



MA in WRD Student Handbook

Department of Writing, Rhetoric, and Discourse

The MA in WRD Student Handbook is a guide to the graduate program, including policies and procedures. Students may also refer to the information online from the College of Liberal Arts and Social Sciences ([Graduate Student Support](#) and [New Graduate Students](#)) and the [University Graduate Student Handbook](#).

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Introduction to the Program

The Master of Arts in Writing, Rhetoric and Discourse (WRD) combines a strong theoretical foundation in rhetoric and discourse with practical training in the areas of teaching writing and language, professional and technical writing, and digital content creation. The program's mix of theory and practice prepares students to write and to create digital content in professional, technical, or nonprofit settings; to teach writing in post-secondary institutions; and to continue academic study in related PhD programs. Our students go on to work as writers and digital content creators in professional and technical workplaces; to teach writing and English as a second language in colleges and universities in the U.S. and abroad; and to continue their academic study in PhD programs.

Program Features

- **Strong curriculum:** The MA in WRD offers a rich graduate curriculum that engages students in a range of professional, academic, and civic genres and experiences. Required courses in rhetoric and discourse provide students with breadth in a range of theoretical and historical disciplinary perspectives, while optional concentrations allow students to focus in depth in an area of particular relevance to their own professional goals.
- **Community orientation:** The MA in WRD offers students unique internship and community-based experiential learning opportunities, drawing on the city of Chicago as an extension of our classroom. These opportunities will give students practical experience in grant writing, workplace writing, writing for the web, and teaching and tutoring adult literacy and English as Second Language (ESL) in community centers and two-year colleges. This commitment to the city and its neighborhoods is reflected throughout many of our courses.
- **Faculty expertise and experience:** The [MA in WRD faculty](#) are teacher-scholars and active professionals. The faculty share a strong commitment to graduate education, and the program incorporates numerous events which aim to mentor and support our graduate students.
- **Global outlook:** Through the [Graduate Certificate in TESOL](#), which MA in WRD students can complete as part of their regular coursework, graduate students develop expertise in second-language teaching, and especially in working with multilingual writers. This knowledge is key to teaching writing in the U.S. today, and it opens up opportunities abroad, such as the one WRD offers MA in WRD and TESOL Certificate graduates at Huaqiao University in China. Visit [Teach in China](#) for more information.

To keep updated on the news of MA in WRD students, alumni, and faculty, visit the Graduate News section of the department blog: <https://wrdblog.org/category/graduate/>

Career Outcomes

In recent years, MA in WRD graduates have gone on to jobs that include the following:

- Writing Center Coordinator, College of Lake County
- Instructional Technology Consultant, DePaul University
- First-Year Writing Instructor, University of Illinois at Chicago
- Content Creator and Manager, Zacks Investment Research
- Proposal Writer, Stratus Security Management
- Completion and Transition Specialist, Triton College
- Technical Writer, National Association of Boards of Pharmacy
- Content Specialist, Northwestern University
- Marketing Manager, The Damien Center
- Learning & Development Manager, Groupon Getaways
- Technical Writer, Computerworks of Chicago
- Content Writer, Loyola Medical
- Speech Writer, New York Governor Andrew Cuomo
- Learning Technologist, Deltak Innovations

Curriculum and Degree Requirements

MA in WRD Degree Requirements

Students complete 12 courses (48 credits) to graduate from the MA in WRD program. Students may choose to declare a concentration in either Professional and Digital Writing or Teaching Writing and Language, or they may choose to declare no concentration.

Required Course (4 credits)

- WRD 500: Proseminar (WRD 500 must be taken at the earliest opportunity after a student begins the program—it is typically offered *only in the Autumn quarter*).

In addition to WRD 500, students take 11 more courses (44 credit hours), to be distributed as follows:

Students declaring a concentration:

- 3 courses in Rhetoric and Discourse
- 4 courses in the declared concentration
- 4 remaining courses

Students *not* declaring a concentration:

- 3 courses in Rhetoric and Discourse
- 8 remaining courses from any area of the program

Note: Course descriptions are available in the [DePaul University Catalog](#), and some [course syllabi](#) are also available on the department's website.

Rhetoric and Discourse Courses (12 credits)

WRD 503: Ancient Rhetorics
WRD 505: Contemporary Rhetorics
WRD 506: Multicultural Rhetorics
WRD 507: Global Englishes
WRD 508: Discourse and Style
WRD 509: Genre Theory and Practice
WRD 510: Topics in Rhetorical History
WRD 511: Topics in Community, Culture, & Identity
WRD 512: Topics in Language
WRD 513: Semiotics
WRD 514: Sociolinguistics
WRD 515: The Essay

Professional & Digital Writing Concentration Courses

WRD 521: Technical Writing
WRD 522: Writing in the Professions
WRD 523: Editing
WRD 524: Document Design
WRD 525: Writing for the Web
WRD 526: Grant and Proposal Writing
WRD 530: Topics in Professional & Technical Writing
WRD 531: Digital Storytelling
WRD 532: Content Strategy
WRD 533: Writing Across Media
WRD 580: Markup and Text Encoding in the Humanities
WRD 590: Internship in Professional and Digital Writing

Teaching Writing & Language Concentration Courses

WRD 540: Teaching Writing
WRD 541: Composition Theory
WRD 542: Urban Literacies
WRD 543: Teaching ESL Writing
WRD 544: Teaching English as a Second or Foreign Language
WRD 545: Teaching Writing Online
WRD 546: Pedagogical Grammar
WRD 547: AP Institute in English Language and Composition
WRD 550: Topics in Teaching Writing & Language
WRD 551: Teaching Apprenticeship Practicum
WRD 582: Writing Center Theory and Pedagogy
WRD 591: Internship in Teaching Writing & Language

Portfolio Requirement

All students will keep a portfolio of significant work done for courses. This work will be curated and submitted as a portfolio at both the midpoint of the program and at its culminating point.

Mid-Program Portfolio

After completing the sixth course but before taking the ninth course, all students must submit a portfolio to their advisor and meet with this advisor to discuss both the portfolio and their future plans in the program. The Mid-Program Portfolio must be submitted, discussed with a student's advisor, and approved before the student can register for their ninth course in the program.

Professional Portfolio

In the final quarter of coursework, all students must submit a Professional Portfolio and reflective synopsis. The portfolio will be evaluated by the WRD Graduate Committee as "Pass" or "Fail." A Professional Portfolio that does not initially earn a score of "Pass" must be revised until it does so.

Graduate Certificate Programs

TESOL

The WRD department offers a Graduate Certificate in TESOL, which may be completed by students in an existing DePaul graduate program or by students who wish to complete only the Certificate. Made up of courses in the programs of Writing, Rhetoric, and Discourse; Bilingual-Bicultural Education; and Modern Languages, the Certificate prepares students to teach English as a Second Language (ESL) to adult learners in the United States or abroad. The Certificate may also be attractive to Professional and Technical Writing students who wish to broaden their understanding of writing in multilingual and international contexts.

TESOL Program Requirements

The certificate requires 16 hours of graduate credit (four courses) and 20 hours of field experience with adult ESL learners. The 16 credits include one course each in the following areas: theory, methods, sociolinguistics, and language structure. Together, these courses will build students' competencies in the major elements of second language teaching.

Theory: Courses in this area explore the major theories of language learning and teaching, providing students with an important theoretical foundation to inform teaching practice.

Course options include:

- BBE 526: Theoretical Foundations in Teaching ESL
- MOL 454: Theoretical Foundations and Current Research in Second Language Acquisition
- BBE 466: First and Second Language Acquisition
- BBE 510: Advanced Language Seminar (when topic is relevant)
- WRD 512: Topics in Language (when topic is relevant)

Methods: Courses in this area familiarize students with pedagogical approaches and strategies for teaching second languages to adult learners, preparing students for the practical applications of language teaching. Course options include:

- WRD 544: Teaching English as a Second or Foreign Language
- WRD 543: Teaching ESL Writing
- WRD 550: Topics in Teaching Writing & Language (when topic is relevant)

Sociolinguistics: Courses in this area explore the relationship between language and society, examining the ways in which dimensions such as region, gender, race, class, politics, and globalization affect language and language use. Course options include:

- WRD 507: Global Englishes
- WRD 514: Sociolinguistics
- BBE 510: Advanced Language Seminar (when topic is relevant)

Language Structure: Courses in this area examine the structures of the English language with an emphasis on teaching these structures to learners. Course options include:

- WRD 546: Pedagogical Grammar
- WRD 512: Topics in Language (when topic is relevant)

Field Experience: Students will complete 20 hours of field experience, providing experience with adult language learners. Field experience will be arranged individually with the Certificate Coordinator.

Application to the TESOL Certificate program must be completed separately from admission to the MA program. Students should apply for the Certificate as soon as they decide to pursue it, by submitting a <300 word Statement of Interest to Prof. Jason Schneider (JSCHNE12@depaul.edu), Coordinator of the Certificate program. Questions about TESOL can be directed to Prof. Schneider.

Certificate in Teaching English in Two-Year Colleges

MA in WRD students may also complete the [Certificate in Teaching English in Two-Year Colleges](#). This interdepartmental certificate program is made up of courses in the departments of WRD and English, and it is designed to prepare prospective teachers of introductory classes in English, writing, and the humanities in community college settings. Participants will learn to teach critical and analytical reading, the processes and disciplines of writing, and other aspects of the arts, humanities, or communication curriculum in two-year colleges. Applications are accepted at any time.

Certificate in Digital Humanities

MA in WRD students may also be interested in a Graduate Certificate in Digital Humanities, a credential useful for demonstrating one's experience with new media. See the [certificate's description online](#).

Advising

Students are assigned a faculty advisor by the second week of their first quarter in the program. The advisor's name can be found in the Campus Connect Student Center or on the Degree Progress Report. The faculty advisor is intended to serve as a mentor and advisor on professional development and career issues related to the student's plan of study. The Director of the MA in WRD should be consulted regarding degree progress and any questions related to course

substitutions or requirements. Students are required to meet with their advisors to discuss their Mid-Program Portfolio, and are encouraged to do set up appointments when they have questions. A student's advisor may be changed during their time in the program due to faculty availability. Students may request a new advisor by contacting the MA in WRD Director.

Registration

Around the midpoint of each quarter, registration for the subsequent quarter will begin. Information regarding assigned registration days and times will be distributed from Student Records prior to this time. Students are encouraged to meet with their faculty advisor and/or the Director of the MA in WRD prior to course registration.

Students will not be able to register for courses if there are any holds on their accounts. To ensure that you are able to register at your assigned registration time, check Campus Connection for information about holds and take any actions needed to remove the hold as soon as possible.

Students may not register for non-WRD classes without prior approval from the Graduate Committee. See [policies regarding non-WRD classes](#).

Independent Studies

WRD 595: Independent Study is offered to allow students to explore specific interests for which a formal WRD course is not offered. In general, WRD 595 courses will count as electives in a student's degree program; WRD 595 can only fulfill area requirements (Rhetoric & Discourse or a concentration area) when these requirements cannot be filled through a formal course (for example, because such a course is not offered).

A WRD graduate faculty member typically serves as the instructor of record for WRD 595. If a student wishes to complete a WRD 595 course with a non-WRD graduate faculty member, the student should consult with the Director of the MA in WRD.

After meeting with and securing an instructor for WRD 595, students must [request registration online](#). Registration is typically completed before the beginning of the term, but may be done any time before the end of the term's first week of classes. After online approval by the course instructor and Director of the MA in WRD, the student will be added to WRD 595.

Internships

Internships in professional or digital writing (WRD 590) or in teaching (WRD 591) can be completed for credit. Students with a Professional and Digital Writing concentration are strongly encouraged to complete an internship as part of their degree. Students interested in completing an internship should visit the [professional internships page](#) for more information on the internship process. In some cases, students may be eligible for a Community Engagement Scholarship—a competitive award from the College of Liberal Arts and Social Sciences—to offset the cost of the internship course.

Some students may wish to complete the teaching internship in the Department of English (ENG 509). This course may be completed as part of the Certificate in Teaching English in the Two-Year College, but students not completing the Certificate are still eligible to apply for the internship. Those interested in doing so should contact the Certificate Director Dr. Carolyn Goffman at cgoffman@depaul.edu or 773.325.8688. **For MA in WRD students, ENG 509 counts as a non-WRD elective.**

Teaching Apprenticeship Program

The Department of Writing, Rhetoric, & Discourse's Teaching Apprenticeship Program (TAP) provides an opportunity for advanced students in the Master of Arts in WRD to gain experience teaching college composition in DePaul's First-Year Writing Program. MAWRD students accepted into TAP will be assigned a section of WRD 103. Under the close supervision of a tenure-line faculty member and following a common syllabus (with options for flexibility), TAP participants will serve as the sole classroom instructors for their assigned sections. Participants will enroll in **WRD 551: Teaching Apprenticeship Practicum** during the quarter of their teaching and will be paid a stipend of \$2,700 (note that this stipend essentially negates the tuition for WRD 551).

Eligibility Requirements

Admission to the program is competitive. To be eligible for consideration, MAWRD students must be in good standing with six courses (24 credits) in the MAWRD by the end of Spring Quarter, including WRD 540 and at least one additional course from the Teaching Writing and Language concentration area. Acceptance into the program will be contingent on successful completion of WRD 540 with a grade of B+ or higher.

Application Timeline

Eligible students must email complete applications to the WRD Department Assistant by the annual mid-April deadline. Note that decisions are typically announced within one week of this deadline, and accepted students must confirm enrollment within one week (this tight turnaround is because Autumn Quarter WRD 103 courses are scheduled in late April).

Program Requirements

Students accepted into the program must complete the following requirements:

- Participate in a three-day orientation and workshop in late August or early September (dates TBA), from 6:00-9:00 each evening. Attendance on all three days is mandatory, and alternatives to the three-day session will not be considered.
- Complete WRD 551: Teaching Apprenticeship Practicum, during Autumn Quarter.
- Adhere to TAP, WRD, and FYW program expectations and guidelines while teaching the section assigned.

Questions

Questions about TAP should be directed to the Director of the MA in WRD.

Tracking Degree Progress

Multiple tools are available to track your progress toward your degree. Within Campus Connection (Student Center), you will find a Degree Progress Report that should give you up-to-date information regarding your fulfillment of various requirements. If you notice that your Degree Progress Report has an error, contact the Director of the MA in WRD. The Degree Requirement Worksheet, in Appendix A, is also a helpful tool for tracking your degree progress.

Concentration Declaration

Students may declare or change a concentration area at any time, up to six weeks prior to graduation. The program, however, encourages you to declare as soon as possible, as we make decisions about which classes to offer based on the number of students in each concentration. Declaring or changing one's concentration can be done using the [online concentration declaration system](#). Note that the Graduate Office typically batch processes these requests at the end of the quarter, so you may not receive confirmation that your declaration has been processed for some time after you submit a request.

Graduation and Degree Conferral

Prior to their graduation, students must apply for degree conferral in order to graduate and receive their diploma: these deadlines are typically early in the quarter in which you plan to graduate, with the exception of Spring Quarter, for which the application deadline is in the Winter Quarter. Full details regarding procedures and deadlines for applying for degree conferral are available on the college's [Degree Conferral page](#). By the deadline to apply for degree conferral, you must also complete a Degree Requirement Worksheet (Appendix A) and email it to the WRD Department Assistant, Cecilia Duenez Aguilar, Cecilia (CDUENEZA@depaul.edu).

A commencement ceremony is held once per year, in June. Information regarding commencement is available on DePaul's [Commencement website](#).

Program Policies

Transfer Credit

Students may transfer up to 12 credits (or three courses) of relevant coursework taken in another program. Students may not transfer credits taken in pursuit of a completed degree or certificate. The exact number of credits and courses that transfer will be determined by the Director of the MA in WRD, based on review of the syllabus/syllabi for which transfer credit is requested. Transfer grades from other institutions do not calculate into the DePaul grade point average.

Non-WRD Courses

Students may take up to two non-WRD courses at DePaul to count toward their degree. Students must complete six courses in WRD before taking courses outside of the program. In exceptional cases (e.g., students completing certificate programs that require non-WRD courses), students may be granted permission to take courses outside of the program earlier in their degree study. All non-WRD courses must be approved by the WRD Graduate Committee prior to enrollment in the course.

Students who have transferred in two or more courses from another institution (see Transfer Credit policy) must take all of their remaining courses in the WRD program.

Students who wish to take a non-WRD course must submit a proposal of a paragraph or two to the MA in WRD Director, which includes the following: 1) Course #, name, and professor name; 2) Course description (if possible, attach a syllabus); 3) Why you want to take the course, focusing on how it will help you to meet specific intellectual, personal, and/or professional goals that you have for your time in the MA in WRD; 4) A statement that you have completed 6 courses, and if not, why this request is appropriate; 5) A statement of how many courses you have taken outside the department or transferred in from other institutions.

The Director will send this request for review by the Graduate Committee. Students must receive the committee's approval prior to enrollment in the course.

Undergraduate Courses

Students may take one four-credit undergraduate-level course for credit toward their graduate degree. Students must request approval to take an undergraduate course from the WRD Graduate Committee prior to registering for the course.

Probation

To maintain good standing, students must complete at least two courses in WRD within twelve months of their admission to the program. Students must also maintain an overall grade-point average of at least 3.0 in their course work. Students whose cumulative GPA falls below 3.0 will be placed on probation and given two quarters to raise their average to the minimum 3.0 level. Students on probation are required to consult with the Director of the MA in WRD before registering for classes. Failure to meet these requirements constitutes grounds for dismissal.

Dismissal

A student may be dismissed from the program in any of the following cases: (1) failure to maintain a GPA above 3.0 for three consecutive quarters; (2) failure to meet with the Director of the MA in WRD before registering for classes while on academic probation; or (3) failure to complete at least two courses in WRD within sixteen months of their admission to the program.

Readmission

If a student is dismissed from the program (as outlined in the dismissal policy), he or she may be reapply through the formal application process.

Academic Integrity

Students should see [DePaul's Academic Integrity policies](#), which apply to all courses at the university.

Attendance

All WRD graduate courses adopt the following attendance policy: “Absences equal to 20% of the class may result in reduction of your term grade by one full letter grade (e.g., an A- would become a B-). Missing more than 20% of the class will result in failure.” This is a department-wide policy.

Graduation Requirements

In order to graduate from the program, students must complete all program requirements with a total of 48 credit hours (12 courses) and a minimum GPA of 2.8.

Graduation with Distinction

To graduate with distinction, students must have a final GPA of 3.9 or higher.

Time Limit

Students must complete the program within six years of their start date. Students who fail to complete the program within this timeframe must re-apply to the program.

Leave of Absence

Occasionally, students need to take time off of their degree for personal or work reasons. Students in this position should be in touch with the Director of the MA in WRD and request a [Leave of Absence](#) from the university.

Non-Degree-Seeking Students

All WRD graduate courses are open to non-degree-seeking students, with the exception of the following: WRD 500, 590, 591, 595, and 599.

Financial Assistance

Graduate Assistantships and Fellowships

One or two graduate assistantship (GA) positions and two Partial Tuition Fellowships (PTFs) are typically available for MA in WRD students on an annual basis. Details regarding upcoming GA and PTF opportunities are available on the [WRD website](#).

Partial Tuition Waivers

Partial Tuition Scholarships (PTW) are awarded quarterly to eligible students. Eligibility is based on GPA and financial need. There is no limit to the number of times that an eligible student may apply for and receive a PTW award during their MA degree. Only WRD courses are eligible for PTW reimbursement awards.

To apply for a PTW, students must meet the following criteria:

- The student has completed at least two courses (8 credits) in the MA in WRD program at the time of application for the award (courses transferred from another program are not eligible);

- The student is enrolled in one or more WRD classes in the term of application for the award;
- The student's cumulative grade-point average is 3.75 or higher; and
- The student pays tuition and fees without financial assistance from any grant or scholarship agency or employee reimbursement program. DePaul 'Double Demons' are not eligible for PTWs. Students with student loans remain eligible for PTW awards.

To apply for a PTW award, students must complete the application form circulated by the MA in WRD Program Director at the end of week two of each quarter.

On-Campus Jobs

MA in WRD students can find campus jobs, and sometimes even positions that come with tuition waivers, by logging on to and searching the [campus job board](#). Positions are posted throughout the year, as they come open.

Graduate Research Funding

Part-time and full-time graduate students are eligible to apply for Graduate Research Funding, a grant program within the College of LAS. Students presenting at conferences or carrying out research which requires some financial support are strongly encouraged to apply. Full details and the application are [available online](#).

Scholarships for Community Engagement

MA in WRD students are often promising candidates for two competitive internal scholarships: the Community Engagement Scholarship, offered quarterly by the College of Liberal Arts and Social Sciences, which pays for the cost of an internship course, and the [Meister Scholarship](#), an annual award for excellence in community engagement, with special consideration given to students 25 years of age and older.

Professional Development

MA in WRD students are strongly encouraged to take advantage of professional development opportunities offered within and outside of the department, including guest speakers, workshops, and other events.

Presenting at an Academic Conference

Students interested in presenting at academic conferences should discuss their goals with appropriate faculty members, who can offer support and guidance. Substantial financial support for travel and registration fees is available from the [Graduate Research Fund](#). Students may also wish to present at the [LAS Interdisciplinary Conference](#), which happens annually on the DePaul campus in May.

Preparing a Professional Teaching or Writing Portfolio

Graduating students create an online teaching or writing portfolio, using [Digication](#) or WordPress. The department offers occasional workshops and one-on-one support in the WRD Invention Lab to assist students with this process.

Appendix A: MA in WRD, Degree Requirement Worksheet

Name		ID Number	Program Start Date	Anticipated Final Quarter in Program
Course #	Course Title		Quarter taken	
WRD 500	Proseminar			
RHETORIC AND DISCOURSE COURSES				
Course #	Course Title		Quarter taken	
CONCENTRATION COURSES (check one: <input type="checkbox"/> Professional & Digital Writing; <input type="checkbox"/> Teaching Writing and Language <input type="checkbox"/> No Concentration – if no concentration, list all of your remaining courses under Electives)				
Course #	Course Title		Quarter taken	
ELECTIVES				
Course #	Course Title		Quarter taken	

TESOL CERTIFICATE (Optional) If you are unsure of which courses satisfy which area, see [this page](#).

Area	Course #	Course title	Quarter taken
Theory			
Methods			
Sociolinguistics			
Language Structure			