

Rethinking the Master's Degree in English for a New Century

ADE Ad Hoc Committee on the Master's Degree

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Preface by the ADE Executive Committee

OUR understanding of the master's degree in English has changed significantly in recent years. Over the last three decades, the number of master's degree programs has grown significantly, especially in creative writing and rhetoric or composition. Today, nearly half of faculty members teaching English in colleges and universities hold the master's as their highest degree. While the profession shares a well-developed sense of doctoral programs as preparation for postsecondary teaching, there is far less awareness of the role master's programs have played in supplying candidates for postsecondary faculty positions, especially the already large and still growing cadre of full- and part-time teachers holding non-tenure-track appointments. For these reasons, the ADE Executive Committee asked the ADE Ad Hoc Committee on the Master's Degree to study the MA in English with respect to numbers; range of degree requirements and curricula; relation to the MAT, MFA, and PhD; common career paths for MA recipients; employment conditions for those holding the MA; and the impact on the profession of the high percentages of MA-holding faculty members.

While for many graduates the MA in English still serves as a preparation for entry into doctoral programs, it has developed several additional purposes, the most significant of which is its function as a teaching degree. MA program curricula now focus not only on literature but also on rhetoric and composition, teaching English as a second language, technical and professional communication, and linguistics. This expansion can be viewed as healthy, but it also raises questions about what programs should offer to the increasingly varied categories of degree candidates they are serving and how they should do it. Our report points to a gap between students' aspirations and employment outcomes on the one hand and MA programs' stated goals and curricular requirements on the other. What, for example, should be the role of literary history and study of specific authors, pedagogy, foreign language and linguistics requirements, training in reading instruction, capstones and theses? Many MA programs in English may not have thoroughly, or recently, considered how graduates use their degrees and what current or future master's students may need.

Master's degree holders now teach a substantial number of courses in English departments. Our report suggests that as the number of non-tenure-track faculty members has grown, students have come to regard MA programs as a route to employment as postsecondary teachers. Departments, however, often misunderstand the goals of master's degree holders who may think the degree will lead to a career, not just a job, in college teaching. Master's programs would do well to model best practices for integrating MA faculty members into their departments.

The master's degree in English has acquired increased complexity and significance as a credential and route to employment in higher education, secondary and elementary school teaching, and business, government, and not-for-profit organizations. The ADE Executive Committee hopes that this report and the questions it raises will help the English profession make MA programs more useful to the students

who undertake them. This report underscores the need for the profession to develop best practice guidelines regarding MA education. We urge members of the ADE community to debate their views of the questions the report raises on their campuses, at ADE summer seminars, and in correspondence with the ADE Executive Committee. To the questions raised by the ad hoc committee, the executive committee adds the following:

- Do theses and comprehensive examinations continue to contribute importantly to MA programs? What vital purposes do they serve?
- How might MA exit requirements or the traditional MA exam be reconceived as a bridge between the classroom and a profession?
- For MA programs based in the study of literature, how does a content-coverage model remain important? Would a skills-based curriculum that focuses primarily on critical analysis and pedagogy be more valuable?
- For MA programs based in the study of literature, how have certificates in teaching rhetoric and composition (or in other areas of specialization) provided valuable curricular additions?
- How could teaching or publishing internships be incorporated into MA curricula?
- What best practice guidelines are already in use for hiring MA graduates to teach at the institutions where they earned their degree?
- What models exist for developing career workshops for students and faculty advisers in terminal MA programs?
- Are there distinct benefits to maintaining the MA as a gateway program into the PhD? Do those benefits offset the costs (financial and time related) of the intermediary degree?
- In gaining admission to PhD programs, how have terminal MA recipients fared in comparison with BA-holding applicants? How much of a completed MA should count toward doctoral course work at another school?

ADE Executive Committee

Rethinking the Master's Degree in English for a New Century

THIS report grew in part from the report of the 2007 ADE Ad Hoc Committee on Staffing, *Education in the Balance: A Report on the Academic Workforce in English*. The 2007 report revealed two significant features of the faculty in English that led the ADE Executive Committee to look hard at the master's degree. Figures 1–4 present information from the 2004 National Study of Postsecondary Faculty (NSOPF) that document these two features. First, a sizable proportion of those who teach English, full-time as well as part-time, reside in non-tenure-track appointments.¹ Second, the figures illustrate the relation, neither widely known nor well understood, between the distribution of tenure-track and non-tenure-track positions in four-year and two-year colleges and the degree qualifications—PhD, MFA, MA, and other degrees—held by segments of the faculty population occupying different tenure statuses. One finding from the 2007 committee that was striking to many of us was the extent to which the non-tenure-track academic workforce in English consists of teachers who hold an MA as their highest degree.

Figure 1 shows the familiar high proportion of non-tenure-track and part-time faculty members in English in four- and two-year institutions. Figure 3, however, tells us something new about the relation of positions in four- and two-year colleges and the degrees held by their occupants: about 50% of the non-tenure-track faculty members in four-year colleges and some 60% of tenured and tenure-track faculty members in two-year institutions hold an MA as their highest degree. In fact, overall in two-year institutions, about 89% of English faculty members do not hold a doctorate (fig. 2). Figure 4 adds additional detail about degree qualifications of faculty members in part-time positions as well as full-time positions on and off the tenure track.

As members of the profession, we have assumed that doctoral candidates in English have as their objective obtaining careers as postsecondary faculty members and that we thus know the expectations of doctoral programs graduates—the same expectations that are applied when departments hire for assistant professor positions. How many of us can say we know what to expect from the master's degree holder? Does the MA prepare graduates for the academic jobs many will take on? Getting answers to these questions became urgent, given that close to half (49.1%) of all those teaching English in colleges and universities hold a master's as their highest degree—31.0% of the faculty in four-year institutions and 68.7% of the faculty in two-year colleges (fig. 2).

We were, at the same time, compelled by another fact of university life: across all disciplinary areas master's programs are the fastest-growing sector in higher education, as Hannah Fairfield observes in a 2007 *New York Times* article. In many institutions and in some disciplines, master's programs have become significant cash cows in an otherwise bleak economic terrain. As Fairfield writes, reviewing US Department of Education data (from the National Center for Educational Statistics) through 2005, “The number of students earning . . . [master's] degrees around the country has nearly

doubled since 1980. Since 1970, the growth is 150 percent, more than twice as fast as bachelor and doctorate programs.” The trend has continued. Across all fields of study, the number of master’s degrees granted between 1980–81 and 2007–08 increased 111%, from 295,731 to 625,023 (Snyder and Dillow, table 274). Even in the humanities, where the percentage increase has been less than in other fields, the number of degrees rose from its low of 27,572 in 1985–86 to 46,629 in 2007–08, or 69.1%.² In education, by comparison, the increase was from 74,816 to 175,880, or 135.1%.

To be sure, such growth does not necessarily mean that English departments automatically profit, whether financially, educationally, or intellectually, from the establishment or expansion of master’s programs. Any benefit may well depend on how a department’s curricular arrangements and educational goals support or conflict with the business model an institution has conceived for the degree programs its departments offer. We can generalize about the significant expansion of master’s programs; we cannot generalize how much, if any, funding they bring into departments. Indeed, it is important to recognize at the outset the importance of determining where support for a master’s program is coming from and where revenues are going. Revenue streams from master’s programs may or may not be shared with the departments hosting them. MA programs may be configured to depend largely on adding students to existing senior-level undergraduate or PhD courses. For whom are such programs profitable—institutions, departments, faculty members, students? From each of these standpoints, is the master’s a value-added degree for students or an opportunistic degree for institutions?

Questions about programs’ financial benefits apart, our charge led us to ask several questions about program content and how it helps shape students’ futures, especially in the light of our increasing awareness of how frequently those futures might be teaching in four-year postsecondary institutions as well as in two-year colleges and secondary schools. What is being offered to students in these rapidly growing master’s programs, and how well do the requirements for completing the degree prepare graduates for the teaching jobs so many of them seem likely to occupy? Discussions at ADE summer seminars and ADE Executive Committee meetings suggested that the range of expectations and curricula might well be considerably larger for master’s degrees in English than for either the baccalaureate or the doctorate. Was there some standard, any set of requirements widely employed, any agreed-on pattern of education on which students or future academic employers could depend? Just what was going on in these programs that were supplying a larger and larger proportion of the teachers of English in higher education?

To answer these questions, the ADE Executive Committee charged the Ad Hoc Committee on the Master’s Degree to investigate the following matters:

1. Numbers, financing, and institutional locations of master’s degree programs
2. Range of degree requirements, curricula, educational practices, and professional training in master’s degree programs
3. Relations of the MA to the MAT, the MFA, and the PhD
4. Common career paths of master’s degree recipients
5. Employment conditions and experiences of master’s degree recipients teaching in postsecondary education, in the light of the research presented in the 2007 report of the ADE Ad Hoc Committee on Staffing

6. Impact on the profession (curriculum, instruction, academic freedom, and faculty governance) of high percentages of master's degree holders among the faculty
7. Feasibility of recommending best practices for the employment of master's degree recipients in the academic workforce

This seemed an extensive enough agenda, which, had we members of the ad hoc committee known then what we came to understand over the course of our work, might have increased our sensible apprehensions. For the terrain of the master's degree turns out to be vast, largely uncharted, and sometimes convulsed by conflicting demands and hopes. We have several conclusions about the master's degree to offer, but we also have at least as many questions to pose to colleagues who direct, review, or teach in master's programs. Indeed, precisely because master's degree programs vary according to local and regional imperatives, to the interests of participating faculty members, or to the diverse clienteles they serve, it seemed wise not to attempt an overall taxonomy. Rather, we present questions that faculty members and administrators might find useful in reviewing and perhaps revising their programs. And we suggest some ideas, often provided by respondents to our survey, about useful approaches to a variety of issues, like the research methods course, culminating exercises, language requirements, or employment possibilities. This report is thus a first attempt to begin mapping a territory that we hope future cartographers will examine more fully.

Methodology and Resources

To carry out our mandate, the committee members, with the essential help of MLA staff members, began by preparing and circulating two questionnaires to 393 ADE-member English departments, 182 PhD-granting and 211 master's-granting, in spring 2009. One questionnaire asked about the characteristics of master's degree programs, the other about the conditions of employment for faculty members who hold a master's as their highest degree; we received 79 usable responses for the first survey and 80 for the second. We also examined the Web sites of about 25 varied master's programs and brochures from as many again; we met with department chairs and directors of graduate studies at ADE summer institutes; and we presented preliminary findings at the 2009 MLA convention as well as at the 2010 convention of the College Language Association. Many of the responses we obtained provide significant anecdotal amplification to conclusions drawn from statistical evidence.

Also relevant to our report has been information on the career paths, academic or otherwise, of graduates with an MA in English. One source of such information is the 2003 National Survey of College Graduates (NSCG), a postdecennial census study of graduates in all fields who hold at least a bachelor's degree. Based on a scientific sample of 100,000 people identified as holding a bachelor's degree or higher on the census (as of 1 April 2000), the NSCG reflects not just recent graduates but all degree holders to age seventy-five, an estimated 40,000,000 college graduates residing in the United States at the time of data collection in fall 2003. Queries on the NSCG dataset provide a snapshot as of 1 October 2003 identifying the employment status and occupations of people who hold a master's degree in English.

A second source of information is a survey of placement (as of fall 2009) of 2006–07 master's degree recipients conducted by the MLA Office of Research. The survey canvassed the 536 departments of English and 700 departments of foreign languages that are listed in the MLA's database of departments awarding either master's degrees or PhDs. Of the 536 English departments canvassed, 134 (25.0%) responded. Department chairs or graduate program directors, not the degree holders, completed the surveys, and directors admit that they do not necessarily have up-to-date information on graduates. The results are useful nonetheless, since they indicate recent trends (albeit, before the economic downturn). One further limitation of this study should be noted: responding departments reported that placement was unknown for 40% of the master's degree recipients they counted as going on to further study and for 48% of those categorized as placed into another category of employment.

Although the NSCG and the MLA study survey very different populations, they direct attention to a common finding: teaching in higher education ranks at or near the top as an employment destination for a significant number of master's degree holders. The 2003 NSCG cites 59 occupational categories for people whose highest degree is the MA in English, but only 3 encompass substantial proportions of those in the workforce: 18.1% hold positions as postsecondary teachers of English, 13.6% are in secondary education, and 16.8% are in a broad category including artists, broadcasters, editors, entertainers, public relations specialists, and writers (see [table 1](#)).

Thus, using these data, it would not be an exaggeration to say that the field of English has developed a teaching degree: not the doctor of arts (for postsecondary education), not the master of arts in teaching (for secondary schools), but the master of arts in English. Yet while the degree serves as a credential for teaching, it has not necessarily been designed to prepare graduates for teaching. The prominence of the MA as a credential for secondary and postsecondary teaching is a reality that faculty members responsible for MA programs need to acknowledge and think about systematically. Master's degree programs, in many locations, need to be considered in the light of their functioning as secondary teacher education and postsecondary teacher preparation programs.

But teaching is not the exclusive endpoint of the MA. The MLA's 2009 placement survey of graduates of master's degree programs found that 43.3% of graduates who received master's degrees in English pursue further study—33.0% in language, literature, or cultural studies; 10.5% in other graduate or professional areas (such as law school; see [table 2](#)). Nearly 40% of the MA graduates found work in education (teaching or administration), about equally divided between postsecondary teaching and secondary or elementary school teaching. Nearly 15% work in business, government, or not-for-profit organizations, including such fields as philanthropy, journalism, and publishing.

Placements vary by MA program, but the information available to us shows how wide the range of options is for graduates. The function of the MA in English as preparation for entry into doctoral programs remains significant, but it is only one of several purposes. Knowing more about what an MA program's graduates do after receiving the degree may prompt a program's faculty members to reconceptualize the MA and its program requirements.

The work of this ad hoc committee was prompted by the findings in *Education in the Balance* that a sizable number of those teaching English hold non-tenure-track positions and that many of those holding such positions held an MA as their highest degree. The MA's popularity suggests that students perceive it as a credential that offers access to a career in the collegiate teaching force in the expanding category of non-tenure-track employment. This report thus considers the fact that a majority of MA holders who enter the academic workforce teach lower-division writing courses and focuses on how MA programs might therefore prepare students for such appointments.

The Character of MA Programs

The ADE survey of characteristics of master's degree programs received 79 usable responses, 63 from departments in public institutions (including one Canadian university) and 16 from departments in private institutions. The questionnaire asked respondents to indicate the degrees their departments offer and details about the programs connected with each kind of degree offered. [Table 3](#) summarizes the data about the degrees offered by our respondents. The top section gives departments' responses about a particular degree as percentages of all responses about that same degree; the bottom section shows these responses as percentages of the entire set of 79 responding departments. Those responding often provided brief but useful comments about details of their degree programs.

Responses to the survey shed light on important areas. For example, with few exceptions the MFA is considered a terminal degree, the possessors of which are treated much like PhD holders—that is, they can obtain tenure, unlike holders of the MA in many institutions. In a small number of institutions, though our evidence does not establish which, respondents say MA and MFA holders are treated alike. But the equity seems more often to involve a decreased standing of the MFA rather than an elevated standing of the MA.

The committee's survey of program characteristics and its online reviews of program descriptions have revealed an expansion of the curriculum for the MA in English. A generation or so ago, "English" might have readily been defined as "literature." Today, as [table 3](#) shows, more than one-third of the departments offer an MA specialization in rhetoric and composition. Other specialization and course options include teaching English to English language learners, technical and professional communication, and linguistics. In addition, more than half of the departments with a master's degree in English offer creative writing, whether as a specialization within the MA (19.5%) or as the MFA in creative writing (47.9%). Our study was not designed to examine the MFA in significant detail, though there are clear reasons why one might wish to do so. According to Chad Harbach, "there were 79 degree-granting programs in creative writing in 1975; today, there are 854!"³ Most of these programs are not, of course, ones offering the master's degree in English. Still, such an enormous expansion summons questions . . . for which we do not have answers. Indeed, the controversies over the book by Mark McGurl discussed in Harbach's article, as well as the debates over efforts to rank creative writing programs,

suggest that an analysis of MFA programs is on the horizon. In the meantime, given the strong interest of students in creative writing programs, it behooves those responsible for them to take particular care to guard against the potential for exploiting students who make themselves vulnerable to undue financial risk.

The study of literature continues to dominate the MA in English and to define it. About 95% of the programs that offer MA degrees in English offer literature as a specialization (table 3). Still, the expansion of other possibilities for study raises interesting questions about the identity of the MA in English as well as about its purposes, outcomes, and place in the university. From one perspective, diversity in the curriculum suggests the value of English studies in a variety of contexts. The MA in English can mean the study of literature, rhetoric, or linguistics—the mastery of a subject matter and its methods. It can also mean creative writing—the mastery of an art. It can be valuable for pragmatic purposes, including teaching (of literature, language, or writing), writing in nonacademic settings, and preparing nonnative teachers of English-language learners for an English-speaking culture. Diversity in the curriculum means that the discipline has been responsive to university and cultural contexts, to student demand, and to factors like globalization, inclusiveness, technology, and the push for narrowly construed pragmatic uses of education.

This diversity is diffusion from another perspective and raises several questions: If the MA in English means so many things, does it mean anything in particular? If the distinctive strengths of an MA program are defined locally, is there a disciplinary vision that connects various types of programs under the name “English”? Do our traditional assumptions about English and the humanities still hold? What constitutes a concentration within a master’s degree? As the curriculum expands, do faculty members keep larger programmatic purposes in view, or are courses added ad hoc? Are we making the decisions about change based on our understanding of the discipline and its values, as a response to external pressures, or to accede to faculty members’ short-term interests?

The question of identity is important for prospective graduate students and for the people who employ them or accept them into doctoral programs. What should a student expect to gain in an MA program? What outcomes justify investment of time and money in the degree? What does the MA as a credential mean? What reasons motivate a department to offer a master’s degree, and how should they define its purposes? Identity is also important for the university’s sense of the English department, which translates to the department’s ability to get university resources and to get its courses included in the curricula for other majors.

In its survey of MA program characteristics, the Ad Hoc Committee on the Master’s Degree looked for ways in which programs defined their goals. Table 4 indicates the goals that shape decisions. Important or very important goals include “developing critical and theoretical knowledge” (96.2% of respondents), “increasing the skill and range of students as readers of literature” (93.5%), and “preparing for admission to a PhD program” (84.6%). These goals reflect the tradition of the MA in English, suggesting continuity into the present. Some goals, such as developing critical and theoretical knowledge, transcend specializations, suggesting disciplinary identity even as subject matter and emphases expand.

Less important program goals may suggest opportunities for the future. These include preparing students for secondary school teaching and providing in-service professional development for teachers, deemed important or very important by 52.0% and 32.1% of responding departments, respectively. Only 41.0% of respondents categorize expanding student knowledge of information technology as important or very important. That 51.3% consider preparing students for writing or editing positions as important or very important for the MA in English may seem astonishingly high, from the perspective of the traditional purposes of the study of English and its resistance to vocational education, or astonishingly low, considering the academic job market for humanities graduates in the early twenty-first century.

The responses to the survey of program characteristics and our study of program Web sites have revealed an enormous range of MA curricula. We have examined an MA curriculum whose prescriptions appear little different from what might have been found fifty years ago: British and American literature surveys; period course requirements; major authors; the three standard genres of fiction, poetry, and drama; and an occasional special topics course. At the other end of the spectrum we have observed one institution that offers a tailor-made curriculum for each individual MA student with no common course requirements or expectations. In our research and surveying, then, we have found relatively little consensus on what the MA in English is, except perhaps that the clientele the degree serves are various and often dictated by local circumstances.

Survey results on degree requirements might point to the diffusion end of a diversity-diffusion continuum of disciplinary identity. But it is not the range of curricula that raises questions so much as the disconnect between stated goals for MA programs and existing curricular requirements. In the survey of department chairs and program directors, 62.4% of respondents designate the preparation of postsecondary teachers as important or very important to their missions (table 4), but it is not at all clear that most programs structure course offerings and requirements that are explicitly directed to prospective teachers. As figure 5 reveals, the most common requirement is a course in research methods, required for all or most students at 63.6% of the programs that responded to the survey. Of course, if the MA is seen as a pre-PhD degree, programs are likely to require a more or less traditional research methodology course, since many doctoral programs expect their students to enroll in such a course early in their studies. If, however, the MA is seen as leading to teaching in secondary schools, community colleges, or other postsecondary venues, a research methodology course might be viewed differently. It might not disappear, but it might be recast to accommodate a wider variety of projects, especially if such a project might constitute the culminating exercise for the master's degree. In one program, for instance, a curriculum development project, a Web site or multimedia work with content focused on a literary topic or set of issues, and a dramaturgy related to on- or off-campus productions are all options as a useful culminating exercise for some MA students, and each option might require somewhat different research methodology course work. Or, since secondary and college teachers should make informed pedagogical and curricular decisions, with information deriving in part from research they undertake, they might include field-based methods of analyzing patterns of student work and assessment data as well as methods for analyzing literary texts and contexts.

Literary theory is required for most or all students at slightly more than half of the programs. Also frequently required are courses in British literature, American literature, and rhetoric or composition theory. A course in the teaching of writing is required of at least some students in 58.1% of the programs, while a course in the teaching of literature is required of at least some students at 29.3% of the programs. Table 5 shows in greater detail findings about the courses departments require and do not require.

But our findings about which courses master's programs do not require may be of more interest than our findings about the courses that they do. Not required in most programs are literatures in English other than British or American (77.6%), literary genres (78.2%), technology or digital humanities (75.4%), and the teaching of literature (70.7%). Of course, "not required" does not mean not offered or not taken. Our survey did not probe into enrollments. In addition, these topics may be taught in courses that focus on other issues.

Still, given the current state of the profession and the occupational aims and employment prospects of MA candidates, another set of questions emerges: Are required courses in theory and methods the most urgent need in the MA curriculum, especially for those students who do not pursue the PhD? Would departments hiring MA recipients for teaching positions at the secondary or postsecondary level endorse such requirements? Would those who hire MA holders replace theory or methods with different requirements? What do recent recipients of an MA in English say were the most valuable courses for the work they now do or the work they seek? To be sure, the variations in requirements reflect varied concentrations within the MA in English: a course in literary theory would be less important in an MFA program or for a concentration in linguistics than for a program in literature. But other nonrequired courses do reflect emphases of the twenty-first century—globalization, technology, the economy. A curriculum out of sync with the world around it risks isolation and irrelevance, as well as loss of an opportunity to make the humanities meaningful in the current environment.

If many master's candidates are going to receive the MA as their final degree and are likely to be employed teaching writing and literature, whether in secondary schools, two-year colleges, or four-year institutions, should a course on pedagogy and professional practices be required for the degree? We note that, while many programs offer a course on the teaching of composition, typically such courses are required only of those MA students who are employed as teaching assistants. And, as shown on figure 6, only about a quarter of the departments that responded to our survey (24.6%) make teaching assistantships available to 75% or more of their MA students in students' first year of study; 31.5% have assistantships for 75% or more of their students in the second year of study and beyond. In 46.1% of departments, teaching assistantships are available to 50% or more of MA students in their first year of study; 54.4% of the departments make assistantships available to at least 50% of MA students who are in the second year of study or beyond. At the other end of the scale, teaching assistantships are not available to any MA students in their first year of study at 21.5% of the institutions that responded to our surveys; for students in their second year of study or beyond, 14.3% of departments report that

assistantships are unavailable. While we do not have student numbers to accompany this program information, it is reasonable to speculate that a significant number of MA students graduate without the teaching experience assistantships provide. Often instruction in writing methodologies comes down to a less-than-full credit proseminar or a week of instruction before the first teaching term begins. How much weight would hiring entities give to applicants who have successfully completed richly developed work in composition or literature pedagogies? How do recent MAs who have taken a pedagogy course within an English program assess that experience?

Another traditional requirement for graduate study in English, the language requirement, merits reconsideration to determine whether and how it works for students in the twenty-first century. Table 6 indicates that, of the 64 departments that answered the question about language requirements, 60.9% require competence in a language other than English in one or more of their master's degree programs. It is not clear what "competence" entails in MA programs, since there appears to be little consistency among programs: in comments responders mentioned as little as two semesters of an undergraduate course or an open-dictionary exam. Such requirements may derive from an earlier model in PhD programs, which mandated a reading knowledge, particularly of French or German, as significant for research. The language requirement is sometimes perceived by students as a hurdle rather than as the important tool for scholarship and teaching that it is. But there are reasons beyond tradition that merit consideration of how a language requirement might benefit students. As teachers of a language-based discipline, English teachers at every level of the curriculum benefit both intellectually and practically from the depth of language awareness and sensitivity that second-language study imparts. The substantive study of languages leads to encounters with structures of language that are fundamental to the tasks of learning and teaching composition and literature in English. Language study enhances disciplinary knowledge in English as well as pedagogies for teaching diverse student bodies. In a globalized environment, it is more important than ever for teachers at every level to be better prepared to interact with students (and their parents) whose primary language is not English. Overcoming the achievement gap among many students of non-English-speaking origins may require faculty members to develop different forms of language competence. Thus the PhD model of a language requirement may need to be expanded and rethought for master's degree candidates.

In areas like the Southwest of the United States, where the first language of a significant number of students is not English, linguistics plays a larger role in master's programs than it does elsewhere. It may be that in reviewing program requirements, department chairs will want to examine both the increasingly diverse language capabilities of potential students and the opportunities in applied linguistics that may be open to systematically trained graduates.

Language diversity emerges in the teaching of writing, and explorations of language differences can be an important tool for helping students advance their written communication skills—as well as a good deal of fun in the classroom. Moreover, using the exploration of language differences to build foreign language competence leads not simply to the fulfillment of a formal requirement but also to encounters with the fundamental structures of language. One survey respondent described

another option: “the English department does allow students to count courses in literatures in translation, and we do offer a translation workshop.” An approach to a language requirement that emphasizes its importance in teaching a variety of students might also help departments obtain resources to support foreign language course work for graduate students, a problem mentioned by several of our respondents and one that has led to dropping language requirements in some institutions. It seems to us useful for master’s programs to reconsider both the form and the purposes of the language requirement.

To reflect the current state of our field and to enhance the employment prospects of students with an MA in English, should other kinds of degree requirements be considered, such as interdisciplinary courses, courses in English studies and technology, or courses in literature in translation? Would hiring entities prefer that holders of the MA have other kinds of required course work? For example, beyond preparing graduates to meet the challenges of teaching composition, master’s degree programs dedicated to preparing students for teaching in community colleges might wish to consider offering course work in reading instruction.⁴ On the one hand, *reading* denotes a basic skill taught in elementary school; on the other, it names a sophisticated practice of engagement with texts, especially although not exclusively the close reading and analysis of literature pursued in English classrooms at both the secondary and postsecondary levels. Teaching reading in the first sense generally engages the expertise of faculty members trained in schools of education; teaching reading of the second kind generally calls on the expertise of faculty members trained in English departments. Yet in many community college English departments and humanities divisions, faculty members with degrees in English will regularly encounter students whose reading presents challenges in both dimensions. Instructors trained in English programs know how to do close reading and other forms of literary analysis, but only infrequently have they considered how reading is learned or taught. How many English MA candidates study the theory and psychology of reading, the strategies and practices struggling readers can use to progress toward becoming effective readers, or ways teachers can help students engage with both literary and nonliterary texts? Graduate programs in English have robust protocols for the study of literature, composition, creative writing, English as a second language, and other fields. But few if any programs have undertaken to consider how to bridge the gap between the sophisticated reading and writing practices of English and reading and writing as acquisitions and attributes of literacy. Acknowledging that few master’s degree programs currently have faculty members qualified to undertake such a project, we raise the prospect both for its intrinsic interest and as an instance of the kind of fresh thinking that those responsible for MA programs may wish to consider. Further, MA programs might consciously wish to address gaps between the reading practices and habits that candidates arrive with and the reading practices and habits that will enable them to teach effectively. Included here are the habits and practices MA candidates would need as teachers to read and respond productively to their students’ writing.

An additional question about the content of the MA curriculum concerns the culminating projects, capstones, or theses that certify the successful completion of the degree. [Table 7](#) shows the results of the survey’s inquiry about culminating exercises

master's degree programs require. The traditional research thesis for the MA remains central to some programs, especially in those institutions that define the MA as a research degree or in which all or most MA students are proceeding to the PhD. Comments accompanying survey results suggest that there are many program directors who champion the MA thesis, often with an accompanying oral defense, as essential to the scholarly integrity of the degree. But the results of the survey suggest a decline in the MA thesis as the required or even the preferred final exercise for the degree. Those institutions that offer MA candidates alternatives to the thesis most often propose a more modest research essay or a portfolio of, typically, three revised course papers. A few programs among our respondents required, in addition, a written examination on a set of texts, chosen either by the student or by the department. Here we see at least three significant questions to pursue:

1. For those MA students intending to pursue a PhD at the same institution or hoping to be admitted to a doctoral program at a different one, should a traditional thesis with oral defense be the recommended option? Do admissions committees for PhD programs expect that an MA applicant will have successfully completed a thesis? Are admissions committees receptive to applicants who have completed an alternative certifying exercise or project?
2. Should those MA students intending to seek employment as teachers at the secondary or postsecondary level be given an examination on a set number of texts to enhance their credentials as teachers of literature? Would hiring entities be more inclined to advance the candidacy of an applicant who had been examined on appropriate texts in literature, composition studies, or young adult writing?
3. Should those MA students seeking neither a teaching position nor admission to a doctoral program be offered the option of an alternative culminating experience that may be tailored to their career objectives, such as a supervised internship or other applied experience, with a required written or oral assessment of the experience?

Our provisional view is that many MA programs have curricula that are not well adapted to the realities of the current academic workforce and may not be serving adequately the needs of this generation of graduate students. This concern raises one additional key question for directors of master's programs: What do recent recipients of an English MA wish they had been required to study?

The Master's Holder in the Marketplace and on the Faculty

The responses to our second survey shed light on departments' treatment of MA-holding faculty members. Shown in table 8 are responses to our query about the relative importance of criteria for hiring non-tenure-track faculty members; these responses present some interesting and perhaps disconcerting information. Unsurprisingly, teaching experience is most often cited as critical or very important. But the factor that the highest percentage of responding program directors deemed critical is "highest degree held is the master's." Unsurprisingly again, hiring

committees seem uninterested in having candidates for non-tenure-track positions present an active record of publication or participation in conferences, and they seem relatively indifferent to the general reputation of a candidate's school. More interestingly, holding the PhD is not a major criterion for over half our respondents. These results, taken together, suggest a rationale for students' increased interest in the master's: the master's degree is a necessary, if not an altogether sufficient, credential to obtain a job in the increasingly populated category of a non-tenure-track appointment. Many of us have expressed concerns about what the growth of non-tenure-track appointments means for the faculty across all ranks and employment categories, as well as for the coherence and even quality of educational programs. The fact remains, however, that a growing number of students have followed an alternative route to finding a teaching job in postsecondary education, at four- as well as two-year institutions, even if it is less well compensated and less stable than a tenure-track position.

Figure 7 confirms that a good deal of hiring is done both locally and regionally, near where most master's degree holders are located. Some institutions have, in fact, shaped their programs in such a way as to prepare graduates for specific needs in regional community colleges. Such an approach may have the added benefit of mobilizing political resources to support master's programs. Certain master's programs have constituted themselves as useful gateways to local academic employment. As we have pointed out, local circumstances create the clienteles for MA programs and thus rightly influence program features. Unlike PhD recipients, MA recipients do not as a matter of course compete for tenure-track jobs in a national market, so the standardization that may obtain in PhD programs need not obtain in MA programs. Rather, locally determined features of MA programs may well respond to local employment needs.⁵

The same degree of security and academic freedom usually associated with the traditional tenured or tenure-track appointments is typically not extended to those occupying non-tenure-track positions. At the same time, figure 8 shows that non-tenure-track jobs can open out into long-term employment opportunities and that those faculty members holding such jobs with an MA often do not have to make the huge investment of time and money (or incur the debt) that PhD earners do. We would not wish to be misread as recommending a preference for the master's degree over the doctorate. But it is clear to us that a significant number of students in a range of disciplines, including English, have entered college teaching on the basis of holding the master's degree. It is possible that students are now undertaking master's degree programs with postsecondary teaching as their career objective.⁶

Our data suggest that the picture of the non-tenure-track master's holder as altogether marginal to the professional life of departments is something of an oversimplification. Figure 9 presents the responses to the question that addressed the participation of MA-holding non-tenure-track faculty members in five activities related to curriculum and departmental and institutional governance. Respondents were also asked to offer their assessment of the level of engagement of MA-holding non-tenure-track faculty members in these activities. Although the departments we surveyed welcome non-tenure-track faculty members, their participation in departmental activities varies widely, as respondents' comments reveal. In some institutions, non-tenure-track faculty members are fully engaged, while in others the engagement is described as

“minimal.” Patterns among faculty members in the same institution vary widely as well, with some choosing to be engaged and others not. Union contracts may limit participation on committees of faculty members with heavy teaching loads.

As shown in [figure 9](#), across all five activities, far lower percentages of those MA holders teaching part-time off the tenure track have an opportunity to participate, and there is much wider variation among the different activities for part-timers than for full-timers. One might point out, without cynicism, that institutions are always pleased to obtain cost-free labor to help carry out the service projects of individual departments. So it is no surprise that most departments encourage non-tenure-track, full-time master's degree–holding faculty members and, with less success, part-timers to participate in a variety of tasks. The program directors' survey responses and comments suggest that many, particularly full-time, MA-holding non-tenure-track faculty members do. In fact, at some institutions, MA-holding full-time non-tenure-track faculty members “are reviewed annually on service,” as one responder put it.

The picture is muddier when it comes to matters that have costs associated with them, as [figure 10](#) indicates. Almost all the departments that we surveyed provide non-tenure-track faculty members with office space, photocopying and library privileges, and computer access. But there does not seem to be a standard for departments' providing funds for travel, professional development, or research, since availability of funds varies among the departments we surveyed. These decisions are likely driven by budget limitations. Of the departments responding, only 29.0% provide all non-tenure-track MA-holding faculty members with funds for travel, and even fewer offer all such faculty members funding for research (10.6%) or professional development (22.1%). No department complains of being overfunded. Limited funds go to the tenure-track faculty members who must travel and conduct research to meet job expectations. Still, the effect may be to widen the divisions of a class system, with some faculty members supported and engaged and others not. Participation in professional conferences and other professional development keeps a teaching faculty energized and up-to-date just as it does a research faculty. Likewise, a small but meaningful number of institutions limit the benefits available to full-time non-tenure-track MA-holding faculty members. Also somewhat limited are opportunities for non-tenure-track master's holders to be able to obtain regular promotion and advancement (see [fig. 11](#)). [Figure 11](#) offers evidence of a significant tension or contradiction in institutions' treatment of non-tenure-track faculty members. Nearly 70% of departments responding say all their non-tenure-track faculty members are reviewed and receive feedback regularly. Yet half the responding departments provide no opportunities to MA-holding non-tenure-track faculty members for regular promotion and advancement—a policy that may, of course, derive from the hesitancy of departments to accept non-tenure-track appointments as a fundamental structural feature, as is implicit in arrangements that provide regular promotion and advancement to faculty members so appointed. As a practice, of course, reappointment with no opportunity for advancement marks but one such tension in higher education's use and abuse of non-tenure-track appointments.

It is appropriate that the colleges and universities that offer MAs—the institutions we surveyed—should model best practices of integrating MA faculty members into the department. If our graduate programs thrive on preparing MA faculty members

for college teaching, we should complete the circle by creating good spaces for them, not just in positions but also in the way we define those positions. Our surveys suggest an effort, though incompletely realized, to do just that. The colleges and universities we surveyed seem generally more progressive than those that hire adjuncts for one or two courses on a semester basis, often right before the term begins and often without providing office space or other support.

Still, persistent values in combination with limited budgets and legacy structures interfere with far-reaching initiatives to integrate MA faculty members into higher education in ways that respect that they might choose careers (not just jobs) in college teaching. The assumption that non-tenure-track faculty members who hold master's degrees are generally aiming to pursue PhDs and tenure-track positions encourages a dismissive attitude. Regardless of the degree qualifications of faculty members, objections to contingency in faculty appointments are all too easily confused with objections to the people who hold non-tenure-track positions. But the two are not the same. As a structural feature of institutions, contingency creates conditions that are inevitably abusive for non-tenure-track faculty members and work against both their and their department's commitment to quality. Contingency often goes hand in hand with impossible workloads and with privileging the short-term goal of covering classes cheaply over the long-term commitment to an institution and its students. Non-tenure-track faculty members, by contrast, have for decades demonstrated their commitment to high-quality teaching and engaged teaching careers. Our common quarrel as one faculty—whether we are tenure-track or non-tenure-track faculty members—should be with contingency. We should not allow our quarrel with contingency to dissipate into a confused squabble between tenure-track and non-tenure-track faculty members over who teaches better, cares more about students, or contributes more to creating high-quality programs. Master's program faculty members may in this connection wish to consult the MLA's Academic Workforce Advocacy Kit (http://www.mla.org/advocacy_kit) and the many useful MLA statements and recommendations it gathers together.

Another tension has to do with the kinds of courses non-tenure-track master's-holding faculty members actually teach. We see in [table 9](#) that two-thirds of courses taught by non-tenure-track MA-holding faculty members are lower-division writing courses. That proportion comes as no surprise. What may be surprising is the substantial number of courses taught by non-tenure-track master's holders: on average almost a third, 31.9%, taught courses in lower-division writing, for a total of 1,723 sections in the 54 departments responding. We speculate that the increased number of master's degrees tells us something about administrators' deployment of this more vulnerable and less well-compensated sector of the academic workforce.

In pointing to certain tensions and anomalies in the structures of some master's degree programs, we do not intend to be judgmental. We are, rather, trying to offer a template helpful to program faculty members, administrators, and students in their efforts to improve what the master's degree accomplishes. After a long period of decline, during which it was often regarded as an exit visa from advanced study, the master's degree in English seems to have made a significant comeback as a desirable

credential. Our hope is that this study will contribute to the ongoing work of making that credential as useful and substantial as it can be.

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Doug Steward, *MLA*

Notes

1. We have chosen to use *tenure-track* to designate both tenured faculty appointments that entail permanent employment and tenure-track appointments that might lead to permanent appointment. We use *non-tenure-track* to designate appointments that are limited to particular terms (e.g., one year, three years, five years). The term *contingent* is also sometimes used to designate faculty members whose terms of appointment are contractually limited, but we are not comfortable with the implications of that word. Significant numbers of individuals with non-tenure-track faculty positions are appointed and reappointed at the same institution for long periods and thus would accurately be described as *permanent contingent*, an absurd term. We have also used the phrase *MA-holding* to designate faculty members who hold a master's degree as their highest degree.

2. Included in "humanities" are degrees in area, ethnic, cultural, and gender studies; English language and literature or letters; foreign languages, literatures, and linguistics; liberal arts and sciences, general studies, and humanities; multi- or interdisciplinary studies; philosophy and religious studies; theology and religious vocations; and visual and performing arts.

3. See also *2009–2010 Survey Results*.

4. The following paragraph is indebted to comments the committee received from a member of the ADE Executive Committee, Thomas Hurley of Diablo Valley College, in California. Hurley adds a second consideration in his letter to the committee: "The second reason why MA programs in English should address reading is scholarly. The needs and issues two-year-college reading instruction address raise significant questions. For example, what do adults bring to texts that children and adolescents do not? How do adult readers move from literal comprehension to more sophisticated examination of texts such as close reading, analysis of assumptions and relation to cultural and historical contexts? How does the experience of reading shape the ability to write? How does the experience of writing affect the ability to comprehend and interpret texts? What is the relationship between reading nonfiction texts and reading poetry, fiction, and drama? Adding training in reading instruction to MA programs, in short, will certainly address a practical need, but it will also open a field of scholarly inquiry that English MA programs have skirted, if not in fact ignored."

5. For an example of a collaboration between a college needing teachers (Guilford Technical Community College, in North Carolina) and a university with graduate students preparing to teach (University of North Carolina, Greensboro), see Buck and Frank.

6. Students may be encouraged toward pursuing the MA over the PhD by comments like the following: "PhD graduates do at least earn more than those with a bachelor's degree. A study in the *Journal of Higher Education Policy and Management* by Bernard Casey [31.3 (2009): 219–27] shows that British men with a bachelor's degree earn 14% more than those who could have gone to university but chose not to. The earnings premium for a PhD is 26%. But the premium for a master's degree, which can be accomplished in as little as one year, is almost as high, at 23%. In some subjects the premium for a PhD vanishes entirely. PhDs in maths and computing, social sciences and languages earn no more than those with master's degrees. The premium for a PhD is actually smaller than for a master's degree in engineering and technology, architecture and education. Only in medicine, other sciences, and business and financial studies is it high enough to be worthwhile. Over all subjects, a PhD commands only a 3% premium over a master's degree" ("Disposable Academic").

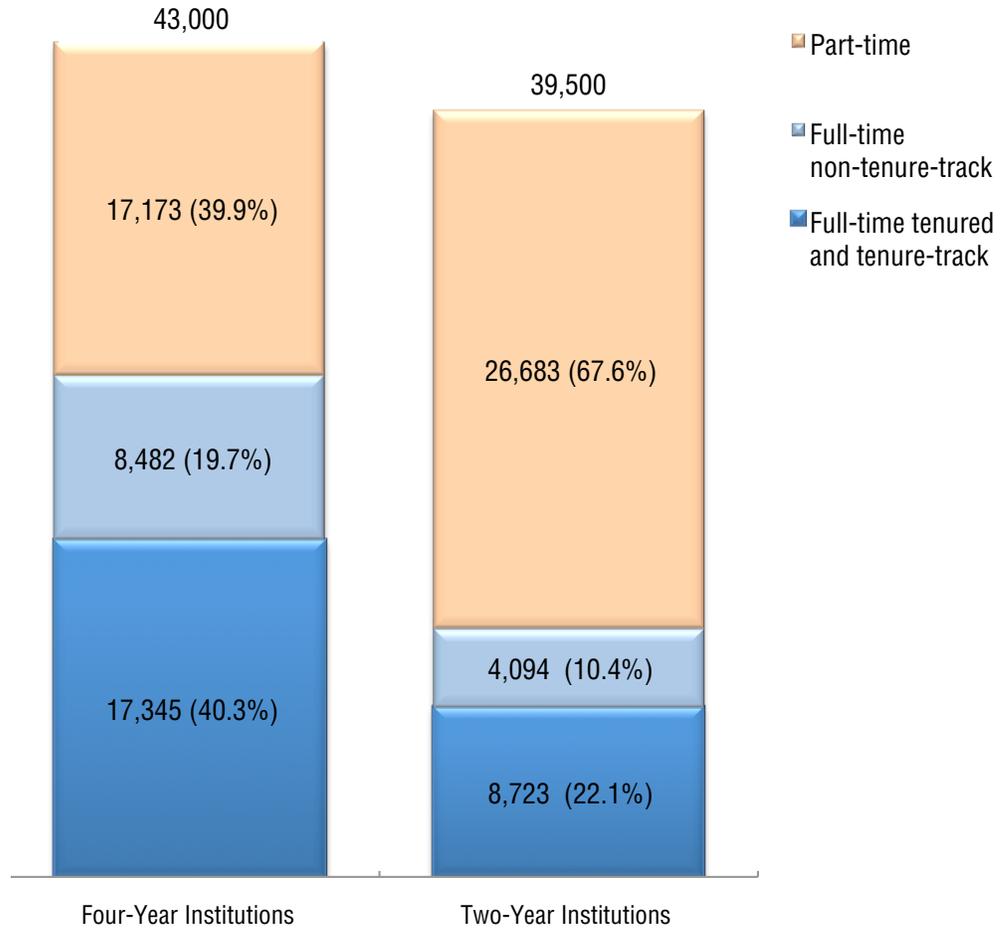
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Degree in English for a
New Century**

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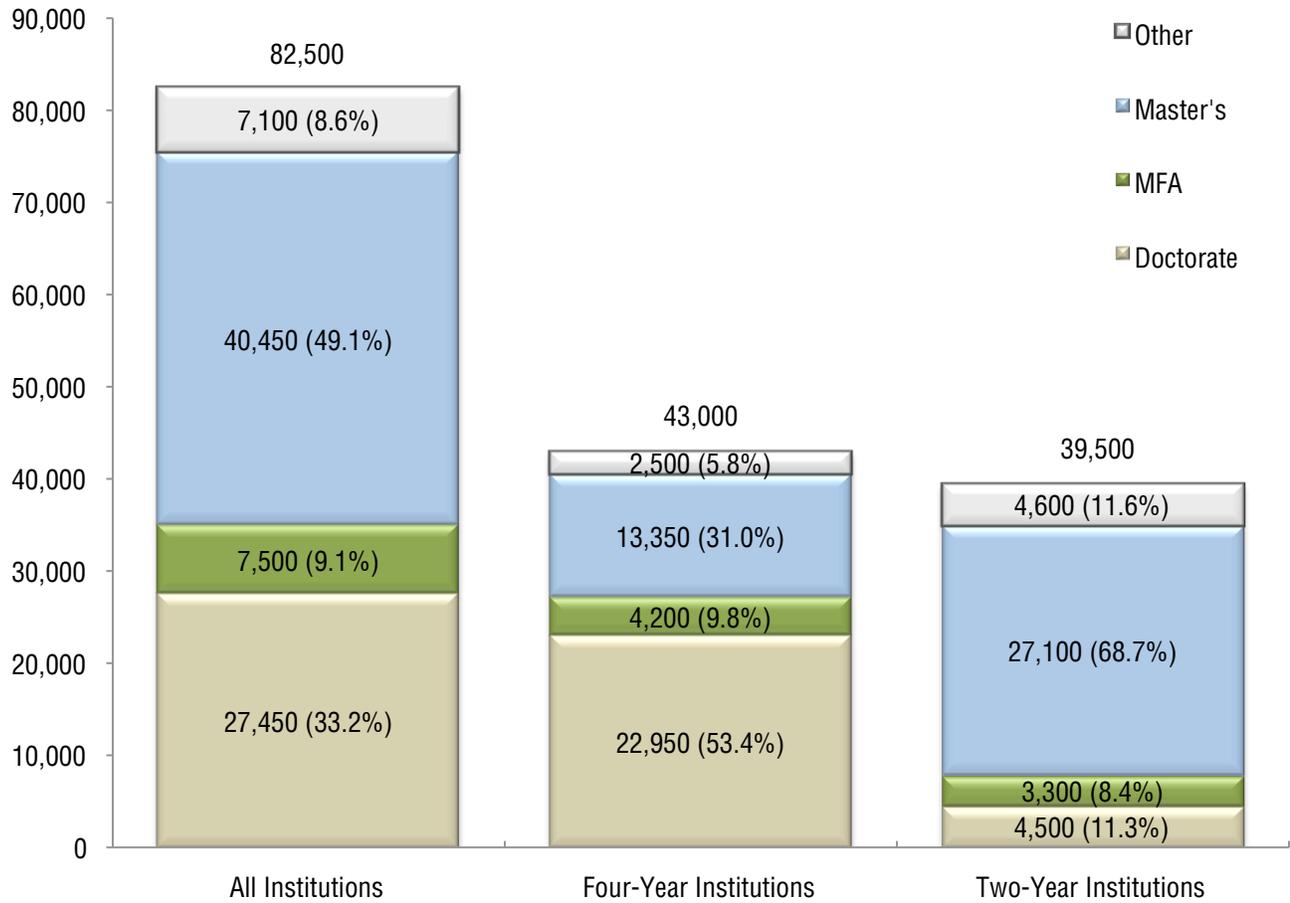
Fig. 1
 Estimated Distribution of Faculty Members in English, by Type of Institution, Tenure Status, and Full- or Part-Time Employment Status



Source: 2004 NSOPF

Note: The number at the top of each column shows the total number of faculty members represented in that column, as estimated on the basis of the NSOPF sample. The part-time category encompasses all faculty members holding part-time appointments, including the small number with tenured or tenure-track positions.

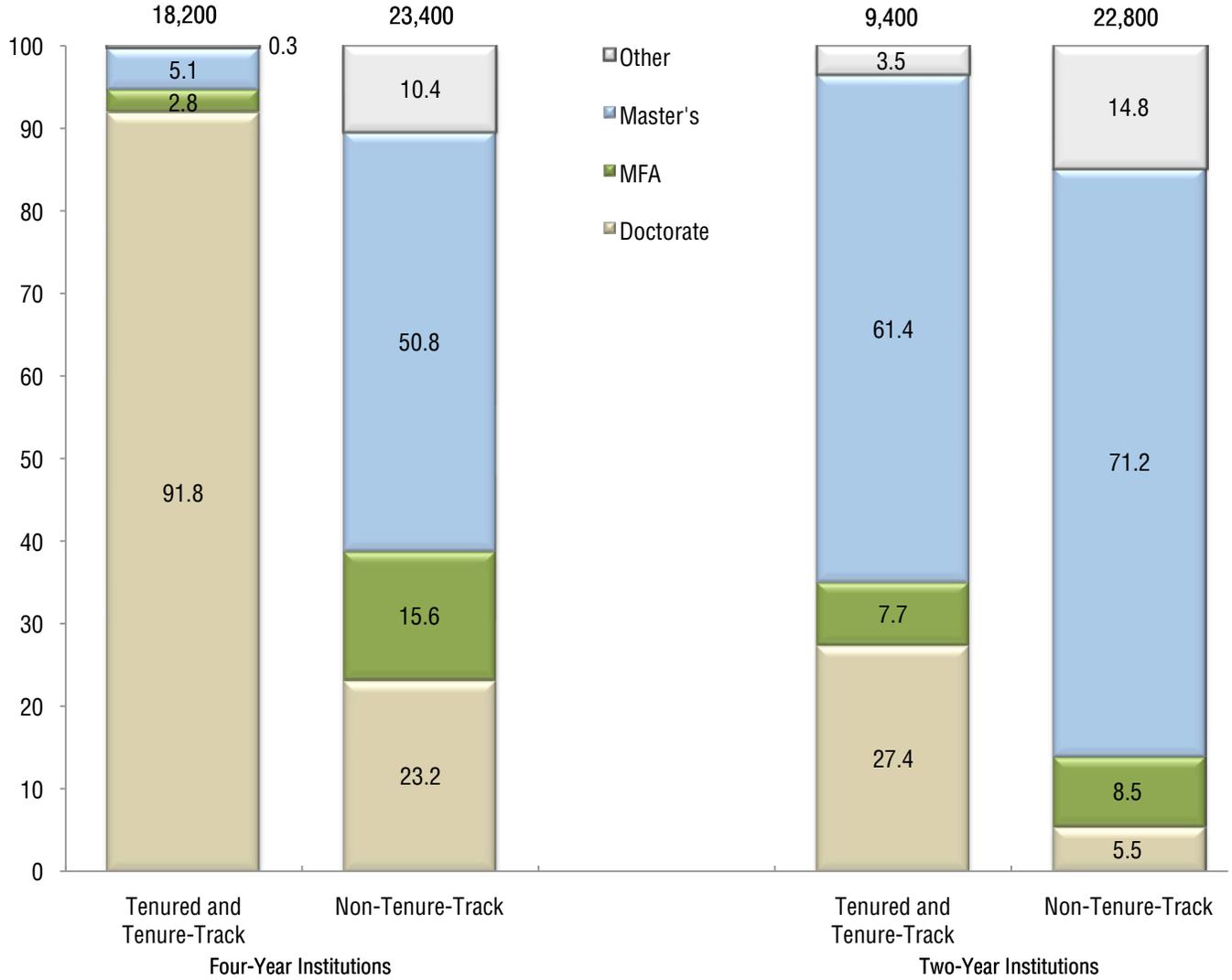
Fig. 2
Estimated Distribution of Faculty Members in English, by Highest Degree Faculty Members Hold and Type of Institution



Source: 2004 NSOPF

Note: The number at the top of each column shows the total number of faculty members represented in that column, as estimated on the basis of the NSOPF sample.

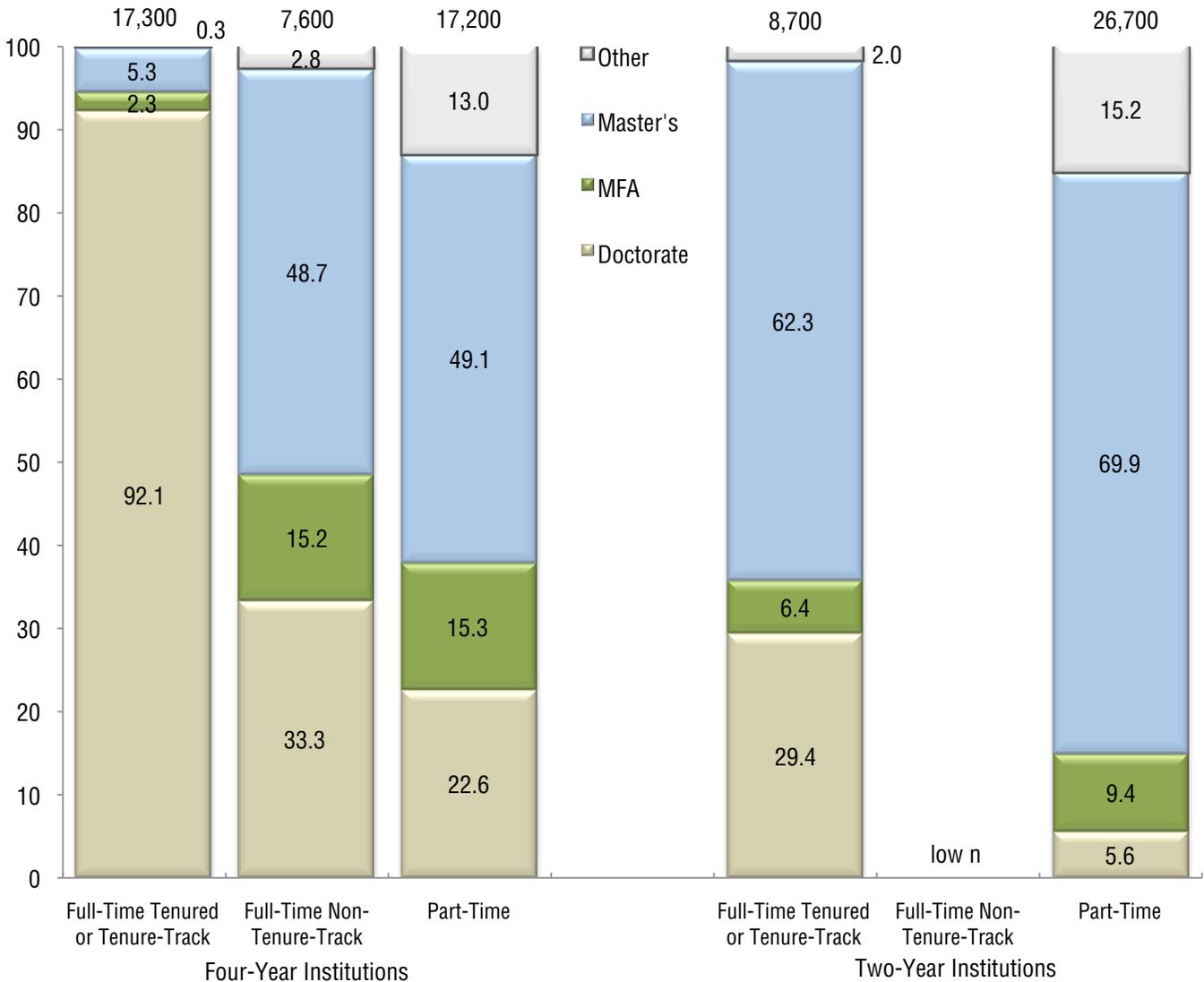
Fig. 3
 Percentage of Faculty Members in Four- and Two-Year Institutions, by Highest Degree Held and Tenure Status



Source: 2004 NSOPF

Note: The number of faculty members in each category (the basis for the percentages) is shown at the top of each column, as estimated on the basis of the NSOPF sample. The non-tenure-track category excludes faculty members teaching in institutions that do not have a tenure system.

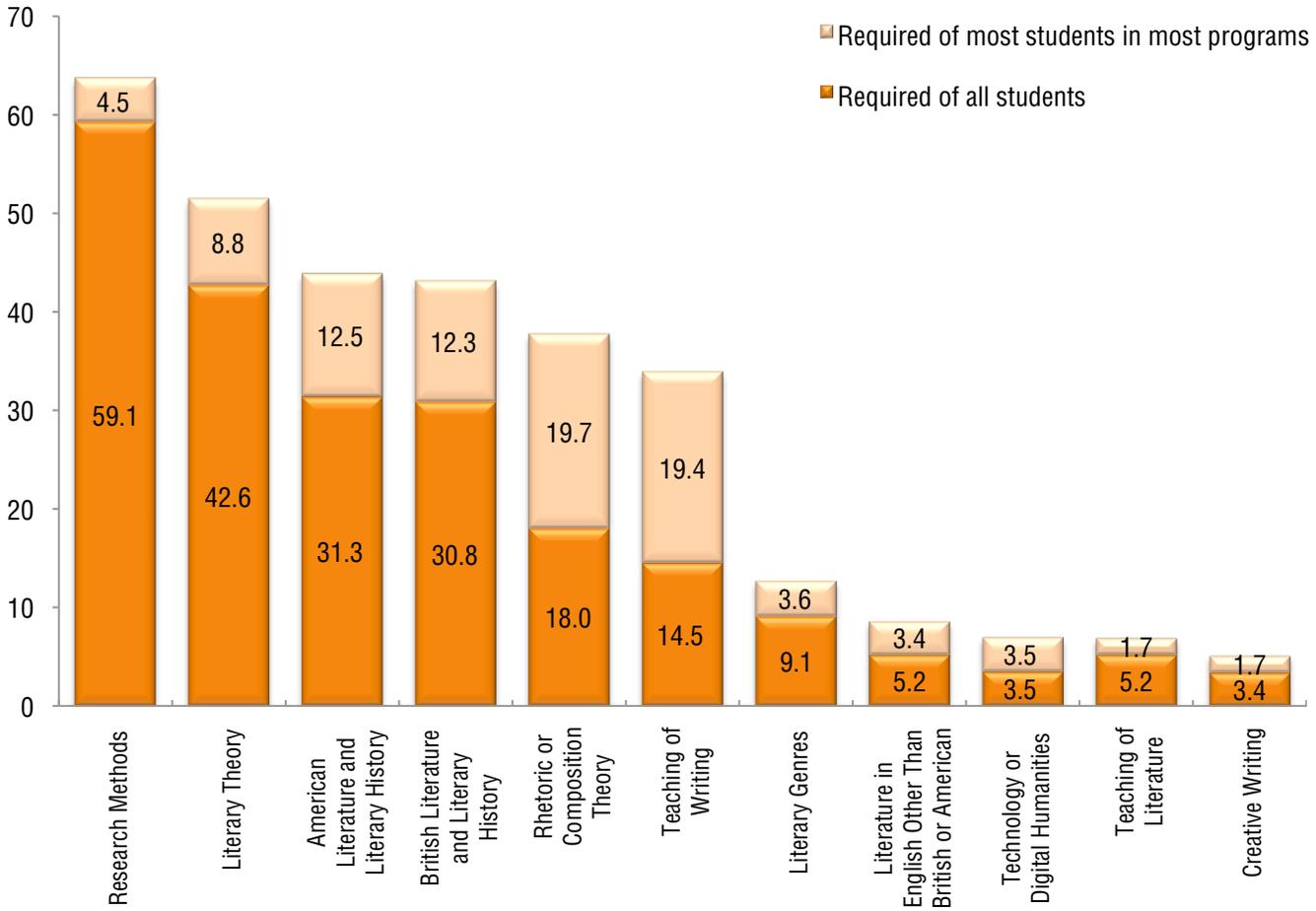
Fig. 4
 Percentage of Faculty Members in Four- and Two-Year Institutions, by Highest Degree Held, Type of Institution, Tenure Status, and Full- or Part-Time Employment Status



Source: 2004 NSOPF

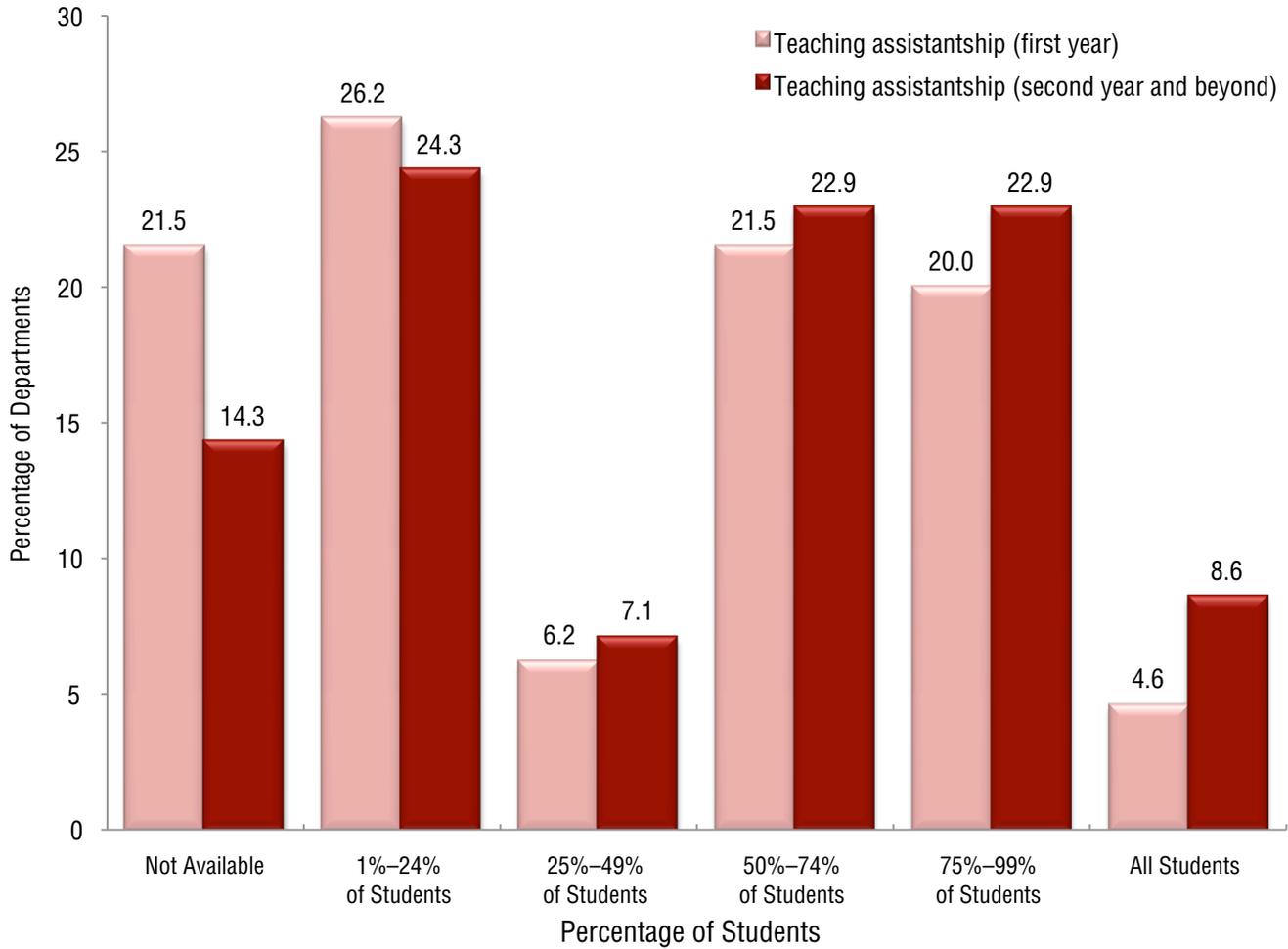
Note: The number of faculty members in each category (the basis for the percentages) is shown at the top of each column, as estimated on the basis of the NSOPF sample. The full-time non-tenure-track category excludes faculty members teaching in institutions that do not have a tenure system. The part-time category encompasses all faculty members holding part-time appointments, including the small number with tenured or tenure-track positions. The number of full-time non-tenure-track faculty members in two-year institutions is too small for the NSOPF to report.

Fig. 5
 Percentage of Departments Requiring Various Courses of All or Most Students Enrolled in Their Master’s Degree Programs



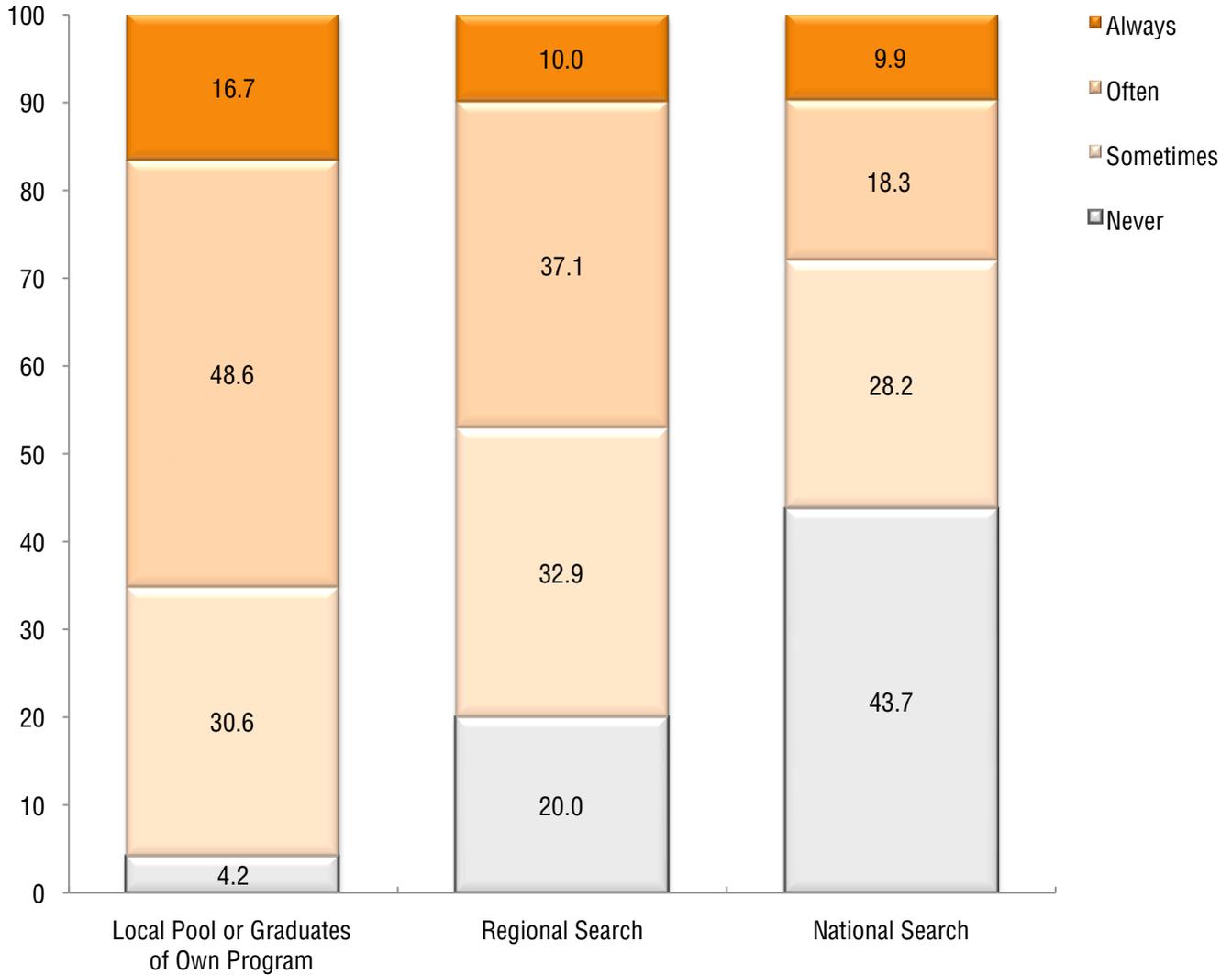
Source: 2009 ADE surveys of ADE-member departments that have master’s or doctoral degree programs

Fig. 6
Percentage of Departments That Make Teaching Assistantships Available to MA Students, by Year of Study and Percentage of Students



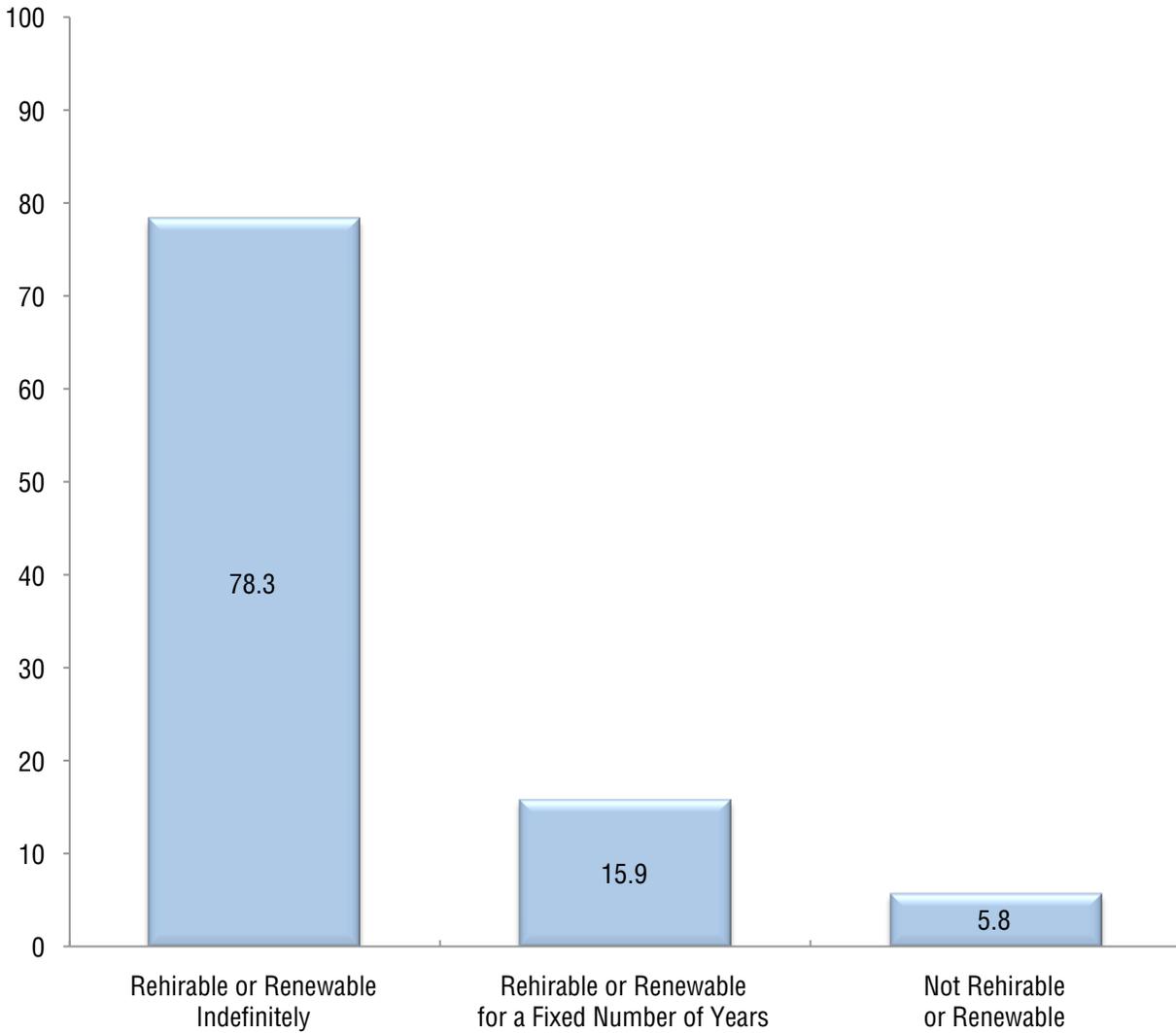
Source: 2009 ADE surveys of ADE-member departments that have master’s or doctoral degree programs

Fig. 7
 Percentage of Departments That Report Hiring Non-Tenure-Track Faculty Members from a Local Pool, a Regional Search, or a National Search



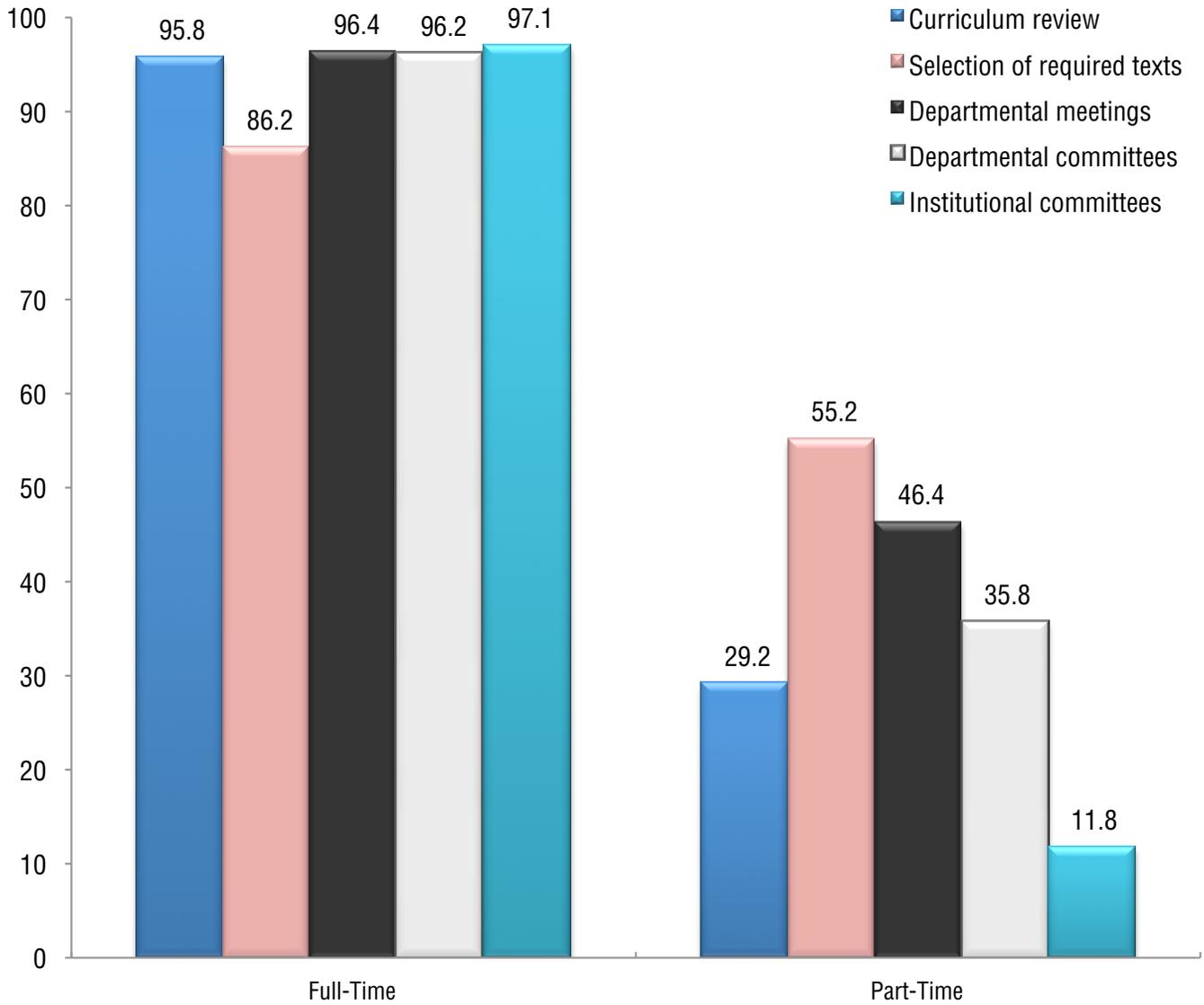
Source: 2009 ADE surveys of ADE-member departments that have master's or doctoral degree programs

Fig. 8
Rehiring and Contract Renewal Practices for Non-Tenure-Track MA-Holding
Faculty Members, by Percentage



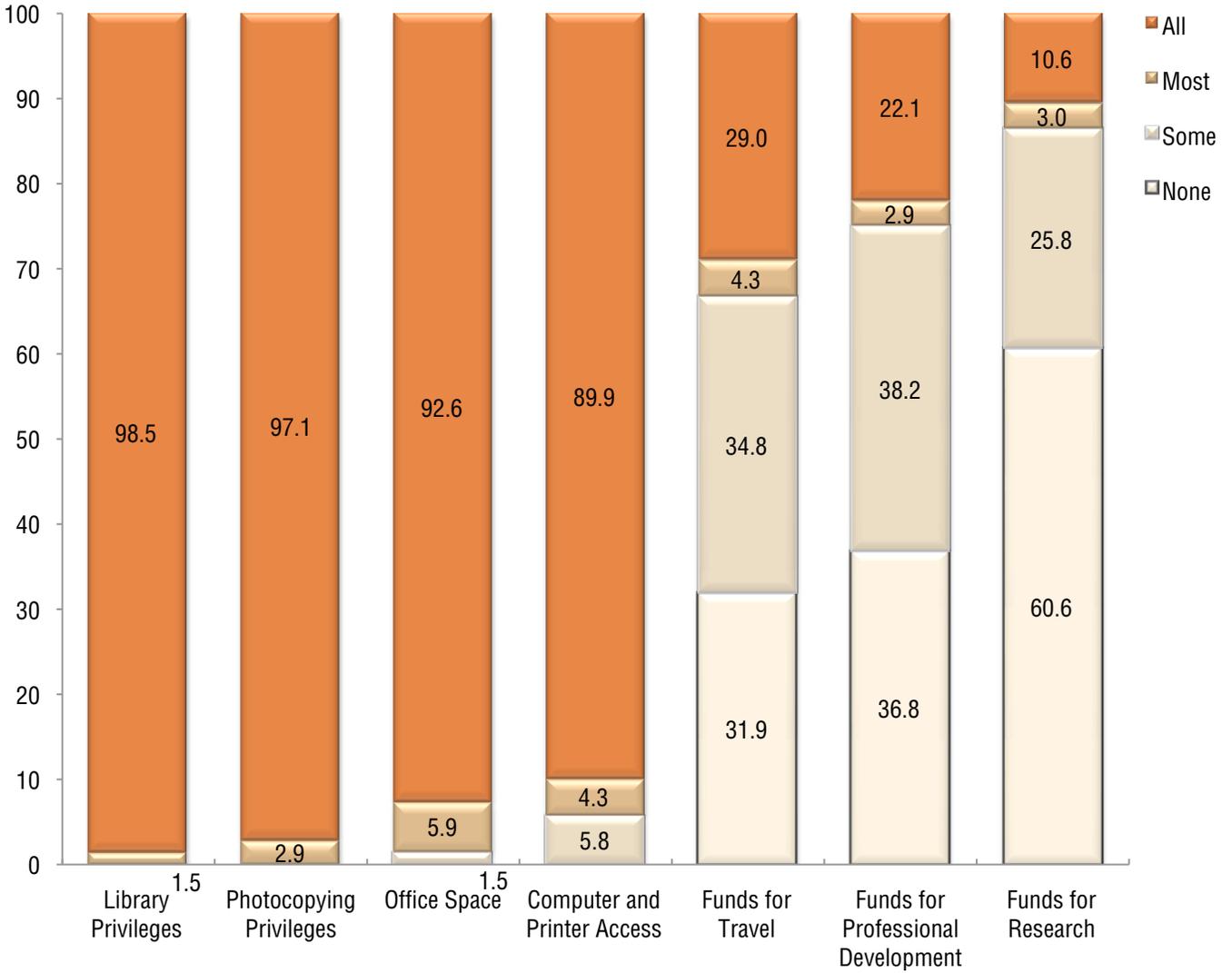
Source: 2009 ADE surveys of ADE-member departments that have master's or doctoral degree programs

Fig. 9
Percentage of Activities Open to Non-Tenure-Track MA-Holding Faculty Members, by Full- or Part-Time Employment Status



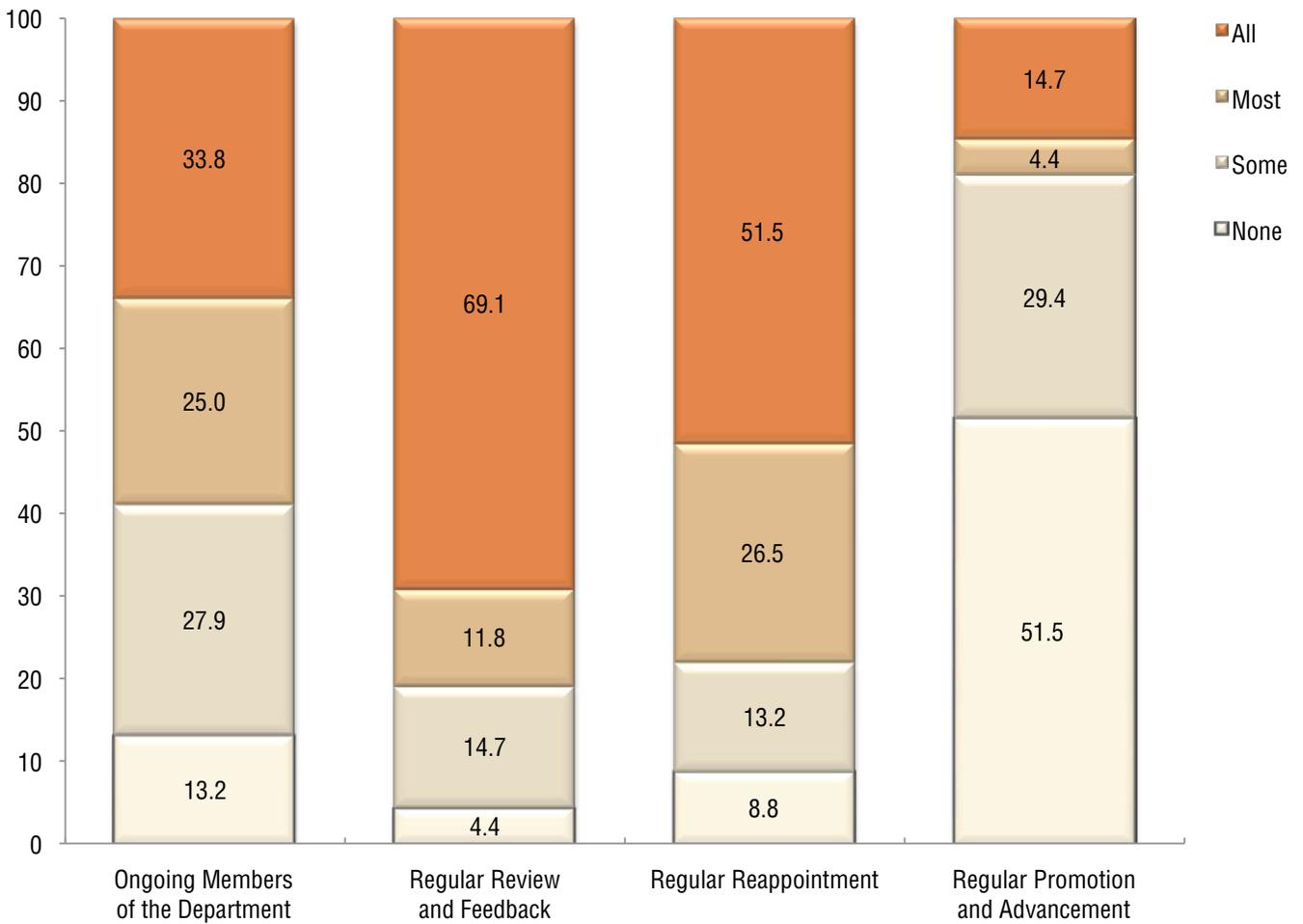
Source: 2009 ADE surveys of ADE-member departments that have master’s or doctoral degree programs

Fig. 10
Forms of Professional Support Available to Non-Tenure-Track MA-Holding Faculty Members, by Percentage



Source: 2009 ADE surveys of ADE-member departments that have master's or doctoral degree programs

Fig. 11
 Procedures for Review, Reappointment, and Advancement of Non-Tenure-Track MA-Holding Faculty Members,
 by Percentage



Source: 2009 ADE surveys of ADE-member departments that have master's or doctoral degree programs

Table 1
Occupation as of 1 October 2003 of Employed College Graduates Whose Highest Degree Is a Master's in English

Occupation	Weighted Count	Percentage
Postsecondary teachers, English	25,085	18.1
Artists, broadcasters, editors, entertainers, public relations specialists, writers	23,240	16.8
Secondary school teachers	18,866	13.6
Other management-related occupations	6,339	4.6
Elementary school teachers	4,690	3.4
Secretaries, receptionists, typists	3,796	2.7
Accountants, auditors, and other financial specialists	3,750	2.7
Postsecondary teachers, other non–science and engineering	3,693	2.7
Other marketing and sales occupations	3,398	2.5
Other teachers and instructors in noneducational institutions	3,364	2.4
Education administrators (e.g., registrar, dean, principal)	3,307	2.4
Other administrative (e.g., record clerks, telephone operators)	3,083	2.2
Personnel, training, and labor relations specialists	2,577	1.9
Secondary school teachers, computer, math, or sciences	2,440	1.8
Librarians, archivists, curators	1,961	1.4
Counselors, educational, vocational, mental health, and substance abuse	1,932	1.4
Special education teachers, primary and secondary	1,764	1.3
Sales occupations, commodities except retail	1,625	1.2
Insurance, securities, real estate and business services	1,601	1.2
Top-level managers, executives, administrators	1,545	1.1
Accounting clerks and bookkeepers	1,513	1.1
Clergy and other religious workers	1,282	0.9
Other precollegiate teachers	1,160	0.8
Other service occupations, except health	1,150	0.8
Postsecondary teachers, education	1,119	0.8
Sales occupations, retail	1,102	0.8
Other social scientists	909	0.7
Other midlevel managers	907	0.7
Lawyers, judges	753	0.5
Other computer information science occupations	691	0.5
Social workers	677	0.5
Postsecondary teachers, business commerce and marketing	672	0.5
Other occupations	662	0.5
Registered nurses, pharmacists, dieticians, therapists, physician assistants	649	0.5
Computer and information systems managers	537	0.4
Construction and extraction occupations	517	0.4
Computer programmers (business, scientific, process control)	513	0.4
Farmers, foresters, and fishermen	489	0.4
Historians	467	0.3
Network and computer systems administrators	460	0.3
Transportation / material moving occupations	401	0.3
Postsecondary teachers, art, drama, and music	384	0.3
Computer support specialists	375	0.3
Architects	363	0.3
Computer engineers, software	347	0.3
Biological scientists (e.g., botanists, ecologists, zoologists)	342	0.2

(continued)

Table 1
Occupation as of 1 October 2003 of Employed College Graduates Whose Highest Degree Is a Master's in English (cont.)

Occupation	Weighted Count	Percentage
Secondary school teachers, social sciences	298	0.2
Postsecondary teachers, health and related sciences	255	0.2
Computer system analysts	212	0.2
Postsecondary teachers, other social sciences	212	0.2
Medical scientists (excluding practitioners)	204	0.1
Health technologists and technicians (e.g., dental hygienist, health record tech)	183	0.1
Postsecondary teachers, foreign languages	158	0.1
Electrical, electronic, industrial, mechanical technicians	134	0.1
Psychologists, including clinical	127	0.1
Political scientists	120	0.1
Network systems and data communications analysts	95	0.1
Precision/production occupations	65	0.0
Postsecondary teachers, mathematics and statistics	53	0.0
Total	138,613	100

Source: 2003 NSCG

Table 2
Educational or Employment Placements of 2006–07 Graduates of Master's Degree Programs in English, as of Fall 2009, by Percentage

Employment Placement, by Sector	Highest Degree of Program		Total
	MA	PhD	
<i>Education</i>			
College or university teaching, four-year institution	11.9	11.4	11.6
College teaching, two-year institution	11.3	4.4	7.7
Continued employment in secondary or elementary school teaching	15.2	7.7	11.3
Secondary or elementary school teaching, entered for the first time	10.5	4.2	7.3
Education administration, postsecondary	1.6	1.8	1.7
Education administration, secondary or elementary	0.2	0.2	0.2
Education subtotal	50.7	29.7	39.8
<i>Business, government, or not-for-profit organizations</i>			
Educational or philanthropic foundation	1.0	2.2	1.6
Federal, state, or local government	1.0	1.1	1.0
Financial, accounting, real estate, or insurance services	1.0	0.4	0.7
Human resources, personnel, training, labor relations	1.6	0.2	0.8
Journalism, media, film	1.9	1.5	1.7
Library	0.4	0.9	0.7
Other for-profit business	3.9	2.7	3.3
Other not-for-profit organization	1.0	2.7	1.9
Publishing	3.9	2.2	3.0
Business, government, or not-for-profit organizations subtotal	15.7	13.9	14.7
Freelance or self-employed	0.6	1.5	1.0
Not employed, seeking employment	1.4	0.0	0.7
Not employed, not seeking employment (includes retired)	0.4	0.4	0.4
EMPLOYMENT PLACEMENT SUBTOTAL	68.8	45.5	56.6
Educational Placement, by Sector of Further Study			
<i>Doctoral study in language, literature, or cultural studies</i>			
Doctoral study in language, literature, or cultural studies (at another institution)	20.1	14.8	17.4
Doctoral study in language, literature, or cultural studies (in own department)	1.0	29.3	15.6
Doctoral study in language, literature, or cultural studies subtotal	21.1	44.1	33.0
<i>Other graduate or professional school</i>			
Other graduate study in the humanities or arts	4.1	3.1	3.6
Other graduate education or professional schooling	1.9	3.5	2.7
Law school	2.9	1.5	2.2
Graduate study in the social sciences	0.2	0.9	0.6
Graduate study in the sciences	0.2	0.7	0.5
Graduate study in library or museum science	0.4	0.5	0.5
Graduate study in journalism or media, including film	0.6	0.2	0.4
Other graduate or professional school subtotal	10.3	10.4	10.5
EDUCATIONAL PLACEMENT SUBTOTAL	31.4	54.5	43.5
Number of graduates with known placement (basis for percentages)	513	546	1,059

Source: MLA survey of placement of 2006–07 graduates, as of November 2009

Table 3
Degrees and Degree Specializations in Master's Degree–Granting English Departments

A. Percentage of Responses (Response Counts)								
	Composition, Rhetoric, Writing	Creative Writing	Linguistics	Literature	Media and Communications	ESL	Professional Writing	Degree Not Offered
AA (41)	2.4	0.0	0.0	9.8	0.0	0.0	0.0	90.2
BA or BS (70)	17.1	50.0	4.3	95.7	11.4	10.0	34.3	0.0
MA (77)	37.7	19.5	10.4	94.8	7.8	15.6	13.0	2.6
MFA (48)	4.2	47.9	0.0	2.1	0.0	0.0	2.1	52.1
MAT (42)	0.0	0.0	0.0	7.1	0.0	4.8	0.0	88.1
MEd (41)	0.0	0.0	0.0	9.8	0.0	4.9	0.0	85.4
PhD (54)	31.5	5.6	11.1	63.0	9.3	3.7	1.9	31.5
DA (38)	2.6	2.6	2.6	2.6	0.0	2.6	2.6	97.4
EdD (39)	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	100.0
Other (22)	18.2	4.5	0.0	9.1	9.1	4.5	13.6	63.6

B. Percentage of All 79 Respondents (Includes Skipped Categories)								
	Composition, Rhetoric, Writing	Creative Writing	Linguistics	Literature	Media and Communications	ESL	Professional Writing	Degree Not Offered
AA	1.3	0.0	0.0	5.1	0.0	0.0	0.0	46.8
BA or BS	15.2	44.3	3.8	84.8	10.1	8.9	30.4	0.0
MA	36.7	19.0	10.1	92.4	7.6	15.2	12.7	2.5
MFA	2.5	29.1	0.0	1.3	0.0	0.0	1.3	31.6
MAT	0.0	0.0	0.0	3.8	0.0	2.5	0.0	46.8
MEd	0.0	0.0	0.0	5.1	0.0	2.5	0.0	44.3
PhD	21.5	3.8	7.6	43.0	6.3	2.5	1.3	21.5
DA	1.3	1.3	1.3	1.3	0.0	1.3	1.3	46.8
EdD	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	49.4
Other	5.1	1.3	0.0	2.5	2.5	1.3	3.8	17.7

Source: 2009 ADE surveys of ADE-member departments that have master's or doctoral degree programs

Note: Response counts serve as the basis for percentages.

Table 4
Importance Placed on Various Goals for Master's Degree Programs by Master's- and Doctorate-Granting Departments, by Percentage

	Very Important	Important	Of Lesser Importance	Not Important	Not Applicable
Filling gaps in students' undergraduate preparation (78)	24.4	39.7	28.2	6.4	1.3
Developing new areas of student expertise (for example, in composition after undergraduate study in literature) (78)	24.4	50.0	16.7	3.8	5.1
Developing critical and theoretical knowledge in addition to knowledge of primary texts (78)	65.4	30.8	2.6	0.0	1.3
Expanding students' knowledge of composition studies (78)	12.8	39.7	28.2	7.7	11.5
Expanding students' knowledge of globalization (78)	9.0	33.3	46.2	7.7	3.8
Increasing students' skill and range as readers of literature (77)	72.7	20.8	2.6	2.6	1.3
Expanding students' knowledge of information technology as it relates to study and teaching of English (78)	14.1	26.9	42.3	12.8	3.8
Preparing students to qualify for admission to a doctoral program (own or elsewhere) (78)	44.9	39.7	11.5	2.6	1.3
Preparing students for secondary school teaching (77)	14.3	37.7	23.4	14.3	10.4
Providing in-service professional development for secondary school teachers (78)	9.0	23.1	32.1	17.9	17.9
Preparing students for postsecondary teaching in two-year institutions or lower-division courses (77)	19.5	42.9	27.3	5.2	5.2
Preparing students for writing or editing positions in business, government, or not-for-profit organizations (76)	11.8	39.5	39.5	3.9	5.3
Staffing composition courses in your university (78)	17.9	19.2	28.2	19.2	15.4
Attracting and retaining professorial-rank faculty members (78)	20.5	35.9	14.1	14.1	15.4
Maintaining respect for the department in the university (78)	26.9	38.5	14.1	14.1	6.4
Other (13)	15.4	0.0	0.0	7.7	76.9

Source: 2009 ADE surveys of ADE-member departments that have master's or doctoral degree programs

Note: Response counts are given in parentheses.

Table 5
Percentage of Departments Requiring or Not Requiring Specific Course Types

	Required of All Students	Required of Most Students in Most Programs	Required of Some Students in Some Programs	Not Required
American literature and literary history (64)	31.3	12.5	26.6	29.7
British literature and literary history (65)	30.8	12.3	24.6	32.3
Creative writing (58)	3.4	1.7	41.4	53.4
Literature in English other than British or American (58)	5.2	3.4	13.8	77.6
Literary genres (55)	9.1	3.6	9.1	78.2
Literary theory (68)	42.6	8.8	27.9	20.6
Research methods (66)	59.1	4.5	18.2	18.2
Rhetoric or composition theory (61)	18.0	19.7	36.1	26.2
Teaching of literature (58)	5.2	1.7	22.4	70.7
Teaching of writing (62)	14.5	19.4	24.2	41.9
Technology or digital humanities (57)	3.5	3.5	17.5	75.4
Other (22)	27.3	13.6	4.5	54.5

Source: 2009 ADE surveys of ADE-member departments that have master's or doctoral degree programs

Note: Response counts are given in parentheses.

Table 6
Requirements or Opportunities for Students in Master's Degree Programs to Develop Competencies in Languages Other Than English, by Percentage

	Foreign Language Competence Required
Percentage of responding departments (total = 64)	60.9
Literature	59.4
Rhetoric and composition	28.1
Creative writing	20.3
Business and technical writing	7.8
Other specializations	14.1

Source: 2009 ADE surveys of ADE-member departments that have master's or doctoral degree programs

Note: Response counts are given in parentheses.

Table 7
Culminating Exercise Required or Available as an Option for Master's-Degree Students, by Percentage

	Required of All Students in All Programs	Required of All Students in Some Programs	Option in Some Programs	Option in All Programs	Neither a Requirement Nor an Option
Thesis (69)	21.7	33.3	11.6	31.9	1.4
Capstone seminar (50)	8.0	8.0	2.0	0.0	82.0
Comprehensive examination (60)	31.7	13.3	10.0	10.0	35.0
Other (28)	39.3	7.1	14.3	10.7	28.6

Source: 2009 ADE surveys of ADE-member departments that have master's or doctoral degree programs

Note: Response counts are given in parentheses.

Table 8
Importance of Various Criteria for Hiring of Non-Tenure-Track Faculty Members, by Percentage

	Unimportant	Somewhat Important	Very Important	Critical
Highest degree held is the PhD (74)	17.6	40.5	25.7	16.2
Highest degree held is the MA (68)	10.3	8.8	16.2	64.7
Teaching experience (69)	0.0	8.0	38.7	53.3
Courses completed (75)	14.5	34.8	36.2	14.5
Reputation of the degree-granting institution (74)	5.4	63.5	23.0	8.1
Participation in conferences (73)	54.8	32.9	8.2	4.1
Publications (75)	45.3	38.7	12.0	4.0
Other (21)	33.3	4.8	23.8	38.1

Source: 2009 ADE surveys of ADE-member departments that have master's or doctoral programs

Note: Response counts are given in parentheses.

Table 9
Course Sections Offered in Fall 2008 That Were Taught by Non-Tenure-Track MA-Holding Faculty Members

	Response Average	Number of Sections	Number of Departments with No Such Sections	Number of Departments
Lower-division writing	29.2%	1,723	5	59
Upper-division writing	6.3%	309	17	49
Lower-division literature and culture	7.0%	373	10	53
Upper-division literature and culture	2.5%	117	21	46
Graduate	0.5%	21	34	43
Other	1.9%	47	16	25
Total		2,590		

Source: 2009 ADE surveys of ADE-member departments that have master's or doctoral degree programs

Note: Departments reporting zero sections are included but those reporting no answer are excluded from this table.