

Quality Assurance

Masters, Postgraduate Diploma, Postgraduate Certificate in Creative Writing

Programme Specification: Postgraduate

Information for students: the programme specification is the definitive document summarising the structure and content of your degree programme. It is reviewed and updated every year as part of Keele’s Annual Programme Review process. The document aims to clarify to potential and current students what you can expect from the study of the subject over the course of your programme.

Introduction

This document provides a summary of the main features of postgraduate taught Creative Writing. It explains what a student can expect from studying Creative Writing at Masters level at Keele University, and includes information about what a student will be able to do if s/he takes full advantage of the opportunities provided during the course of this programme.

This programme specification applies to students starting the programme from September 2021 onwards.

Names of programmes	- MA - Postgraduate Diploma - Postgraduate Certificate - in Creative Writing
Mode of study	Full time and part time
Framework of Higher Education Qualification (FHEQ) level of final award:	Level 7
Duration	12 months full time / 24 months part time
Course Start Dates	September OR January (for MA or Diploma) September (for Certificate)

External Examiner(s): <http://www.keele.ac.uk/ga/externalexaminers/>

1. What is the philosophy of the Programme?

Creative Writing is a relatively new discipline in British universities, despite several long-established programmes. It has long had a role in education in North America. At MA level at Keele we aim to guide and advise talented students towards imaginative writing of an advanced, publishable standard, where publishable does not mean that every student will get published, but that their work is of a standard to be published if market conditions are favourable. The Keele MA is aimed at students who are already writers with a body of work, who wish to improve and develop their writing to the point where they have a part-manuscript that could potentially be offered to a publisher. It offers such students an opportunity to develop and improve their writing by working with published authors and other students in a workshop situation. Of equal importance is the opportunity it offers for writers to

understand their work in a critical context and in relation to contemporary writing and culture. The Keele MA exposes writers to the kinds of discussion and critical interaction that will enable them to see their writing not just as self-expression, but as part of an evolving literary tradition. Students will benefit by gaining knowledge and understanding of the following:

- critical self-awareness about the writing process and the literary work;
- a thorough understanding of the history and development of at least one specified literary genre;
- writing a specified literary genre to a publishable standard.

Creative Writing at Keele

Keele University offers modules in creative writing as part of the English Principal Programme at undergraduate level. The MA builds on the growing writing culture in the institution, which extends to readings, publications, workshops, and writers' groups. The aims of the Programme are to:

- provide opportunities for the practice and study of creative writing at an advanced, publishable level;
- provide a supportive and constructively critical environment in which students can work with published writers and their peers to improve their writing;
- provide students with the necessary skills to write at an advanced, publishable level.

Graduate Attributes

Keele University is committed to developing graduates who demonstrate the ten Keele Graduate Attributes (<http://www.keele.ac.uk/distinctive/keelesgraduateattributes>). Through studying the MA in Creative Writing you will have the opportunity to develop your existing skills, knowledge and aptitudes in the following ways:

1. An open and questioning approach, demonstrating qualities such as independence of thought. Through critical evaluation of your own written work and that of your fellow students, you will develop your ability to give and take constructive criticism. This will be reflected in the development of your writing.
2. An appreciation of the development and value of creative work and an awareness of the dynamic and provisional nature of the creative process. Taught modules address the critical contexts for creative work. These will include reference to the links between literary and cultural criticism and the creative process
3. The ability to handle different genres and forms. The ability to handle short and long writing assignments. The ability to deploy appropriate research skills. You will have some writing experience before you start the programme, but the MA in Creative Writing gives you the opportunity to practise your skills in a structured and critical environment. The *Writer as Critic, The Critic as Writer* module will give you the opportunity to relate your work to contemporary cultural and critical contexts. In addition, there are opportunities to practise your information-handling techniques and abilities as you undergo the taught and assessed elements of this programme. Students can obtain further, tailored guidance throughout the programme from the course team, the Keele liaison librarian for Humanities and Social Sciences, or from Student Support and Development Services.
4. Solve problems creatively, determining the techniques appropriate to the task from the range offered by the MA in Creative Writing. Problem-solving and the application of appropriate theories and techniques are inherent to all taught modules, where the ability to identify issues in a piece of writing and give constructive feedback is central to both seminar and workshop situations. Your MA Portfolio will consolidate these skills by allowing you to complete a sustained piece of writing in your chosen genre.
5. An appreciation of the social, ethical, environmental and global implications of your studies. *The Writer as Critic, Critic as Writer* module is specifically concerned with writers' relationship to social, political and ethical concerns. The reflective commentaries on submitted work also address these areas.
6. Effective written and oral communication skills. Clear and effective written and verbal communication are central to the programme. The taught modules encourage thorough and critical student engagement in

seminar and workshop discussion. Expertise in writing is central to the Programme. All modules of the programme include written assessments, so there are repeated opportunities to hone your style, structure and fluency in a variety of written formats, including poetry, the short story, the novel, and life writing. In tackling the final Portfolio you will be supported in drafting, writing and submitting a substantial piece of work that will require sustained demonstration of good or excellent writing in your chosen genre.

7. The attributes necessary to pursue your future goals. The MA in Creative Writing strives to provide you with the knowledge, skills and confidence to assess, attempt and achieve your career or academic goals. At the start of the course you may not have clear ambitions for your career trajectory; the duration of your studies offers you the chance to talk to tutors, and the Keele Careers and Employability service, to explore the available options and position yourself to take full advantage of them. You can also consider pursuing a practice-based PhD in Creative Writing at the conclusion of your Masters programme.
8. The ability and motivation to participate as an active citizen or community member. Humanities programmes inherently encourage an appreciation of the needs and perspectives of others and so inculcate a spirit of tolerance and participation. Creative Writing requires that you consider a wide variety of differing viewpoints and cultural situations. Furthermore, we foster community spirit in our taught modules via positive contacts staff-to-student and student-to-student. This creates a supportive context of collaboration and networking for the benefit of both students and staff.
9. A professional and reflective approach encompassing aspects of leadership, personal integrity, empathy and accountability. The importance of personal responsibility, self-regulation and disciplinary ethics are integral to the creative writing workshop. Reflection on and the application of personal and disciplinary principles is a component of the methodological discussion required in the dissertation.
10. The ability to adapt to changing circumstances. Students usually embark on their MA programme with some idea about the scope and content of their Portfolio, but the practicalities of research and the nature of available source materials frequently demand adaptation or recasting of their plans. Your writing will develop throughout the programme and you should be prepared to allow for substantial changes in your approach and method.

2. How is the Programme taught?

‘The Writer as Critic, The Critic as Writer’ is taught as a two-hour seminar. It is taught by two members of staff: one a creative writing tutor; one a literary critic from the School of Humanities. It explores the relationship between writing and contemporary cultural criticism. Students read their own work in progress inviting comment especially on areas of difficulty. The tutors and students present on critical questions in their own research and/or writing and on key areas of debate in contemporary culture.

The optional MA Creative Writing modules (‘Writing Fiction’, ‘Writing Poetry’, ‘Life Writing’) are taught through weekly two-hour workshops. Students are introduced to a selection of indicative examples of the relevant literary genre. Students are set writing-specific tasks. They present their own work to the group with a verbal commentary and receive critical feedback from tutors and fellow students. Although these are Options, students are expected to complete the module which corresponds to their eventual portfolio medium (i.e. Fiction, Poetry or Life Writing.)

‘The Writer in the Community’ module – also optional – aims to equip the student with skills and experience in the design and delivery of services commonly undertaken by writers in the community and cultural landscape in which they work. It gives students a chance to create and deliver a professional project. Typical 12-week projects include:

- designing and delivering creative writing workshops
- mentoring less experienced writers
- steering a literary editing project
- setting up and putting on a literary event

- creating a web-based literary resource

The 'Portfolio' (Dissertation) module is taught through individual supervision. This includes regular individual and/or small group supervision meetings providing students with opportunities to

- Discuss their writing plans and structure
- Get advice on reading, research and writing
- Review their progress

These supervision meetings offer an important opportunity for students to discuss their ideas with the tutor.

Teaching on the modules is supplemented by a visiting speaker programme that includes creative writers and which may include other professionals in the literary arts.

Teaching Staff

Three writers are responsible for the creative components of the course:

James Sheard, Senior Lecturer and author of *Scattering Eva* (Jonathan Cape, 2005), *Dammtor* (Jonathan Cape, 2010) and *The Abandoned Settlements* (Jonathan Cape, 2017), which was shortlisted for the T.S. Eliot Prize.

Emma Henderson, Lecturer and author of *Grace Williams Says It Loud* (Sceptre, 2011), which was shortlisted for the Orange Prize for Fiction and *The Valentine House* (Sceptre, 2017), which was shortlisted for the Historical Writers Association Gold Crown Award.

We also draw on the critical expertise of colleagues in English Literature, including:

Dr Ceri Morgan, Senior Lecturer in English, with an interest in participatory projects and geopoetics (walking and creative practice).

Professor Tim Lustig, literary scholar in Henry James, novelist with interests in forms of Life Writing.

3. What is the Structure of the Programme?

Please note that the optional modules will vary from year to year.

MA

Credits	Title of Module	Module Code
30	The Writer as Critic, The Critic as Writer (compulsory)	ENG-40018
90	Portfolio (compulsory)	ENG-40023
and two of the following options		
30	Writing Poetry (option)	ENG-40020
30	The Writer in the Community (option)	ENG-40041
30	Writing Fiction (option)	ENG-40019
30	Life Writing (option)	ENG-40031

Postgraduate Diploma

After 120 credits students will have gained a thorough knowledge of the relationship between writing and contemporary criticism and a firm grounding in the skills required to write in two literary genres.

Credits	Title of Module	Module Code
30	The Writer as Critic, The Critic as Writer	ENG-40018
30	Portfolio (Diploma)	ENG-40048
and two of the following options		
30	Writing Fiction	ENG-40019
30	Writing Poetry	ENG-40020
30	Life Writing	ENG-40031
TOTAL CREDITS: 120		

Postgraduate Certificate

After 60 credits students will have gained a thorough knowledge of the relationship between writing and contemporary criticism and a firm grounding in the skills required to write in one literary genre.

Credits	Modules	Module Code (if known)
30	Writer as Critic, Critic as Writer	ENG-40018
and one of the following options		
30	Writing Poetry	ENG-40020
30	Writing Fiction	ENG-40019
30	Life Writing	ENG-40031
TOTAL CREDITS: 60		

Programme Outcomes and Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategies

The tables below outline the possible routes (part-time or full-time) for the three different exit awards (MA, PGDip, and PGCert).

MA Part-time (September Start)

	Semester 1	Semester 2
Year 1	The Writer as Critic	Option

Year 2	Option	Portfolio
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MA Part-time (January Start)

	Semester 1	Semester 2
Year 1	Option	Writer as Critic
Year 2	Option	Portfolio

MA Full-time (September Start)

	Semester 1	Semester 2
Year 1	The Writer as Critic	Option
	Option	Portfolio

MA Full-time (January Start)

	Semester 1	Semester 2
Year 1	Option	Writer As Critic
	Option	Portfolio

Students taking the MA will be allowed 10 months continuation status for an additional fee in the case that they are required to submit the dissertation.

Diploma Part-time (September Start)

	Semester 1	Semester 2
Year 1	The Writer as Critic	Option
Year 2	Option	Portfolio (Diploma)

Diploma Part-time (January Start)

	Semester 1	Semester 2
Year 1	Option	Writer as Critic
Year 2	Option	Portfolio (Diploma)

Diploma Full-time (September Start)

	Semester 1	Semester 2
Year 1	The Writer as Critic	Option

	Option	Portfolio (Diploma)
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Diploma Full-time (January Start)

	Semester 1	Semester 2
Year 1	Option	Writer As Critic
	Option	Portfolio (Diploma)

Certificate Part-time (September Start Only)

	Semester 1	Semester 2
Year 1	The Writer as Critic	Option 1

Certificate Full-time (September Start Only)

	Autumn
Year 1	The Writer as Critic
	Option

All modules may be taken as CPD short courses and the credits may later be included under the University Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL policy RPCL towards an MA. Further details relating to the University's policy regarding RPL can be found via

<http://www.keele.ac.uk/qa/accreditationofpriorlearning/>

The outcomes of the MA Creative Writing Programme relate to three main areas:

- Subject knowledge and understanding and cognitive abilities
- Discipline specific skills
- Transferable skills

Summary of intended learning outcomes, modules and assessment

Learning outcome	Module	Principal forms of assessment (of the Learning Outcome) used
Subject specific knowledge and understanding		
Critical self-awareness in relation to the writing process.	The Writer as Critic Writing Fiction Writing Poetry Writer in the Community Life Writing Portfolio Portfolio (Diploma)	Essay, seminar performance Reflective commentary Reflective commentary Reflective analysis Reflective commentary Reflective commentary Reflective commentary
Critical awareness about the literary work	The Writer as Critic Writing Fiction Writing Poetry Portfolio Life Writing Portfolio (Diploma)	Review Reflective commentary Reflective commentary Reflective commentary Reflective Commentary Reflective commentary
A critical understanding of a specified literary genre.	Writing Fiction Writing Poetry Portfolio Life Writing Portfolio (Diploma)	Portfolio of written work Portfolio of written work Extended portfolio of written work Portfolio of written work Portfolio of written work

Subject specific skills		
Writing skills to an advanced, publishable level	Writing Fiction Writing Poetry Portfolio Life Writing Portfolio (Diploma)	Portfolio of written work, reflective commentary Portfolio of written work, reflective commentary Extended portfolio of written work Portfolio of written work Portfolio of written work
An advanced level of critical skills	The Writer as Critic Writing Fiction Writing Poetry The Writer in the Community Portfolio Life Writing Portfolio (Diploma)	Review, essay, seminar performance Reflective commentary Reflective commentary Essay Reflective analysis Reflective commentary Reflective commentary Reflective commentary
Generic/Employability Skills		
Advanced communication skills	The Writer as Critic Writing Fiction Writing Poetry The Writer in the Community	Seminar performance, review Portfolio, reflective commentary Portfolio, reflective commentary Creative Brief, Reflective analysis
Time management and planning	The Writer as Critic Writing Fiction Writing Poetry The Writer in the Community Life Writing	Essay Portfolio of written work Portfolio of written work Portfolio, Reflective analysis Portfolio of written work

The ability to present complex, critical ideas effectively	The Writer as Critic	Essay
	Writing Fiction Writing Poetry The Writer in the Community Life Writing	Reflective commentary Reflective commentary Reflective Analysis Reflective Commentary
The ability to give and accept constructive criticism	The Writer as Critic Writing Fiction Writing Poetry The Writer in the Community	Seminar performance Reflective commentary Reflective commentary Reflective analysis

Exit routes

MA: 180 credits.

PGDip: 120 credits.

PGCert: 60 credits.

Credits are accumulated as detailed above in Section 3. The pass mark for the Programme is 50%.

To be eligible for the award of a Distinction in the Master's degree a student must have satisfied the requirements of the award and achieved:

- i) an average mark of 70% over all Level 7 modules, calculated in accordance with any weightings specified in the course regulations; and
- ii) a mark of at least 70% in the Master's dissertation (portfolio).

To be eligible for the award of a Merit in the Master's degree a student must have satisfied the requirements of the award and achieved: (i) an average mark of 60% over all Level 7 modules, calculated in accordance with any weightings specified in the course regulations; and (ii) a mark of at least 60% in the Masters dissertation.

4. How is the Programme assessed? Assessment

Students are able to demonstrate that they have achieved the relevant learning outcomes by undertaking a range of different forms of assessment in compliance with the University's Assessment Strategy. Feedback on work in progress will be given in time for students to incorporate it into their final assignment. The programme employs a variety of methods of assessment:

- written assignments in a specified literary genre;
- verbal presentations;
- written assignments in the form of a critical essay;
- a portfolio of writing in a specified literary genre. The Portfolio consists of a substantial writing portfolio in one genre equivalent to a short collection of poetry or short stories, a novella or part of novel. The

Portfolio is taught initially through individual supervision and exchanges of ideas and drafts via email.

The marking of assignments is subject to clear, discipline-specific criteria appropriate to FHEQ level 7. Creative writing assignments are judged according to the following criteria:

- use of correct English (apart from the very occasional slip) in grammar, sentence-structure, punctuation and control of appropriate literary forms (stanzas, metre, paragraphs, dialogue etc.);
- evidence of technical control, control of literary form and control of voice, style, idiom and register;
- elements of originality in a conventional framework skilfully constructed (may be strikingly original but not well-organised; or it may be extremely skilful in its use of convention but show little originality);
- showing the potential to be eloquent and memorable;
- the subject-matter of the work will have been explored with some insight and breadth of viewpoint.
- knowledge and understanding of form and subject-matter will be evident.

As one would expect in a creative writing programme, the assessment of writing assignments lies at the core of the programme. For more detail on the form and length of assessments see the module outlines.

An authoritative statement of the University's regulations on assessment can be found at <http://www.keele.ac.uk/regulations>. Further guidance is provided in the MA Creative Writing Handbook, published annually.

Students present work in progress in the creative writing workshops and receive feedback from fellow student and the workshop tutor. They present work in progress to their supervisor for the Portfolio (Dissertation) module and receive feedback and suggestions for revision.

5. What are the typical admission requirements for the programme? Entrance requirements

Applicants will normally be expected to have a good honours degree (normally 2.2 or above). They will be required to submit a portfolio of work to the admissions tutor (usually the Programme Director). A high-quality portfolio will take precedence over a first degree and may be taken as evidence of RPEL. The portfolio should consist of 10-15 poems and/or 5000-6000 words of prose. If it is considered of sufficient quality, the admissions tutor will pass it on to one of the Creative Writing tutors specialising in the genre chosen by the applicant. That tutor will then recommend an interview, on which the final decision will be based. Normally up to 30 credits from a comparable programme may be taken as RPCL. The IELTS requirement is 7.0 with no less than 6.5 in components.

6. How are students supported on the programme?

Where possible, students are allocated their supervisor for the Portfolio module (Dissertation module) at the beginning of the programme and work with that supervisor on their chosen genre (Poetry, Fiction, or Life Writing) throughout. In addition, the Programme Director holds regular consultation and feedback hours to support choice of modules and other academic decisions as well as to give pastoral support. Module tutors give feedback on assessments.

7. Learning Resources

The Keele Writing Room (CBB1.056) is the main teaching room, but outside teaching hours, it is available to students as a place to work and exchange views with other students. The Facebook Keele Writing page supplements the KLE and gives information about events as well as providing a forum for students. The Library has a range of publications and online resources relevant to the programme.

8. Other learning opportunities

Students are encouraged to engage with community organisations and to arrange writing events through the ‘Writer in the Community’ module. Students have worked with local libraries, museums, and health groups on this module. Details of projects can be obtained from the Programme Director.

9. Quality management and enhancement

The programme is managed through regular Programme meetings, which are attended by all those who teach on the programme. The Programme Director has overall responsibility for the running of the Programme and the School of Humanities Education Committee is responsible for quality assurance.

The Programme is reviewed through the University’s Annual Programme Review process following a review meeting in July. Students are able to feed back on the programme through module evaluation and through representation on PGT Student:Staff Voice Committee.

The programme will be run in accordance with the University’s quality assurance policies and will be reviewed as part of the Internal Quality Audit for the School of Humanities, which take place on a quinquennial basis.

10. The principles of programme design

The programme relates to the guidelines for teaching Creative Writing published by the National Association of Writers in Education (NAWE), which has been referenced as standard by the English Subject Centre. See the NAWE website: <http://www.nawe.co.uk/writing-in-education/writing-at-university/research.html>

11. Programme Version History

Version History	Date	CHANGES / NOTES
Date first created (if known)		
Date last reviewed / revised	February 2021	Updated route details for January Starters Updated Staff Details
Last reviewed by	James Sheard	
Date last approved at SEC		
Date last approved at FEC	May 2021	