

Online MA English Syllabus 2025–2026

A Generalized Curriculum for Distance & Online MA English Programs in India

Overview

The Online Master of Arts (MA) in English is a 2-year postgraduate program divided into 4 semesters. It is designed to develop advanced literary understanding, critical thinking, linguistic competence, and research skills among students. The curriculum typically covers English poetry, drama, fiction, Indian Writing in English, linguistics, literary theory, translation studies, and research methodology.

The program is offered by several UGC-DEB approved universities in India through distance and online modes, making it accessible to working professionals and learners from across the country. The total credit distribution for the program is 76 credits: 64 from Core Papers (16 papers × 4 credits each) and 12 from Elective Papers (4 papers × 3 credits each).

Program Structure at a Glance

Parameter	Details
Program Name	Master of Arts in English (MA English)
Duration	2 Years (4 Semesters)
Mode	Online / Distance
Total Credits	76 (64 Core + 12 Elective)
Core Papers	16
Elective Papers	4
Assessment Pattern	Internal (20 marks) + External (80 marks) per paper
Maximum Marks per Paper	100
Eligibility	Graduation in any discipline with minimum 50% marks

Semester-wise Syllabus

Semester I

Semester I introduces students to the historical foundations of English literature, from medieval poetry to early fiction, alongside a survey of Indian Writing in English.

Paper	Title	Key Topics Covered
Core Paper I	Poetry I: From Chaucer to 17th Century	Medieval poetry; Lyric, Ballad, Sonnet; Metaphysical Poetry (John Donne); Satire (Dryden); Epic (Milton – <i>Paradise Lost</i>)
Core Paper II	Drama I: Elizabethan and Jacobean Drama	Origins of drama; Miracle and Morality Plays; Senecan Tragedy; Elizabethan Theatre; Marlowe, Jonson, Webster
Core Paper III	Fiction I: Origins and Developments up to 18th Century	Novel as form; Allegorical and satirical novels; Defoe, Swift, Sterne, Austen
Core Paper IV	Indian Writing in English and in Translation	Indian classical tradition; poetry by Tagore, Ezekiel, Kolatkar; Drama by Tendulkar; Fiction by R.K. Narayan, Deshpande; Indian literature in translation
Elective Paper I	Classics in Translation	Ancient Indian and Greek theatre; World literature concepts; Thirukkural, Plato, Camus, Sophocles, Ibsen

Semester II

Semester II expands literary study to American Literature, Restoration Drama, 19th century fiction, and introduces a career-oriented elective paper.

Paper	Title	Key Topics Covered
Core Paper V	American Literature	Transcendentalism; Harlem Renaissance; Poetry by Whitman, Dickinson, Frost; Drama by O'Neill; Fiction by Twain, Alice Walker; Prose by Emerson, Thoreau
Core Paper VI	Poetry II: Eighteenth to Nineteenth Century	Augustan ideals; Pope's <i>Rape of the Lock</i> ; Romantic poets (Wordsworth, Coleridge, Shelley, Keats); Victorian poets (Browning, Tennyson, Hopkins, Arnold)
Core Paper VII	Drama II: Restoration to Twentieth Century	Restoration drama; Irish Dramatic Movement; Epic Theatre (Brecht); Comedy of Menace (Pinter); Post-Modern Drama (Beckett – <i>Waiting for Godot</i>)
Core Paper VIII	Fiction II: Nineteenth to Twentieth Century	Victorian social fiction; Conrad, Charlotte Brontë, George Eliot; D.H. Lawrence, Virginia Woolf; James Joyce
Elective Paper II	English for Careers	Business writing; Knowledge Management; Newsletter and Press Release editing; Online CV writing; Website writing

Semester III

Semester III focuses on Shakespeare, linguistics, literary theory, and practical aspects of literary analysis and publishing.

Paper	Title	Key Topics Covered
Core Paper IX	Shakespeare Studies	Shakespeare's theatre; Sonnets 12, 65, 86, 130; Comedies (<i>Much Ado About Nothing</i> , <i>Winter's Tale</i>); Tragedy (<i>Othello</i>); History (<i>Henry IV</i>); Feminist, post-colonial, and New Historicist criticism
Core Paper X	English Language and Linguistics	Phonology; Linguistics and the brain; Language and culture; Teaching English as a Second Language (TESL); Curriculum development; Digital literacy and action research
Core Paper XI	Literary Criticism and Literary Theory	Classical criticism (Aristotle, Sidney, Wordsworth, Coleridge); Humanistic criticism (Arnold, Eliot); Formalism and Structuralism (Brooks, Frye, Genette); Post-Structuralism (Barthes, Said)
Core Paper XII	Literature Analysis, Approaches and Copy Editing	Practical criticism; Book review; Publishing industry; Copy editing and proof reading; E-publishing; Technical writing
Elective Paper III	Film Studies	History of Indian cinema; Types of films; Film-making techniques; Films and social responsibility; Film review

Semester IV

Semester IV covers 20th century poetry, women's writing, translation studies, and research methodology, preparing students for academic and professional careers.

Paper	Title	Key Topics Covered
Core Paper XIII	Twentieth Century Poetry	Modernism and postmodernism; Yeats, T.S. Eliot (<i>The Wasteland</i>); War poets (Owen, Auden); Movement Poets (Larkin, Ted Hughes); Welsh Poets (Dylan Thomas); Post-Modern Poetry (Heaney, Craig Raine)
Core Paper XIV	Writings by and on Women	Varieties of feminism; Women's poetry (Plath, Maya Angelou, Atwood); Prose (Virginia Woolf, Vandana Shiva, Alice Walker); Fiction (Arundhati Roy, Kate Chopin, Jean Rhys); Drama (Hansberry)
Core Paper XV	Introduction to Translation Studies	Definition and scope of translation; History of translation; Problems of equivalence; Formal and Dynamic Equivalence; Comparative study of translations
Core Paper XVI	Research Methodology and Project Writing	Working bibliography; Research paper format; Note-making and plagiarism; Parenthetical documentation; Drafting and proof reading; Works cited
Elective Paper IV	English Literature for UGC NET/SET Examinations	Elizabethan to Contemporary literature; American and Non-British literatures; Literary theory and criticism; Rhetoric and prosody; Objective and essay-type preparation

Detailed Core Paper Outlines

Core Paper I – Poetry I: From Chaucer to 17th Century

Objective: To familiarize students with English poetry from Medieval England to the 17th century, focusing on the evolution of poetic forms such as sonnet, ballad, lyric, satire, and epic.

Unit	Theme	Key Texts / Authors
Unit 1	Chaucer and Medieval England	Geoffrey Chaucer – <i>The Prologue to The Canterbury Tales</i> (The Knight, The Prioress, The Wife of Bath, The Monk, The Doctor of Physic)
Unit 2	Poetic Forms During the 16th Century	Lyric, Ballad, Sonnet; <i>Ballad of Sir Patrick Spens</i> ; Spenser's <i>Prothalamion</i> ; Wyatt and Surrey's Sonnets
Unit 3	Poetic Forms During the 17th Century – Metaphysical Poetry	John Donne – <i>The Canonisation, Ecstasy</i>
Unit 4	Satire	John Dryden – <i>Absalom and Achitophel</i>
Unit 5	Epic	John Milton – <i>Paradise Lost</i> , Book IX

Core Paper II – Drama I: Elizabethan and Jacobean Drama

Objective: To acquaint students with the origin of drama in Britain and the stages of its evolution in the context of theatre and culture.

Unit	Theme	Key Texts / Authors
Unit 1	Beginnings of Drama	Miracle and Morality Plays – <i>Everyman</i>
Unit 2	Senecan and Revenge Tragedy	Thomas Kyd – <i>The Spanish Tragedy</i>
Unit 3	Elizabethan Theatre	Theatres, theatre groups, audience, actors and conventions
Unit 4	Tragedy and Comedy	Christopher Marlowe – <i>Doctor Faustus</i> ; Ben Jonson – <i>Volpone</i>
Unit 5	Jacobean Drama	John Webster – <i>Duchess of Malfi</i>

Core Paper V – American Literature

Objective: To familiarize students with the origin and development of American Literature from the time of settlers and colonies to postmodern and multicultural literature.

Unit	Theme	Key Texts / Authors
Unit 1	Concepts and Movements	Transcendentalism; Harlem Renaissance; Multiculturalism; Rise of Black culture
Unit 2	Poetry	Whitman – <i>Passage to India</i> ; Emily Dickinson; Robert Frost – <i>Home Burial</i> ; Gwendolyn Brooks

Unit	Theme	Key Texts / Authors
Unit 3	Drama	Eugene O'Neill – <i>Long Day's Journey into the Night</i> ; Marsha Norman – <i>Night Mother</i>
Unit 4	Fiction	Mark Twain – <i>Adventures of Huckleberry Finn</i> ; Alice Walker – <i>The Color Purple</i>
Unit 5	Prose	R.W. Emerson – <i>Self-Reliance</i> ; Henry David Thoreau – <i>Walden</i>

Core Paper IX – Shakespeare Studies

Objective: To make students understand and enjoy Shakespeare's plays and engage with contemporary critical perspectives.

Unit	Theme	Key Texts
Unit 1	Shakespeare Theatre and Conventions	Theatre conventions; trends in Shakespeare studies; Shakespeare on film
Unit 2	Sonnets and Comedies	Sonnets 12, 65, 86, 130; <i>Much Ado About Nothing</i> ; <i>Winter's Tale</i>
Unit 3	Tragedy	<i>Othello</i>
Unit 4	History	<i>Henry IV Part I</i>
Unit 5	Shakespeare Criticism	A.C. Bradley; Wilson Knight; Stephen Greenblatt; Ania Loomba; Feminist, post-colonial, New Historicist approaches

Core Paper X – English Language and Linguistics

Objective: To enable students to understand the English Language in a historical perspective, use phonological and structural knowledge, and adopt English Language Teaching approaches.

Unit	Theme	Topics
Unit 1	Phonology	Sounds of language; Sound patterns; Transcription and reverse transcription
Unit 2	Linguistics	Language and the brain; Regional and social variation; Language and culture
Unit 3	Teaching of English as Second Language (TESL)	ELT, EFL, ESL, ESP; ELT theories and methods; Classroom management
Unit 4	Curriculum Development and Language Assessment	Syllabus types; Bloom's Taxonomy; CEFR; Formative and summative assessment
Unit 5	Digital Literacy and Action Research	ICT tools; Blended learning; Flipped classroom; Action research

Core Paper XI – Literary Criticism and Literary Theory

Objective: To give an overview of critical trends from Aristotle to post-structural and post-colonial theories.

Unit	Theme	Key Theorists / Texts
Unit 1	Foundational Concepts	Imitation; Formalism; Structuralism; Deconstruction; Post-Colonialism
Unit 2	Classical, Neo-Classical and Romantic Criticism	Aristotle – <i>Poetics</i> ; Sidney – <i>Apologie for Poetry</i> ; Wordsworth; Coleridge
Unit 3	Humanistic Criticism	Matthew Arnold – <i>Study of Poetry</i> ; T.S. Eliot – <i>Tradition and the Individual Talent</i>
Unit 4	Formalism and Structuralism	Cleanth Brooks – <i>Language of Paradox</i> ; Northrop Frye; Gerard Genette
Unit 5	Post-Structuralism	Roland Barthes – <i>Death of the Author</i> ; Edward Said – <i>Orientalism</i>

Core Paper XIV – Writings by and on Women

Objective: To give space to women's writings and sensitize students to women's issues as reflected in literature.

Unit	Theme	Key Texts / Authors
Unit 1	Varieties of Feminism	Concept of gender; androgyny; language of women; ecofeminism
Unit 2	Poetry	Sylvia Plath – <i>Lady Lazarus</i> ; Maya Angelou – <i>Still I Rise</i> ; Margaret Atwood; Anne Bradstreet
Unit 3	Prose	Virginia Woolf – <i>A Room of One's Own</i> ; Vandana Shiva – <i>Ecofeminism</i> ; Alice Walker
Unit 4	Fiction	Arundhati Roy – <i>The God of Small Things</i> ; Jean Rhys – <i>Wide Sargasso Sea</i> ; Kate Chopin – <i>The Awakening</i>
Unit 5	Drama	Lorraine Hansberry – <i>Raisin in the Sun</i> ; Jane Harrison – <i>Stolen</i>

Core Paper XV – Introduction to Translation Studies

Objective: To introduce students to the theory and practice of translation with a focus on equivalence, cultural contexts, and comparative analysis.

Unit	Theme	Topics
Unit 1	Introduction	Definition; scope; types of translation; translation and culture
Unit 2	History	Brief history of translation across civilizations

Unit	Theme	Topics
Unit 3	Issues in Translation	Decoding; problems of equivalence; loss and gain; gender in translation
Unit 4	Formal and Dynamic Equivalence	Equivalence theories; translation shift
Unit 5	Comparative Analysis	Comparative study of two translations of <i>Thirukkural</i> by G.U. Pope and Rajaji

Core Paper XVI – Research Methodology and Project Writing

Objective: To equip students with skills for academic research, documentation, and scholarly writing.

Topics Covered:

- Preparing the working bibliography
- Research paper format and planning
- Collection of materials; note-making; avoiding plagiarism
- Parenthetical documentation
- Drafting, revision, and proof reading
- Preparing the list of works cited

Recommended Text: MLA Handbook, 8th Edition: *Rethinking Documentation for The Digital Age*

Elective Paper IV – English Literature for UGC NET/SET Examinations

This paper prepares students for UGC NET and SET competitive examinations in English Literature. It covers objective and essay-type questions spanning Chaucer to the Contemporary Age.

Period	Key Authors and Concepts
Elizabethan Age	Chaucer, Spenser, Shakespeare, Marlowe, Kyd, Ben Jonson
Jacobean Age	John Webster, Francis Bacon, Metaphysical Poets
Restoration Period	Dryden, Milton, Congreve, Wycherley
Augustan Age	Pope, Swift, Defoe, Johnson, Richardson, Fielding
Romantic Age	Wordsworth, Coleridge, Shelley, Keats, Byron, Austen
Victorian Age	Dickens, Hardy, Thackeray, the Brontës, Browning, Tennyson, Arnold
Twentieth Century	T.S. Eliot, Joyce, Woolf, Beckett, Pinter, Orwell, Ted Hughes
American Literature	Whitman, Twain, Hemingway, Alice Walker, Toni Morrison
Non-British Literatures	Achebe, Naipaul, R.K. Narayan, Arundhati Roy, Kamala Das, Nissim Ezekiel

Period	Key Authors and Concepts
Literary Theory	Aristotle, Arnold, Eliot, Said, Derrida, Foucault, Barthes, Kristeva

Credit Distribution

Component	Papers	Credits per Paper	Total Credits
Core Papers	16	4	64
Elective Papers	4	3	12
Total	20		76

Assessment Pattern

Each paper is assessed for a total of 100 marks:

Component	Marks
Internal Assessment (assignments, quizzes, participation)	20
External Examination	80
Total	100

Eligibility Criteria

Parameter	Requirement
Minimum Qualification	Bachelor's degree in any discipline from a recognized university
Minimum Marks	50% aggregate (45% for reserved categories, varies by university)
Final-year Students	Eligible to apply provisionally
Entrance Exam	Merit-based / Direct (most online universities); CUET-PG for central universities

Key Recommended Texts (Across Semesters)

- *The Oxford Anthology of English Literature*, Vols. I & II – OUP
- *The Norton Anthology of Modern Poetry* – Richard Ellmann & Robert O'Clair
- *The Norton Anthology of Literature by Women* – Sandra M. Gilbert & Susan Gubar
- *Translation Studies* – Susan Bassnett, Routledge
- *A Glossary of Literary Terms* – M.H. Abrams
- *An Oxford History of English Literature* – Andrew Sanders
- *Beginning Theory* – Peter Barry

- *A Dictionary of Linguistics and Phonetics* – David Crystal
- *Shakespearean Negotiations* – Stephen Greenblatt
- MLA Handbook, 8th Edition

This syllabus is generalized based on the standard MA English curriculum followed by Indian universities offering online and distance education programs under UGC-DEB guidelines. Individual universities may vary in specific texts, paper titles, and evaluation patterns. Students are advised to verify the current syllabus from their respective university's official website.