

Dr. Frauke Reitemeier

## **MA ELLC: A Brief Explanation of Exam Types**

*last updated Feb 2022*

Please note that this is merely an outline of different exam types intended to provide you with an overview. For an authoritative guide to any specific module's and course instructor's requirements and expectations, please consult the information material provided by your course instructor. You can find binding information on the examination in a specific course on the syllabus or in a separate file such as an introductory session's PowerPoint presentation. This material is made available on Stud.IP in the first week of class. Check your course's "Files" section!

These are the most common types of exam you will encounter in the Master's programme English: Language, Literatures and Cultures.

### **1. Portfolio**

In general, a portfolio is a collection of different task and assignments, which you complete over the course of the term and which you collectively submit at the end of the semester (in one file). In our programme, portfolios come at varying lengths and will be either graded or ungraded – it depends on the module you are taking.

Take the example of the foundations module in Anglophone Literature, M.EP.01c: Anglophone Literature and Culture: Theoretical Foundations. For this module's compulsory course "Literary and Cultural Theory in Use," you hand in an exposé and an outline of your research project before you write a short term paper. You will receive feedback on the exposé and the outline and get a chance to revise your drafts before you hand in the exposé, the outline, and the term paper as your final submission, the portfolio.

Another example is module M.EP.Ac101: (Intercultural) Academic Skills. The final exam of this module, which asks you to attend workshops and consultations with your academic advisors, consists of five different assignments you can work on throughout the course of your studies: 1) an outline of a term paper on a topic of your choice; 2) a commented bibliography on the topic you have chosen for your paper outline; 3) a close reading of a text passage of your choice; 4) a commented library reserve shelf for a course; 5) a 5-minute PowerPoint presentation on a topic of your choice. When you have attended all compulsory workshops and consultations and have completed these five different assignments amounting to 3500 words, you hand in your responses to these assignments as your portfolio.

The portfolio is also one of two exams in the foundations module M.EP.01a. We will describe the graded oral or written exam you have to take in this module below. The ungraded portfolio in this module concludes the so-called Independent Study element of M.EP.01a. Independent Study means that you work independently on a research project that is closely connected to the topic of the lecture you attend for this module. Specifically, you will conduct substantial research, consulting a good number of critical

sources, on topics of your own choice that link to and further the topic of the lecture before presenting your chosen topics to your instructor during their office hour. For your portfolio, you will hand in altogether handouts; each of these should give a short summary of your findings on one page or less and present a research bibliography that gives at least five sources. Together, these handouts count as your final portfolio for the Independent Study-part of module M.EP.01a. Please consult the instructor of the lecture for further information.

## **2. Written exam / end-of-term test**

This format, designed to test your knowledge on a course topic, should be very familiar to you and requires little explanation. You may encounter it in modules offered in Practical English Language as well as in foundational modules that contain a lecture course, for example in M.EP.01a – here it functions as an alternative to the oral exam – , M.EP.02b and M.EP.02c (Medieval Studies). While end-of-term tests are usually written at the end of the semester in the lecture halls and classrooms where the courses took place, the move to distance teaching and learning has forced many instructors to adapt this exam type to an online-friendly format, such as the open-book-exam. An open-book-exam allows you to take a look at your notes while working on the exam questions, which may take the form of essay questions, yet the time given to complete the exam – usually 90 minutes – remains unchanged.

## **3. Oral exam**

Oral exams come in different modules; for example, they may be part of M.EP.031-N and M.EP.032-N, depending on the course suggestions you have been given after the Diagnostic Test. The oral exam is also an option to conclude module M.EP.01a and the completion modules. While the oral exams of the completion modules at the end of your studies are usually 30 minutes in duration, you should talk about your course instructor's specific expectations and requirements, as these differ from division to division. In Anglophone Literature (M.EP.06a), for example, the oral exam is a defense of your thesis project, whereas in North American Studies (M.EP.06b), the oral exam can either be on a course topic or a presentation of your work-in-progress.

M.EP.01a consists of two components, a lecture course you will attend and complete with a graded oral exam (or written exam, for which see above), and an ungraded portfolio that documents your work for the Independent Study requirements of this module. For an explanation of the portfolio for Independent Study, go back to the explanation of the exam type "portfolio." In the oral exam for M.EP.01a, you will be tested on your knowledge of the content of the lecture. During the 20 minutes, you respond to your instructor's questions on the texts discussed and information provided in the lecture. In preparation for the exam, you can give your instructor three lecture sessions you wish to name as special fields of interest where you exhibit in-depth knowledge. (The written exam, by contrast, consists of two essay questions which have to be completed in 90 minutes.)

## **4. Term paper (varying length)**

Term papers come at varying lengths, but the most common word count in the M.A. programme is 7500 words. Usually, the topic of the paper is your choice; it combines

your individual preferences (interests, abilities, knowledge) and the topic of the seminar (general topic, in-class discussions, critical and theoretical texts discussed, notes taken). A term paper consists of an introduction (must include thesis and/or research question, methodology, and paper outline, may include necessary preparatory remarks such as a short overview of the main trends of criticism relevant to your topic); a body or main part with chapters and sub-chapters (arguments to support your thesis as well as the theoretical basis of your paper, the current state of research on the topic, remarks regarding the cultural and historical background of your primary material as well as close reading elements), a conclusion (must refer back to thesis and summarize your main findings, may include outlook for further research), a List of Works Cited (MLA Style), and a Statement of Academic Honesty. Please refer to the Anglophone Literature division's Guidelines for Academic Papers and Academic Writing for further information and to download a draft of the Plagiarism Statement.

## **5. Reading logs**

Reading logs are the type of examination you are required to supply for module M.EP.10a: Historical Aspects of Anglophone Literature and Culture. Specifically, you will hand in 2 reading logs of altogether 4500 words. There are a few steps to complete before you start writing these reading logs. As you are attending a lecture course to take credits in this module, your first task is to familiarise yourself with all texts from the reading list and to choose two areas of interest from the theme or period that is the topic of the lecture series (e.g. a historical event; a moment of political or social crisis; a literary or artistic movement). When you have found the two topics for your reading logs, choose two texts for each of the two reading logs. The texts have to relate to the context of the lecture series, but only one of the texts can be taken from the lecture's reading list, the other one should be your own choice and based on your research. Make sure the two chosen texts connect in a meaningful way to facilitate your writing process. For the reading logs, write a brief summary of your chosen texts (covering key characteristics such as topic, content, relation to the lecture series, and relation to each other) and contextualise the texts in your overall understanding of the period or the theme covered by the lecture series. Finally, analyse the texts through a particular theoretical lens (e.g. Postcolonial studies, gender studies, cultural materialism, disability studies, etc.). When you have finished writing your reading logs, send both, together with a signed Declaration of Academic Honesty, via email to your instructor. Keep in mind that you have to take two mandatory advisory meetings while working on your reading logs. We advise that you see your instructor for the first one of these meetings early on in the term to discuss your topic of interest and chosen approach. The North American Studies division has a similar type of exam called response logs.

## **6. Presentation with discussion**

This type of examination asks you to give an in-class presentation on a topic of your choice that relates closely to the course topic. After the presentation, you need to hand in a write-up of your presentation; you can elaborate your topic and analysis further and include the feedback you have received for your presentation. This type of exam is usually based on a visual aid, such as a PowerPoint presentation, and often involves discussion questions that engage your peers. However, you should discuss the specific requirements and expectations with your instructor and meet them early in the term to talk about the presentation topic.

## **7. Examination-like term paper (usually 3500 – 4000 words)**

In some linguistic modules (M.EP.022 and M.EP.11a) the requirement is an examination-like term paper. This is a collection of different tasks or assignments to be worked on during the semester. Examination-like term papers are take home exams; i.e. you are not only allowed but expected to use your notes, slides, textbooks, or other resources. The requirement can be split into two or three assignments following the progress of the course. Examination-like term papers are of various type and length (specified in the course manual):

- Short answer exams focus on knowledge and understanding of terms and concepts;
- Case studies or problem set exams require you to analyze linguistic data with a specific method and to form generalizations that verify or falsify a hypothesis. The emphasis is on methodological and conceptual understanding and application of theoretical knowledge.
- Essay exams provide a more complex task that requires responses which can vary in length from a couple of paragraphs to many pages. A journal paper discussed in class can be the prompt of an essay. Essay questions are less structured, what allows you to demonstrate that you can integrate the course material in creative ways. This type of exam presents a range of questions divided into topic sections covered in the course. You may be expected to give an essay response on more than one topic and show how theories have contributed to the knowledge areas.