

## What is Professionalization?

Academic professionalization can mean many, many things. In its most traditional sense, it means learning how to research, write, and publish for a scholarly audience; teach at the university level; and acquire skills relevant to university program administration. But professionalization during your MA/PhD can just as easily lead you in research/writing/teaching/administrative directions that are not bound by university hedgerows.

So, on the one hand, academic professionalization means learning how to research and write with nuance and complexity, and it means developing pedagogical and administrative skills that enable you to teach well and communicate well with university students and employees. However, and in addition, professionalization during your time at DU means building networks, collaborating, and developing an entrepreneurial acumen that will enable you to practice your academic skills in many different career environments.

## MA Student Professional Milestones

### *MA: year 1*

In addition to coursework, spend your first year talking with faculty about what you like about advanced coursework and research and how these interests align with different kinds of humanities-oriented professions and organizations.

While many of you hold part-time employment, if possible, be intentional about these positions. Consult with [Career & Professional Development](#) to help you think through your employment interests and talents, develop your resume, and build a LinkedIn profile. Consider applying for a paid summer [internship](#) with a humanities-oriented organization that capitalizes upon your work with Career & Professional Development. This is also a good time to explore relevant academic and professional associations and the resources associated with them. Many organizations offer student membership rates, annual conferences, and opportunities to volunteer. These associations help expand your professional network, and the [DU Career Network](#) can connect you with alumni volunteers who can support your goals.

As you meet colleagues, build a support network by talking with your fellow graduate students (especially PhD students) and finding out what kinds of projects they are involved in; participate in EGSA and the Writing Center; and look outside the English department to environments like the [Center for Community Engagement](#), [iRISE](#) and the [Latino Center](#), and the [Ritchie Center Innovation Lab](#), to name a few. By understanding professional development as an act of exploring other communities and spaces at DU in conversation with your work in the English department, you will begin to identify interests and opportunities that extend past your life as a student and minimize the pressure of the job search or planning for your next steps as you enter your second year.

If you plan to apply for a PhD, talk with DU English faculty about which PhD programs can best support your specific interests in literary studies. Learn about the faculty in these programs, and get to know their work. During the summer, reach out to faculty over email and ask if they could direct research on your topic.

### *MA: year 2*

Begin developing your thesis topic; approach potential faculty in the Fall so that you can start working on the thesis during the Winter quarter. As you begin this process, consider presenting your research at one conference this year. The [Rocky Mountain MLA](#) offers graduate student travel grants, and the University of Denver GSA and OGE offer quarterly conference reimbursement grants.

If you are applying for PhD programs, approach potential faculty recommenders in early Fall quarter, several months prior to application deadlines.

Continue your conversations with [Career & Professional Development](#) to ensure you are on track. Update your resume and LinkedIn profile to reflect your experiences from your first year. Continue to explore options, identify potential employers and expand your network so that by Winter quarter—the traditional hiring season for employers—you are ready to start the job search. Work with the English department's Jobs Placement Officer and Career Services to prepare for interviews, and learn how to research salaries and negotiate job offers. Remember, Career Services is available for the first year after graduation, then these services are transitioned to alumni relations.