

# **IMPORTANT TIPS for A SUCCESSFUL APPLICATION to the ONLINE MA PROGRAM**

**Suggestions for applicants to the online MA in English program, including those who have been away from an academic program for some period of time.**

## **1. Resume / Curriculum Vitae (CV)**

A CV is an “academic resume” that provides an account of a person’s education, previous experience, and qualifications for further work as a scholar and/or teacher. For those applicants whose personal experiences lend themselves more toward a standard resume, that is acceptable but please emphasize your education as well as other relevant jobs and skills that you feel qualify you for acceptance into a Master’s of English degree program.

## **2. Writing Sample**

The writing sample gives us a chance to see the way you think, organize information, and produce essays and documents. It also indicates your proficiency as a writer. We prefer to have an analytical or critical writing sample of at least 8-10 pages. Two or more shorter essays totaling a similar page count is also acceptable, though longer works are often better as they tend to demonstrate the capacity for extended analysis.

Ideally, your submitted writing sample will demonstrate your facility with academic research and argumentation, including the use of secondary sources. Since this is an MA in English, it would be good to submit an essay about literature or a closely related field (e.g. film) (if your area is linguistics, you would send a linguistics paper). When the Admissions Committee evaluates your writing sample, we are looking for more than mere competence in the conventions of writing. We also want to see

- a clear and contestable thesis statement;
- a close engagement with the text you're interpreting or the research you are undertaking;
- an ability to incorporate scholarly sources into your argument;
- a clear sense of audience and purpose.

The goal is to convince us that you are well-situated to take on the challenges of research-based writing and interpretation at the graduate level.

*Note: if you do not have such a document from a previous educational experience, a more functional writing sample will suffice.* If you have examples of writing that are not literature-based but nevertheless show your skills in supporting a clear and contestable thesis statement and incorporating sources and analysis to support that thesis, you can submit that writing instead. The selected sample should also demonstrate your ability to write to a specific audience for a specific purpose. You may want to assemble several documents that separately demonstrate these various writing skills. Examples of acceptable alternatives include: annotated lesson plans; a grant proposal; a report; or a dossier of short, analytical writing samples that you have provided for your own students. Newspaper articles or critical contributions to a website may also be relevant additions.

Finally, if you are applying to the Creative Writing concentration, you should include, in addition to an analytical piece, a creative writing work, such as a set of poems, a short story or a creative-nonfiction piece.

### **3. Statement of Purpose**

The purpose of this document is to outline your interest in graduate-level research and writing. This statement, which should be approximately 700 words in length, indicates the reasons for your interest in our English Master's program, identifies your goals for graduate study, and explains your career objectives in relation to the degree. This statement may also include the specific areas of interest and research you hope to pursue (or have pursued in undergraduate studies).

### **4. Letters of Recommendation**

You are responsible for requesting the letters of recommendation. The letters should address your likelihood of success in graduate school and beyond.

*For online degree applicants who no longer have contact with undergraduate professors or other academics, these letters should come*

from someone who can speak to your capacity as a student or lifelong learner, can vouch for your analytical skills, and/or can provide evidence of your ability to work independently and complete assigned projects.

### **General Note About Application Review**

All applicant packages are evaluated holistically, which is to say that every piece of the application package contributes to the applicant's overall desirability. Specifically, we are looking for applications that contain strong, convincing arguments for the applicant's good fit with the program and its objectives.