

Guidelines for Portfolio Option Master of Arts in English

**Department of English
Kutztown University**

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I. General Description of the M.A. Portfolio

Generally, the Portfolio is a collection of an M.A. student's work over the course of her or his graduate studies at Kutztown. The work of the Portfolio is to substantially revise two seminar papers the student has already written and provide critical, scholarly reflection on that work. Whereas the thesis option asks students to produce one sustained piece of writing, the Portfolio asks students to consider the relationships among texts they have written as part of their graduate studies.

The Portfolio provides a pedagogically and intellectually sound option for a graduate capstone project that has currency nationally. The English department recognizes that the thesis option is not for everyone—especially students who have not settled on one particular area of study in which they want to concentrate. The Portfolio allows students to begin to articulate a scholarly/theoretical position with roots in their graduate study. In addition to representing the culmination of a student's M.A. experience, the Portfolio is excellent preparation for Ph.D. applications, academic conferences, and job applications.

II. Contents of the Portfolio

Students should:

- Choose two (2) papers they wrote for graduate classes at Kutztown. These papers should be substantially revised and carefully proofread to ensure they are free of all typographical and grammatical errors and are in a format appropriate to their field of study (e.g. *MLA Style Manual and Guide to Scholarly Publishing*). As a guide, the final, revised papers should be of *presentation quality* in an appropriate academic field.
- Write a 15-20 page critical, reflective essay that introduces the two papers, provides a sustained discussion about the relationship between the essays, and articulates an intellectual/scholarly agenda based upon the work of the papers.

III. Selecting a Committee

Students choosing the Portfolio option will select a committee of two or three faculty members as their Portfolio Committee. Once the Portfolio is completed, the student will orally present and discuss his or her work in a Portfolio review.

The student chooses *at least* two, possibly three, faculty members to be on their committee. Those two faculty members should be the faculty members for whom the student wrote the papers they are including in their Portfolio. In extraordinary circumstances, an alternate faculty member can serve in place of a faculty member for whom the student wrote a paper.

Roles of Committee Members

Convener

- This faculty member serves as the chair of the Portfolio committee. The primary responsibilities of the Convener are to guide the student through the process, make arrangements for the Portfolio review, and coordinate the work of the committee. The Convener may be one of the faculty for whom the student wrote a paper, or the student may select a third faculty member to serve as the Convener.

- In addition to working closely with the student in substantially revising their seminar papers, it will be the primary responsibility of the Convener to work with the student on the critical reflection component of the Portfolio.
- The student should approach a potential Convener first. Once a faculty member has agreed to serve as the Convener, the student and faculty member work together to plan the project and identify other faculty member or members who might be appropriate to have as the faculty representative(s). Once the student and her or his Convener have identified potential faculty representatives, the Convener will approach those faculty members to see if they are willing and/or able to serve in that capacity.
- The Convener and student will also draft an informal timeline for the completion of each part of the Portfolio. It shall be the responsibility of the Convener to track the student's progress and help the student revise his or her timeline as needed.
- The Convener makes recommendations for how the student should get started on the project and discusses the expectations for a strong Portfolio.
- Once the faculty representative(s) has/have agreed to serve on the committee, the Convener shall do her or his best to ensure that all members of the committee are clear on the expectations for the Portfolio.
- The Convener should make every reasonable attempt to ensure that any serious problems with a student's work, progress, or approach to the Portfolio are addressed as part of drafting process. That is, problems in a student's work should not be addressed for the first time during the Portfolio review. It is, however, primarily the responsibility of the student to address substantive objections, suggestions, and recommendations by the Convener or faculty representative(s).

Faculty Representatives

- These two (2) faculty members are faculty who taught the courses for which the student wrote the papers in the Portfolio. In extraordinary circumstances, one or both of these faculty members do not have to be the faculty members for whom the student wrote the papers. The primary responsibility of these faculty members is to represent the courses that generated the paper and provide critical commentary and suggestions to the student in revising his or her papers and preparing the critical reflection. One (1) of these faculty members *may also* serve as the Convener.
- These faculty members shall be co-responsible for the revisions to papers written for their classes. Faculty representatives should expect to meet with the student at least once to discuss appropriate revisions to the paper in their area of expertise.
- Faculty representatives will also read the entire Portfolio upon its completion and prepare questions and suggestions for the Portfolio review.

IV. Timeline for Completing the Portfolio

The student should identify the faculty member who will serve as the Convener and complete the first part of the Portfolio Form no later than the **10th week of the semester before the student plans on completing the Portfolio**. A Convener must be a member of the English Department's Graduate Faculty.

The student should work in consultation with his or her Convener to identify one or two additional faculty members to serve as Faculty Representatives. Students should identify all of their Faculty Representatives no later than the **2nd week of the semester in which they have**

enrolled for Portfolio credits. Faculty Representatives must also be members of the English Department's Faculty.

Working with his or her Convener, the student should then make every effort to schedule a Portfolio review date *during the semester in which they are enrolled in Portfolio credits*. The student should schedule their Portfolio review **no later than the 10th week of the semester in which they are enrolled in Portfolio credits**. If the student is unable to schedule the hearing during the semester in which they are enrolled in Portfolio credits, the student will take an Incomplete in the course. The Incomplete grade will be changed once the student has successfully passed their Portfolio review.

V. Portfolio Assessment Criteria

- Each paper must be *substantially revised*, moving it from a seminar paper to one that could be presented at an academic conference in the appropriate field.
- The voice in the revised papers should be more authoritative; that is, the student should demonstrate an understanding and comfort with her/his sources and ability to comfortably “enter the conversation” on the topic under study.
- The student's writing must demonstrate a mastery of research processes and methodologies.
- Each paper should be 15 to 25 pages in length and conform to a format appropriate to their field of study (e.g. *MLA Style Manual and Guide to Scholarly Publishing*).
- The reflective essay must demonstrate a critical self-awareness of the most significant moments of the student's graduate education, especially as those moments are evident in the work included in the Portfolio.
- The student's writing across all work in the Portfolio must demonstrate some degree of elegance and style.
- The student must demonstrate the ability to successfully discuss and defend their Portfolio orally during the Portfolio review.