or if their writing samples indicate they have some areas that need strengthening.

If you were admitted with stipulations, the letter of admission you received from the Office of Research and Graduate Studies will indicate what courses or conditions you need to meet. For example, an admission letter may indicate that you need to maintain a "B" or better in the first 12 hours of graduate coursework. Failure to satisfy the requirement of the stipulation(s) may result in your being dismissed from the University.

Students admitted with stipulations are eligible for Graduate Assistantships in the English Department and are eligible for financial aid.

Adhering to the Seven-Year Time Limit

You have seven years from the time of your first enrollment as a graduate student to complete your degree. Courses older than seven years will not be counted toward your degree.

If you need more time to complete your degree, you may file an "Extension of Time to Complete a Degree Program Request" with the Office of Research and Graduate Studies at

<https://tinyurl.com/yurek37j>. In addition to an explanation of why you need the extension and matters of how you have stayed current, you will need to secure your advisor's signature, the department chair's signature, and the signature of the Dean of the Office of Research and Graduate Studies.

Applying Transfer Credit

The University accepts up to 15 hours of transfer credit toward a 30-credit Master's degree from students who have accrued graduate credits here or elsewhere but who have not earned a degree; however, the English Department accepts only up to 9 hours. Students who have already earned a Master's degree from CMU or elsewhere may transfer only 6 credits.

Graduate transfer credit must meet the University's Office of Research and Graduate Studies guidelines for transfer credit. You may be asked for supporting material about the courses you wish to transfer. For example, the advisor or administrator approving the transfer credits may ask to see the syllabus for the course, titles of the textbooks used, and perhaps a sample of the work you did for the class.

Transfer credits will be accepted provided all the following conditions are satisfied:

1. The credits were earned at a college or university of recognized standing (recognized at the time the credits were earned).
2. The credits are not in violation of any pertinent university regulation, procedure, or policy.
3. The credits do not correspond to a course previously taken at CMU.
4. The credits were earned within the time limit for program completion. The credits are appropriate to the student's program and are not in conflict with credit limitation specified in the Graduate Bulletin.
5. The grade for the credits must be a "B" or higher. Ungraded course work will not be accepted in transfer unless accompanied by evidence that the work was of a B or higher quality.
7. The student is in good standing (3.0 GPA or higher) at the institution at which the credit was earned.
8. The credits must be certified on a graduate transcript as being of graduate level. The student must take personal responsibility for having official transcripts of the credits sent directly to the Dean of the Office of Research and Graduate Studies at CMU by the institution in which the credit was earned and for filing a Transfer of Credit Request in the Office of Research and Graduate Studies.
9. The credits must be approved by the Coordinator of Graduate Studies in English and the Dean of the Office of Research and Graduate Studies.
10. The **academic advisor** initiates a Docusign form to list the credits they recommend for transfer to CMU.
11. Credits (that are not part of completed degree or certificate) must have been earned within the time limits for earning the CMU degree - see above.
12. Transfer credits are now eligible to be considered for an extension of time (similar to credits earned at CMU, in extenuating circumstances only).
13. Limits:
 - A max. of 33% of credits required for a graduate certificate may be transferred from prior graduate coursework.
 - A max. of 50% of credits required for a master's, specialist, or doctoral degree may be transferred from prior graduate coursework.
 - Programs may set limits lower than the CMU maximums. They need to be described in Bulletin.

- Students and advisors are strongly encouraged to determine if credits are appropriate for transfer soon after matriculation.

CMU Policy on Incomplete/Deferred Grades

<https://cmich.smartcatalogiq.com/en/2026-2027/graduate-bulletin/policies-and-general-information/academic-policies-and-information/grade-incomplete-and-deferred>

Academic Probation and Dematriculation as part of Academic and Retention Standards

<https://cmich.smartcatalogiq.com/2026-2027/graduate-bulletin/policies-and-general-information/academic-policies-and-information/graduate-academic-and-retention-standards>

Students become inactive after three years of no enrollment (they must re-apply to the program to enroll in courses)

<https://cmich.smartcatalogiq.com/en/2026-2027/graduate-bulletin/admission/period-of-inactivity>

Course repeat policy: can repeat two times; grade from final attempt is used in GPA

<https://cmich.smartcatalogiq.com/en/2026-2027/graduate-bulletin/policies-and-general-information/academic-policies-and-information/graduate-repeat-course-policy>

OPPORTUNITIES

Financing the Degree, Research Projects, and Conferences

All full-time graduate students are eligible to apply for graduate assistantships in the CMU Writing Center as well as a Creative Writing graduate assistantship. Applicants must have secured regular admission to **both** the Office of Research and Graduate Studies and to the MA program in Creative Writing to be considered for a graduate assistantship. Accelerated MA students may apply for a GA for the academic year following their undergraduate graduation.

Applications for admission to the Office of Research and Graduate Studies and for the Assistantship may be submitted at the same time: **February 15**. The stipend is at least \$11,000 for the first year, with the position renewable for the second year. Twenty credit hours of tuition waiver per year are included, as well as some fees.

Students assigned to the Writing Center must complete ENG 510WI during their first semester of the graduate program if they have not already completed the course as undergraduates.

Further information and applications for graduate assistantships can be found here:

<https://www.cmich.edu/academics/colleges/liberal-arts-social-sciences/departments/english-language-literature/graduate-program>

Further information about the Writing Center and its employment opportunities are available at:

<https://www.cmich.edu/academics/colleges/liberal-arts-social-sciences/centers-institutes/writing-center>

All GAs are eligible and welcome to join the Graduate Student Union; please see the website at

<https://www.cmich.edu/offices-departments/office-research-graduate-studies/graduate-studies/on-campus-employment/graduate-assistant-union> for more details.

Other forms of support include the following:

- The Clara Lee Moodie Scholarship is awarded to an English MA student to support their second year of study in the program. Applications are accepted between October 1 – November 30, 2026: <https://www.cmich.edu/academics/colleges/liberal-arts-social-sciences/departments/english-language-literature/student-resources/scholarships-competitions>
- The Office of Research and Graduate Studies awards grants to support scholarly and creative presentations and publications: <https://www.cmich.edu/offices-departments/office-research-graduate-studies/graduate-studies/student-services/graduate-student-grants>
- The College of Liberal Arts and Social Sciences also has Presentation Grants available; for more information, visit https://www.cmich.edu/docs/default-source/colleges/college-of-liberal-arts-and-social-sciences/class-scholarships/2022_class_student_conferences_grant1a3b27d6-dcc9-4e89-b63c-6522a591f8de.pdf?sfvrsn=1d107ce1_5.
- Graduate students are eligible for departmental funding to support travel to conferences and other research and creative opportunities. This amount varies by year, so check with the English Department to learn more about the 2026-27 approved student funding amount. Requests for funding must be submitted to the English Department Policy Committee at least 30 days in advance of expected travel; the Policy Committee meets on the 3rd Friday of each month during the school year.

REMEMBERING IMPORTANT DATES

Registration	Ends on Jan 17 for Spring 2026 Begins February 15 for Fall 2027
Application for Graduation (including \$50 application fee) https://www.cmich.edu/offices-departments/registrar-office/graduation-faq	October 1 for May graduation February 1 for August graduation April 1 for December graduation
Final, approved Plan B must be submitted to the Department and checked off in the Degree Progress System	By the end of week following Exam Week in Fall and Spring semesters
Graduate Assistantship application and accompanying materials	February 15, 2027
Graduate Assistantship notifications	March 20, 2027

International students must register every term, and if they plan to stay in the U.S. after graduation for practical training, they must check with Office of International Affairs at the beginning of their last semester.