

A Guide to MLA Policies and Recommendations

This document is an annotated compilation of guidelines, policies, and reports from the MLA, the Association of Departments of English (ADE), and the Association of Departments of Foreign Languages (ADFL; now the Association of Language Departments [ALD]). Organized by subject, the guide aims to provide a downloadable overview of the association's positions on key issues that shape our work. To view the full text of the resources here, visit the MLA's [Reports and Professional Guidelines](#) page as well as the [MLA Academic Programs Services \(ADE and ALD\) website](#).

Contents

1. Curriculum
2. Enrollments and Majors
3. Teaching and Learning Conditions
4. Diversity, Inclusion, Equity, and Equality
5. Hiring, Tenure, and Employment
6. Governance and Academic Freedom
7. Graduate Students and Programs
8. Humanities and Public Policy

1. Curriculum

[MLA Report to the Teagle Foundation on the Undergraduate Major in Language and Literature](#)

This report, drafted because of the Teagle Foundation’s “invitation to disciplinary associations to think about ‘the relationship between the goals and objectives of undergraduate concentrations in their disciplines and those of a liberal education,’” establishes the purposes and objectives of the study of languages and literature and a flexible model for curricular structure and courses of study within majors at the undergraduate and graduate levels. Additionally, appendixes provide data on programs and degrees granted, graduates, and career paths for graduates.

[Anti-Racist Resources for Your 2020–21 Teaching](#)

This site collects resources for the development of anti-racist and anti–white supremacist curricula, reflecting MLA support for those aims.

[Foreign Languages and Higher Education: New Structures for a Changed World \(Report of the MLA Ad Hoc Committee on Foreign Languages\)](#)

This report offers a series of recommendations for strengthening the demand for language competence within the university, as well as proposals for collaboration and governance of governance of language programs.

[Bringing Your Course Online](#)

This site presents resources compiled by the MLA beginning in March 2020 with the intention of maintaining pedagogical standards and avoiding harm to already-disadvantaged students. These emergency measures are broadly applicable to online teaching and may be useful in conjunction with the next two resources in this section.

[Suggested Best Practices and Resources for the Implementation of Hybrid and Online Language Courses](#)

This ADFL document addresses the implementation of hybrid and online courses, specifically in languages, the realities of developing and teaching online and hybrid courses, and the resources

needed for success. Although specific to language programs, the definitions, points of interest, and necessary resources are of general applicability.

[Special Considerations for Language and Literature: The AAUP Statement on Distance Education](#)

Although written in 2001, the AAUP statement and the MLA's endorsement of that statement make recommendations that are still relevant.

2. Enrollments and Majors

[Strategies for Recruiting New Majors in English and World Languages](#)

The list of strategies developed and transcribed by the facilitators of an ADE-ADFL seminar suggests practices to address the declining number of majors in language and literature programs.

[Enrollments in Languages Other Than English in United States Institutions of Higher Education](#)

This page provides links to the MLA's reports on language enrollments. The most recent reports (for 2016 enrollments) include a comprehensive analysis of challenges facing language departments, as well as case studies of successful departments on which positive change can be modeled.

[Data on Second Majors in Language and Literature](#)

This analysis of the United States Department of Education's Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System shows increases in language departments' presence as second majors during the period 2001–13.

3. Teaching and Learning Conditions

ADE Guidelines for Class Size and Workload

This policy statement makes a series of recommendations: Standard writing courses should be capped at 15–20 students; developmental writing courses should be capped at 15 students. No more than 60 students should be taught by a single writing instructor during one term. Literature courses should be capped at 30–35 students; writing-intensive literature courses should be capped at 20–25 students. Qualified teaching assistants should be assigned to literature courses larger than the 30–35 cap in appropriate increments.

College English instructors should teach no more than 12 credits per term. This should be regarded as an upper limit: colleges and universities should be aware that teaching as many as four separate courses per term prevents instructor research and compromises professional development. Instructional loads beyond 12 credits also interfere with student learning by reducing the instructor’s ability to engage with students at length and provide adequate feedback. Course loads should be reduced to compensate for administrative duties. Part-time or temporary appointments should be avoided.

ADFL General Guidelines for Departments

This ADFL report offers several recommendations: Foreign language courses should be capped at 20 students. Lower-division courses that focus on developing students’ linguistic proficiency should be capped at 18 students. Online, hybrid, and HyFlex classes should be capped at 15 students. College language instructors should teach no more than 12 credits per term; their teaching loads should be lowered to account for administrative and service obligations and research expectations. As tenured faculty members retire, they should be replaced by tenure-track faculty members.

Statement of Professional Ethics

This is one of the MLA’s core documents about professional ethics in teaching, mentoring, and research.

4. Diversity, Inclusion, Equity, and Equality

[Guidelines for Search Committees and Job Seekers on Entry-Level Faculty Recruitment and Hiring as well as Postdoctoral Applications](#)

The MLA Committee on Academic Freedom and Professional Rights and Responsibilities makes recommendations that include transparent and timely communication between candidates and departments; equitable and merit-based consideration of candidates; systematic measures taken to insure fully inclusive applicant pool; and institutional support for outreach and recruitment.

[Report of the Task Force against Campus Bigotry](#)

This report calls on all institutions to maintain a systematic and continuous stance of vigilance against acts of bigotry; to sustain an environment that is safe, inclusive, and supportive of the free and open exchange of ideas; to apply the values that the MLA holds in scholarship to the discussion of controverted issues in the classroom and in other venues; to sustain an environment of respect and courtesy for all members of the community; and to uphold the rights and privileges of all members of the community. It also asks departments of English and other languages to provide training programs for graduate teaching assistants, faculty members, and staff members that address issues of bigotry, insensitivity, respect, and courtesy in the classroom in connection with other training programs on the campus.

[Final Report: MLA Ad Hoc Committee on Diversity and Tolerance](#)

This report offers three case studies in continuation of the work of the Task Force against Campus Bigotry, in keeping with its charge of gathering and disseminating information about successful strategies and programs.

[Statement on Native American Languages in the College and University Curriculum](#)

This statement urges colleges and universities to support and implement the policies that are advocated in the Native American Languages Act of 1990 by working with Native American language communities and educational and governing bodies in, at a minimum, granting credit for language study, teaching Native languages where possible, and creating materials to support the teaching of Native languages.

Statement on Indigenous Languages of the World in the College and University Curriculum

This statement recommends that institutions offer heritage language credit for Indigenous languages.

Guidelines for Good Practice by the Committee on the Literatures of People of Color in the United States and Canada

For the recruitment, mentoring, and evaluation of faculty members of color, the committee recommends the following: the reexamination of definitions of positions in traditional fields; methodological and curricular changes; full and deliberate procedural protections for faculty members of color in evaluation and promotion; awareness of the possible effects of race, gender, and sexuality bias on teaching evaluations; and equitable teaching rotations that reflect diverse specializations, among others.

Standing Still: The Associate Professor Survey (Report of the Committee on the Status of Women in the Profession)

This report identifies and quantifies ongoing disparities between men and women in time to promotion, professional activities, family obligations, and job satisfaction. It offers the following recommendations to reduce these disparities: clear guidelines for promotion from the rank of associate professor to professor that align with their institutional mission and a more expansive conception of scholarship, research, and publication that includes new media and public scholarship; mentoring programs, training, and professional development to support newly tenured faculty members and long-term planning for promotion; and review of existing practices, including the allocation of nonteaching responsibilities, salary increases, and resources to support research.

5. Hiring, Tenure, and Employment

[Addressing the Broad Impacts of Contingent Labor in the Profession](#)

This document lists and discusses hardships for contingent academic labor that began before the start of the pandemic and that remain in effect today. It proposes that contingent faculty members need much greater than current levels of support from their institutions to achieve a livable situation. It recommends that institutions create a path to tenure or stability of employment; enable greater participation in unions; increase information about contracts, review, and upcoming renewals; assure participation in university governance; offer mental health services to contingent faculty members; and increase access and inclusion.

[Guidelines for Search Committees and Job Seekers on Entry-Level Faculty Recruitment and Hiring as well as Postdoctoral Applications](#)

The MLA Committee on Academic Freedom and Professional Rights and Responsibilities offers recommendations for the hiring process, covering advertising and initial screening, preparing applications, screening for interviews, interviewing on campus, and negotiating an offer. It also sets out some general principles for the hiring process.

[Recommended Guidelines for Interviews for Academic Positions](#)

This detailed list of dos and don'ts for both interviewers and candidates in the job interview process covers clarity in job listings, expectations for application materials, remote and on-campus interviews, and negotiating job offers, among many other suggestions.

[MLA Guidelines on Letters of Recommendation](#)

This document presents a detailed list of recommendations for job applicants, faculty members, hiring committees, department chairs, directors of graduate studies, and administrators of applicant tracking systems.

[MLA Recommendation on Minimum Per-Course Compensation for Part-Time Faculty Members](#)

The MLA recommends that part-time faculty members should be compensated pro rata to salaries for full-time faculty members performing similar duties and that, if benefits are not available to the instructor, an equivalent add-on premium or stipend should be added to the base salary to compensate for lack of benefits.

MLA Recommendation on a Minimum Salary for Full-Time Entry-Level Faculty Members

The MLA recommends that the minimum salary for full-time appointments at the entry level should be at least \$69,000 for those at the rank of instructor and at least \$77,000 for those at the rank of beginning assistant professor. (Note that these recommended salaries were calculated for 2022.) Health-care benefits and shared contributions to a portable retirement plan should also be provided.

Statement on Non-Tenure-Track Faculty Members

The MLA recommends that non-tenure-track (NTT) faculty members be hired on three-year contracts with full benefits and that after six years they should be eligible for longer-term review and given longer (five- or six-year) contracts and be allowed to participate in departmental governance regarding NTT lines. This statement also recommends that NTT faculty members be incorporated into the life of the department; be fully informed of their terms of employment and fully aware of review processes; be provided with orientation, mentoring, and professional support and development opportunities; and be reviewed annually regarding salary levels and opportunities for promotion. Internal postdoctoral positions should not exceed a term of two years.

ADE Statement on the Use of Contingent Faculty Members (Also Endorsed by the ADFL)

This statement recommends that contingent faculty members be compensated fairly and equitably; receive prorated salaries and basic benefits; be hired, reviewed, and given teaching assignments according to processes comparable to those established for the tenured or tenure-track faculty members; and be given office space, training, and opportunities for promotion. Long-standing, successful members of the contingent faculty should be offered multiyear contracts.

Worst Practices: How to Avoid Exploiting Contingent Faculty

The MLA's Committee on Contingent Labor in the Profession created a document that focuses attention directly on the material working conditions of faculty members who work off the tenure track and identifies five categories of exploitative practices against contingent faculty members that harm faculty members, students, and institutions: inequality in hiring and promotion; income; benefits; pedagogy; and infrastructure. The document urges members in all positions to guard against these practices.

Professional Employment Practices for Non-Tenure-Track Faculty Members: Recommendations and Evaluative Questions

This document sets guidelines for non-tenure-track (NTT) faculty members: hiring NTT faculty members by means of long-term planning whenever possible, incorporating them into the life of the department, considering them for all tenure-track positions, and fully informing them of the conditions of their employment, including the continuation of contracts. Guidelines cover five areas of NTT working life. It endorses and extends the work of the MLA's Academic Workforce Advocacy Kit, the recommendations made in the MLA's 2003 Statement on Non-Tenure-Track Faculty Members, and the 2008 report *Education in the Balance*.

Data from the MLA Survey of Departmental Staffing

This file tabulates the results of a survey of chairs of English and language departments on their instructors, the type and number of courses offered, and course staffing in the fall 2014 term.

Education in the Balance: A Report on the Academic Workforce in English

This comprehensive report of the 2007 ADE Ad Hoc Committee on Staffing assesses the composition of instructional staff in departments of English and recommends policy development in relation to staffing changes and a new staffing survey to be conducted at least every ten years.

Report on Evaluating Scholarship for Tenure and Promotion

Written by the MLA Task Force on Evaluating Scholarship for Tenure and Promotion, this report notes that quantity requirements for tenure appear to be increasing even as resources for publication are being reduced and concludes with a list of twenty recommendations for departments and institutions.

Evaluating Translations as Scholarship: Guidelines for Peer Review

This document is intended to help departments and institutions develop appropriate procedures for evaluating translations in personnel decisions related to hiring, retention, merit awards, promotion, and tenure, at a time when translation remains an indispensable component of intellectual exchange and development and a labor-intensive task requiring a high level of professional skill.

[MLA Statement on the Use of Part-Time and Full-Time Adjunct Faculty Members](#)

This statement finds that “expansion of the adjunct ranks in language and literature departments over the past two decades threatens the integrity of the profession and instructional programs.” It states that the norm in a department should be full-time tenure-track employment, that each department should adopt and adhere to an appropriate limit on the use of adjunct labor, and that adjunct faculty members should be treated as professional staff, and it itemizes some minimal conditions (e.g., being reviewed through “processes comparable to those established for the tenured or tenure-track faculty members” and receiving equitable salaries and benefits).

[Guidelines for Evaluating Work in Digital Humanities and Digital Media](#)

The Committee on Information Technology offers a recommendations for candidates as well as for members of appointment, reappointment, promotion, and tenure committees so that faculty members who create, study, and teach with digital objects; engage in collaborative work; or use technology for pedagogy can be adequately and fairly evaluated and rewarded.

[Job List reports](#)

These reports cover the years 2012–13 through 2019–20 and include data on tenure status of advertised positions

6. Governance and Academic Freedom

[CAFPRR Statement on Resource Allocation and Academic Freedom](#)

The Committee on Academic Freedom and Professional Rights and Responsibilities recommends that college and university administrations acknowledge that academic freedom protections cover the financial management of the academic processes of teaching and research. It asks that administrations work with faculty senates and faculty members to ensure that financial data are available to faculty members and to develop the financial competence that will allow faculty members to participate in the financial decisions that affect their academic units and shape patterns of research funding across disciplines.

[Tool Kit on Academic Freedom](#)

This document introduces key concepts regarding academic freedom organized as answers to a series of questions: What is it? Why does it matter? And what to do to protect it? It describes the links between academic freedom and tenure and discusses how academic freedom seeks to ensure professional autonomy by promising members of disciplinary and interdisciplinary communities' freedom to determine the parameters of inquiry, research, and teaching. In addition, it states that if teachers can be threatened with loss of employment because their research or teaching does not conform to private funding interests or because they publish or teach unpopular ideas, inquiry is not free.

[ADE/ADFL Recommendations for the Use of External Reviewers for Tenure and Promotion](#)

These guidelines for external reviews are offered in the context of the general threat to tenure in higher education, the shrinking of the percentage of tenure-line faculty members in the professoriat of the United States, and the persistent instances of controversial tenure decisions that reflect conditions of inequity within the academy.

[Statement on Campus Reopenings and Challenges to Academic Freedom, Tenure, and Shared Governance](#)

The MLA's Committee on Academic Freedom and Professional Rights and Responsibilities drafted this statement as a follow-up to the MLA's "Statement on Administrative Overreach, Shared Governance, and Faculty Rights in the Time of COVID-19," which addressed emergency measures developed in response to the global crisis. This report reaffirms the MLA's commitment to faculty rights, shared governance, and academic freedom and addresses the measures kept in place during the returns to campus under the guise of a "new normal."

7. Graduate Students and Programs

[Doctoral Student Career Planning: A Guide for PhD Programs and Faculty Members in English and Other Modern Languages](#)

Faculty members should support graduate students as they consider a diverse set of careers, and departments should consider these broad outcomes in graduate student training. Faculty

members should also advocate for correct levels of funding for their graduate students and related research programs. These materials offer a set of guidelines and suggestions on the topic of graduate student instruction.

Report of the Task Force on Doctoral Study in Modern Language and Literature

This report responds to what it describes as an unsustainable reality that combines a median time to degree of around nine years for language and literature doctoral recipients with a long-term academic job market that provides tenure-track employment for only around sixty percent of doctorate recipients. It makes ten recommendations, including redesigning the doctoral program, reimagining the dissertation, strengthening teaching preparation, redefining faculty advising, and diversifying career outcomes.

Report of the MLA Task Force on Ethical Conduct in Graduate Education

This report was developed to confront long-standing, ethically questionable practices in graduate education and makes a series of recommendations toward “student-centered graduate education informed by an ethics of care.” This report has been a cornerstone of ongoing Delegate Assembly Open Discussions and is a follow up to the 2014 *Report of the Task Force on Doctoral Study in Modern Language and Literature*.

Improving Institutional Circumstances for Graduate Students in Languages and Literatures: Recommendations for Best Practices and Evaluative Questions

This report was developed by the Committee on the Status of Graduate Students in the Profession and includes recommendations about financial support, graduate teaching expectations and policies, and support for all graduate students, specifically but not limited to graduate students of color, women and gender-nonconforming graduate students, LGBTQ+ graduate students, graduate students with disabilities, first-generation college graduates attending graduate school, and other groups traditionally underrepresented in graduate programs in languages and literature.

8. Humanities and Public Policy

[Guidelines for Evaluating Publicly Engaged Humanities Scholarship in Language and Literature Programs](#)

These guidelines seek to help departments, institutions, and faculty members in languages and literatures value and assess public humanities work. Created by the MLA Ad Hoc Committee on Valuing the Public Humanities, the document articulates core principles for the evaluation of public humanities scholarship, provides guiding questions for evaluators to consider, and offers advice for departments, university committees, administrators, and candidates for evaluation.