UNIVERSITY OF CENTRAL ARKANSAS™

MA Program Portfolio Capstone

This document describes the portfolio capstone for MA students on both the thesis and coursework tracks. (Document updated August of 2023.)

Committee: Each academic year, the graduate coordinator will appoint three graduate faculty for a Portfolio and Assessment Committee. This committee will provide feedback on portfolio drafts and will assess final portfolios.

Portfolio Draft: Students will submit a draft of the portfolio during the semester before they are scheduled to graduate (the penultimate semester of coursework).*

- Due April 15 in Spring
- Due November 15 in Fall

*See section at the end of this document on important guidelines for preparing the draft.

Feedback on Portfolio Draft: Students will receive written feedback (via email) at the start of the next semester. Drafts submitted in April will receive feedback by the start of Summer I (by the end of the first full week of classes, around June 1). Drafts submitted in November will receive feedback by the start of the spring semester (by the end of the first full week of classes, around January 20). This feedback will guide students in their preparations for the final submission, which will be assessed in part on the degree to which feedback has been implemented.

Assessment of Final Submission: Portfolios will receive a grade of Pass/Fail on the final submission (April 15 for Spring graduation and Nov. 15 for Fall). If a portfolio receives a failing grade, student will have one opportunity to resubmit it. In such instances, student should meet individually with the graduate coordinator and the department chair, revise the portfolio, and resubmit it at the next opportunity (fall or spring).

A note on terminology: An "item" is a document prepared specifically for portfolio evaluation. In contrast, an "artifact" is a document that was submitted with the application for graduate study or completed as part of a class, and it does not require revision. As a document in the portfolio, the "artifact" should be contextualized in the Intellectual Development Essay as evidence of intellectual development. Here's another way to think about it: "items" are the primary documents being evaluated for the capstone, which tell the story of your development, whereas "artifacts" provide evidence of that development.

A note on formatting and submission: Follow all MLA formatting guidelines. (Twelve-point Times New Roman font, double-spaced, etc. If any of the documents includes notes, provide endnotes, rather than footnotes, per MLA guidelines.) Submit as one document with continuous pagination. Include a Table of Contents. The portfolio (both the draft and finalized version) will be submitted digitally by emailing it as PDF document to Dr. Jellenik (<gjellenik@uca.edu>). Page count minimums for all documents in the portfolio <u>exclude</u> endnotes and bibliography.

Portfolio Contents (<u>6 components</u>):
- Item #1: Résumé or CV (includes a professional, non-UCA email)
- Item #2: Intellectual Development Essay (8-12 full pages)
- Artifact #1: Admissions Writing Sample
- Artifact #2: First-Year Paper (the paper completed either for ENGL 6393: Research Methods OR ENGL 5366: Literary Theory and Criticism—whichever class was taken first) (a minimum of 15 full pages)
- Artifact #3: Second-Year Paper or Thesis Chapter (a minimum of 15 full pages)*
- Artifact #4: Professional Development Document

* "Second Year" refers to the final twelve hours of coursework, which is to say that a paper completed for any class during the final twelve hours of coursework should be submitted for the Second Year Paper (Artifact #3). Thesis-track students have the option of submitting a thesis chapter for this category.

Description of Portfolio Documents:
Item #1: Résumé or CV—There are a variety of models for these types of documents. Here are some things worth consideration for inclusion: graduate coursework as well as work history, presentations and publications, internships, awards, organizations, and volunteer work for both undergraduate and graduate years. Include a non-UCA email.

Item #2: Intellectual Development Essay—This document is the heart of the portfolio and the primary document being evaluated. It should reflect on your intellectual and professional development over the course of the MA program, contextualize the portfolio's contents as evidence of this development, and articulate post-degree aspirations, plans, and preparations. (See attached "Guidelines: Intellectual Development Essay" below.)

Artifact #1: Admissions Writing Sample—The writing sample submitted with your application to the MA program.

Artifact #2: First-Year Paper—The paper (15+ pages) completed either for ENGL 6393: Graduate Research Methods OR ENGL 5366: Literary Theory and Criticism. Include the paper completed for whichever class was taken first.

Artifact #3: Second-Year Paper—Paper (15+ pages) completed for a class during the final twelve hours of coursework. (Students on the thesis track may submit a thesis chapter.)

Artifact #4: Professional Development Document—This document demonstrates professional experience pursued in anticipation of post-degree-life. This artifact should take the form of one of the following: (1) abstract submitted to an academic conference (include proof of submission), (2) essay or article submitted to a scholarly venue for publication consideration (include proof of submission), (3) written work completed as part of an internship, (4) statement of purpose completed as part of application for further graduate study, or (5) lesson plan completed either for a teaching position the student holds or for guest lecturing in a UCA English class.

Guidelines: Intellectual Development Essay

The intellectual development essay is the heart of the portfolio and the primary document being evaluated. It should reflect on your intellectual and professional development over the course of the MA program, contextualize each artifact in the portfolio's contents as evidence of this development, and articulate post-degree aspirations, plans, and preparations. It's an opportunity to reflect on what you're learning, how you're growing, and what these things might mean for the future, all while showcasing strong evidentiary support (referring to specific works read, conference presentations delivered, classes taken, conversations had, etc.).

To prepare for writing the essay, we recommend that you compile major assignments completed for graduate courses. By reviewing courses taken and research projects completed, you should be better positioned for self-reflection: What patterns of mind emerge when reviewing the materials? What connections might be made, indicative of your own interests and values, when reflecting on the central questions and methodologies guiding each project?

*The submitted draft of the intellectual development essay must meet the minimum page length. **Any portfolio draft submitted with an intellectual development essay shorter than <u>eight full pages</u> will be returned without feedback on any aspect of the portfolio**. In such instances, the student would be in the position of submitting a finalized version of the portfolio without having received guidance from the committee, a significant disadvantage. The only exception to this rule is in instances in which a student

submits the portfolio draft before having completed a second-year paper to include. In these instances, the minimum page length for the draft of the intellectual development essay is seven full pages.

Length: 8-12 full pages (following MLA formatting guidelines—double-spaced, etc.)

The essay should be a narrative that tells a story about your development while engrossed in graduate study. The essay should do <u>each</u> of the following:

- Reflect on what drew you to graduate study in English.

- Articulate the larger questions that graduate study enables you to pursue and how those larger questions inform your approach to interpreting literature. It may be true that the "larger questions" have taken shape, shifted, or changed altogether over time.

- Discuss the portfolio contents, contextualizing each piece as evidence of development. (For the professional development document, articulate how what you have learned in graduate study has contributed to the production of this artifact.)

- Identify areas relevant to graduate study upon which you have worked (and, perhaps, are still working) to improve, and describe what progress has been made.

- Incorporate several pieces of textual evidence (short quotations as well as paraphrases) from texts read/films viewed for class in reflecting on what you have been learning. These can include the primary literature as well as works of theory and literary scholarship that were assigned for class and/or encountered on your own as part of research completed for class or a thesis.

- Along with referring to what you have read as a graduate student, describe meaningful moments, no matter how small, in telling the story of your intellectual development while in graduate school. These might include significant milestones, such as conference presentations or the defense of a thesis proposal. They also could include more quotidian experiences (a conversation with a fellow student or professor, a moment of confusion or insight during class, a setback encountered during the research process, etc.).

- Demonstrate that you have given thought to post-degree plans and have taken concrete steps to prepare for professional life after the degree.