

Programme Specification

Master of Fine Arts (MFA) in Creative Writing

<i>School:</i>	Humanities
<i>Subject area:</i>	Creative Writing
<i>Entry from academic year:</i>	2023-24
<i>in the month(s) of:</i>	February
<i>Awarding institution:</i>	York St John University
<i>Teaching institution:</i>	York St John University
<i>Delivery location:</i>	York St John University
<i>Programme/s accredited by:</i>	Not applicable
<i>Exit awards:</i>	Not applicable
<i>UCAS code / GTTR / other:</i>	Not applicable
<i>Joint Honours combinations:</i>	Not applicable
<i>QAA subject benchmark statement(s):</i>	See the QAA Benchmark document on Creative Writing for reference (these do not extend in Creative Writing to any specifics for MFA/MA level and are therefore a guide only)
<i>Mode/s of study:</i>	Postgraduate periods of study for full-time / part-time
<i>Language of study:</i>	English
<i>Paired with foundation year</i>	No
<i>Study abroad opportunities:</i>	No
<i>Placement year opportunity:</i>	No

Introduction and special features

The Master of Fine Arts in Creative Writing - is the next exciting step for those who have already completed a taught Masters. The MFA project culminates in your original contribution to literary culture in the form of a complete manuscript and Critical Commentary reflecting on relevant sources and processes which have informed its composition. You will produce a full-length manuscript (novel, collection, script, biography) under the expert one to one supervision of one of the professional writers at the York Centre for Writing in the stunning setting of historic York and its surrounding area. Your project will also be supported by a weekend Residential Masterclass in an inspiring setting and can be focussed on publication, community/heritage or critical theory.

The three distinct routes offer focussed, but flexible structures to fulfil a range of motivations. This is distinctive in the UK market:

- **Publication/book** route – your aim is to produce a full-length work (e.g. novel, poetry collection, script, biography) for publication/performance/dissemination. The Critical/reflective Commentary will focus on this, whilst the creative submission can be in any form/genre
- **Community/Heritage route** – your aim is to produce a book-length work, performance or account exploring an outreach project with a partner, for example in health, arts, music or heritage. The Commentary may focus on the development and implications of this project, and could incorporate some qualitative/quantitative data or case studies, where appropriate

- **Critical/theoretical route** – your aim is to produce a book-length work in any form (novel, poetry, script). The project has a strong theoretical/critical underpinning, in which the Critical/reflective Commentary explores and analyses a movement, literary theory or other critical idea and the creative work performs a practice-based exploration of the same. Intended for students considering moving onto a PhD, but not exclusively for them.
- Your final manuscript will comprise 40,000-70,000 words of creative prose or approx. 1,200 lines of poetry (the aim being a book-length manuscript appropriate to the chosen the form). Writers wishing to produce a script will produce an equivalent ‘time’ length. Your final manuscript will be accompanied by a Critical Commentary of 6,000 – 10,000 words which reflects on the process of composition. Please note that a shorter creative piece, such as a novella, may require a longer Critical Commentary so that the minimum overall wordcount will be at least 50,000 words
- Your project will be supported by one to one, expert supervision. This can be undertaken full- or part-time, face to face, online or a blended approach to suit your circumstances
- You will take part in a termly Writers’ Workshop to share work in progress with like-minded peers in a nurturing atmosphere
- A Residential Writing Retreat offers an opportunity to reflect and focus on your progress amongst a community of writing peers, facilitated by tutors, in a beautiful and inspiring regional or city setting
- Close links to agents, publishers, literary events and local arts and heritage organisations will fuel your creativity and hone your employability skills

You will have the flexibility to pursue a project that you are passionate about, and will be supported by the expertise of the staff team. This allows for a range of diverse backgrounds in terms of learning experiences, ethnic diversity, disability, gender and age; projects will be developed and tailored to your learning needs. The staff team of award-winning writers have an exciting and diverse approach to creative writing and are able to supervise a huge range of proposed projects. All staff members are actively publishing their writing and have won several awards between them for creative outputs. The team have expertise in speculative fiction, historical fiction, scriptwriting, screenwriting, adaptation, poetry, experimental poetry, hybrid forms, horror fiction, literary fiction, creative non-fiction (including memoir and true-crime), and are able to support writing in a number of genres. In addition, the CW team at YSJ has a strong focus on the relationship between critical theory and creative writing and the intersection of a number of theoretical perspectives with creative practice, including eco-criticism, psychoanalysis, biopolitics and regionality. Members of the team have undertaken interdisciplinary and collaborative research exploring music, memory, medicine, uncanny landscapes and pollination.

Structure and assessment:

- Taught via one to one supervision in three ten-week terms starting in February
- Termly peer Writing Workshops and Writing Retreat to support creative practice
- Portfolio Progress presentation assessment worth 20 of the 180 credits at the end of the first term
- Manuscript submitted in January of the final year

Whilst the learning is independent, but supported, you are encouraged to take a professional approach and attend the variety of events provided by the York Centre for Writing, which include visits from agents, publishers, editors and writers and foster an important sense of belonging and community.

The York Centre for Writing acts as a hub for a number of exciting writing events, projects and publications in collaboration with Valley Press, The [York Literature Festival](#), and other community partners. In the past we have welcomed authors such as Kathleen Jamie, Sarah Hall, Michel Faber, Daljit Nagra and Margaret Atwood, who have inspired students and members of the local community alike. The Centre curates two print publications, [Beyond the Walls](#), our student anthology, and [The York Literary Review](#), our international creative writing journal, both published by [Valley Press](#) and providing commissioning, editing and publishing experience to all students.

Creative Writing at YSJ is distinguished by:

- The integration of writing practice, critical appreciation of texts and employability skills
- A focus on contemporary writing
- Regular engagement with visiting speakers and writers
- Partnerships with local publishers and writing festivals
- The innovative use of the local and regional landscape in learning and teaching
- Research-led teaching
- Diverse and inclusive syllabi
- Opportunities for students to experience field trips as part of their learning experience
- Value added in terms of student achievement

Key graduate attributes:

- To have the confidence to research, compose and critically evaluate a substantial, complete body of creative writing for potential publication/exhibition/dissemination
- To be reflective in relation to their own work and a body of texts, cultural artefacts and cultural contexts.
- To be aware of, and sensitive to, a range of audiences/readers
- To take a professional approach to editing, drafting and critiquing creative work
- To have an awareness of the wider role of creative writing in culture
- To understand the publishing industry and feel confident in approaching agents, publishers, editors, directors etc
- To engage with a writing community, both at a local and national level
- To be generous in the support of creative peers within a community of practitioners

Admissions criteria

You must meet the University's general entry criteria for [postgraduate](#) study. In addition, you must have:

- MFA candidates are those who have already excelled at MA taught study, and therefore require an MA in Creative Writing (or close equivalent) that has achieved at least a **Merit grade** (or equivalent) In the School of Humanities at York St John, this requires a graduate to have achieved an overall grading of at least 60% at Postgraduate level. At other institutions this may be a 'B' grade.
- MFA candidates also need to submit a sample of creative writing, either in Prose, Script or Poetry of at least 1,000 words (or 3 poems) in order for staff to ascertain if the writing is of an appropriately high standard
- MFA candidates are required to complete a proposal form that demonstrates they have a level of clarity about both the critical and creative components of their proposed project and the capacity for planning an independent project. This will also be used to assign the appropriate team member as supervisor

If your first language is not English, you need to take an IELTS test or an equivalent qualification accepted by the University (see <https://www.yorks.ac.uk/international/how-to-apply/english-language-requirements/>).

If you do not have traditional qualifications, you may be eligible for entry on the basis of [Recognition of prior learning \(RPL\)](#). We also consider applications for entry with advanced standing.

Programme aim(s)

- To provide expert support for the development of your independent project culminating in a book-length manuscript which may be a novel, poetry collection, short story collection, script, non-fiction book or a related form
- To develop the skills and confidence for you to take a professional approach to writing through critical reflection on the writing process and in-depth analysis of appropriate models and inspirations
- To provide flexible study in full- and part-time modes, and in which one to one tutorials may be conducted online as well as face to face, at times to suit you
- To foster a sense of belonging to a writing community; you will be able to meet a range of professional writers, publishers, agents, local arts organisations and a group of writing peers based around the exciting hub of the [York Centre for Writing](#)
- To offer the opportunity to engage with the local culture, community and landscape of the North and York as part of the above mentioned creative community

Programme learning outcomes

Upon successful completion of the programme students will be able to:

Level 7

- 7.1 Organise, research, and produce an original, independently-researched and -composed writing project
- 7.2 Critically reflect on a range of appropriate models and theoretical/cultural/historical contexts in relation to the composition of their own writing
- 7.3 Apply an awareness of forms, conventions and genres in relation to appropriate readers/audiences
- 7.4 Professionally edit and redraft their writing in response to constructive critical feedback
- 7.5 Communicate effectively the value of their creative and critical work to appropriate audiences
- 7.6 Engage in an active writing community as part of their ongoing professional development

[NB: See the QAA Benchmark document on Creative Writing for reference](#) (these do not extend in Creative Writing to any specifics for MFA/MA level and are therefore a guide only)

Programme structure

Code	Level	Term	Title	Credits	Module status	
					compulsory or optional to take C or O	non-compensatable or compensatable NC or X
CRW7008M	M	2	MFA Portfolio Progress	20	C	X
CRW7009M	M	3 & 1	MFA Manuscript and Critical Commentary	160	C	NC

Learning, teaching and assessment

The MFA in Creative Writing is designed to provide an opportunity for a student who already has a taught MA in Creative Writing to create a finished, full-length manuscript with accompanying Critical Commentary. The primary teaching mode is one to one supervision with an assigned supervisor who has expertise in the chosen form (prose (fiction/non-fiction), poetry, script (stage/screen/radio). Full-time students will receive at least 8 hours (and a maximum of 10 hours) of one to one supervision, and this can be delivered face to face or online (or take a blended approach) offering flexibility. In addition, you will have the opportunity to attend one Writing Workshop per term to share work in progress and a Portfolio Progress Residential Weekend. Whilst the largest proportion of the assessment is necessarily the final manuscript and its accompanying Critical Commentary, the Portfolio Progress module is an opportunity to present work developed so far and demonstrate the ability to articulate the value of the work to peers and tutors. It carries 20 of the 180 credits and is a pass-fail module. Sharing work with your peers in a constructive and

nurturing atmosphere is a key learning strategy to support independent learning and research, and to foster editing and critiquing skills that reproduce the professional relationship a writer has with agents, publishers, editors and, ultimately, audiences/readers.

As stated above, there are three broad 'routes' through the MFA, and you may develop any external links and/or critical-creative frameworks as appropriate to your unique project, with support from your supervisor and the broader Creative Writing team. You may already have links with an organisation, or any idea of working with a local community/heritage partner, but we can also provide potential links to local presses and publications, as well as arts organisations and the York Literature Festival; NHS; Bar Convent; Yorkshire Film Archive; Aesthetica; Valley Press; York Art Gallery; York Museums Trust; Shandy Hall, etc. as possible collaborators if the student wishes to pursue the 'Community/heritage' route.

Whilst the learning is independent, but supported you are encouraged to take a professional approach and attend the variety of events provided by the York Centre for Writing, which include visits from agents, publishers, editors and writers and are aimed at a sense of a creative community, of whom you are a valued member.

Progression and graduation requirements

The University's [general regulations for](#) postgraduate awards apply to this programme.

Any modules that must be passed for progression or award are indicated in the Programme Structure section as non-compensatable.

Internal and external reference points

This programme specification was formulated with reference to:

- [University mission and values](#)
- [University 2026 Strategy](#)
- [QAA subject benchmark statements](#)
- [Frameworks for Higher Education Qualifications](#)

Date written / revised: 01/11/22

Programme originally approved: 04/05/2018