Guidelines for M.A. Portfolios (updated 3/6/25)

When you are nearing the end of your first semester of the M.A. program, you should decide whether you want to complete a portfolio for the final project of your degree program or whether you want to complete a thesis. Students choosing to complete a portfolio are advised to stay committed to that option once they decide upon it as switching to the thesis option later may result in their not having enough time to finish the thesis project by the end of their second year in the program.

Students choosing the portfolio option must take ENGL 52103/Portfolio Workshop the spring semester of their second year in the program--that is, the semester they plan to graduate. Students prepare and submit portfolios by the end of the course, and the portfolios are evaluated by a committee of three faculty members: the professor of ENGL 52103 (who serves as chair of the committee), the Director of Graduate Studies, and another committee member selected by the professor of the course. Portfolios are given a score of Pass or Fail, and a student must receive a passing score in order to complete the M.A. program. If a student receives a failing score, he or she is allowed to rework the portfolio and to submit it a second time, but this second attempt at receiving a passing score is the final one granted.

The writing selected for a student's portfolio should include five to ten main documents totaling 50-75 pages and an introductory essay of 5-10 pages.

The introductory essay should provide an overview of the main documents selected for the portfolio and contextualize each of them. The introductory essay should also offer a self-reflective account of the student's trajectory in the program, considering the student's goals and objectives in undertaking the program, the

development and growth experienced as a result of work in the program, and an indication of how this work could be applied to future career development.

The five to ten main documents for the portfolio should represent a student's best work in the program, so at least one of the main documents should normally be a researched critical essay written for a course and revised for publication in a peer-reviewed journal. Other types of documents that could be suitable for the portfolio include shorter critical essays, pedagogical pieces, websites and multi-media projects, and job application materials.