

Tips on Applying

From [MA Policies and Procedures 1.3.2](#):

In addition to the material required by the Faculty of Graduate Studies, the Department requires the following: **a.** a statement (of no more than two pages in length) of the student's specific scholarly (or, in the case of a writing project, literary) interests, with particular attention to a topic or topics and potential supervisor(s) appropriate for the Major Research Paper component of the program; **b.** a recent writing sample demonstrating the student's ability to generate an informed academic argument pertinent to the field (or, in the case of a writing project, an accomplished work in prose or poetry). The suggested length for this sample is between 10 and 25 pages.

GPA

Admission to graduate studies at Brock University requires a minimum average of 75% based on grades from the last two years of study. The English department prefers an average of 78% or above. The adjudication of applications is increasingly competitive and there are only so many spots available in any given year, so there is no grade average that in itself guarantees admission. At the same time, it should be stressed that the GPA is only one element of the application.

Writing Sample

Show us writing that reflects your best skills. It is wise to send an academic essay from a senior-level English class, or some equivalent. While a longer piece of writing is a good idea, because it shows your ability to build and sustain an argument, it is also important that, if possible, you send a piece of writing that illustrates your close, careful work with texts, theory, and/or criticism.

Statement of Intent/Interest

The Admissions Committee reads the statement carefully to determine how prepared an applicant is for graduate studies. The primary purpose of the Statement of intent is to propose an MRP project, and then to demonstrate how your knowledge and experience has prepared you to carry out such a project. The statement is as important to the application as high grades and strong letters of reference, and in some cases, it is more important—it is the element of the application through which you, as the applicant, have the ability to affect the committee's perception of your grades, writing sample, and reference letters.

Pointers on writing a successful statement of intent:

- **Be specific:** An applicant who says that they “have loved reading since they were a child” is not going to appear as focussed and self-guided as an applicant who states that they are interested in exploring the significance of walking in Jane Austen's novel, *Mansfield Park*, or examining the role of race in American science fiction book awards in the past fifty years.

Text/Community/Discourse
The Brock University English Language and Literature MA Program

The goal is to demonstrate that one is able to articulate a clear, focused and compelling English Studies research project.

- **Be pragmatic:** Make sure your project is manageable. The MRP is typically 35 pages long, so an applicant who states their intention to discuss eleven different large novels or to delineate and interconnect every possible reading of Othello, has clearly not thought about the necessary limitations. Further, you don't need to know what you'll find, but you should have definite questions that you want to explore. In fact, we're looking for you to clearly articulate those questions. Your statement helps us decide how focussed your curiosity is, how informed you've become, and how prepared you are for graduate work.
- **Demonstrate Critical Awareness:** Show an awareness of the critical conversation in which you wish to participate by outlining a particular historical context or theoretical approach that is important to your proposed research. Applicants who name and cite critical thinkers and texts they wish to engage demonstrate that they have already acquainted themselves with relevant critical debates and can knowledgeably imagine themselves assuming a part in them. In other words, they show themselves to be independent learners with an understanding of what research entails.
- **Write as a scholar:** Keep in mind the creative writing adage to “show not tell.” In this case, that means don't just tell the reader what thinkers and works you are interested in looking at critically, but do critical work with these texts—in other words, *perform* your scholarly ability to “name and cite critical thinkers and texts.” **Note:** your application to an English MA program is evidence that you love to read and write—the childhood origin of your love of reading and/or writing is probably not a story you need to tell here.
- **Why Brock English?** Towards the end of the statement, give some sense of why you want to study at Brock. If possible, connect your proposed research with the research interests of the department – you can find out about those on the department website. This should be a small section that you can and cut and paste to tailor your statement, assuming that you are applying to multiple schools. **Note:** for Brock English, you don't need to have a supervisor prior to applying. We arrange that in the first term. However, you can express interest in working with a particular scholar or mention that you have been in contact with one of our department members to discuss your research ideas. We are interested to hear why ours is the right program for you and your research interests.

External Funding

Applicants who are applying or intend to apply for external funding such as SSHRC (for MA, referred to as “The Tri-Agencies”) or OGS to support their studies should make this clear in their application, which is strengthened by that assertion. Note that the deadlines for SSHRC and OGS will be announced in the summer or early fall (for 2022, SSHRC was Dec. 1 and OGS was Jan. 15), and you will want to be sure to give your reference letter writers a decent lead time and, if possible and highly recommended, a chance to give your feedback on your proposal. For both awards, a qualifying GPA must be at least 80% for the most recent two years of study.