Programme Specification

Award and title: Master of Fine Arts (MFA) Creative Writing

School:	Humanities
Subject area:	Creative Writing
Entry from academic year:	2024/25
in the month(s) of	February
Awarding institution:	York St John University
Teaching institution:	York St John University
Delivery location:	York St John University
Programme/s accredited by:	
Exit awards:	N/A
UCAS code / GTTR / other:	
Joint Honours combinations:	
QAA subject benchmark statement(s):	Creative Writing QAA
Mode/s of study:	Postgraduate periods of study[1] for full time / part time
Language of study:	English
Paired with Foundation Year	No
Study abroad opportunities:	No
Opt-in YSJU Placement Year opportunity:	No
Excluding a year-long placement/professional experience, are there placement/field trip/work experience(s) totalling 20 days or more?	No

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Introduction and special features

The Master of Fine Arts (MFA) 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.

You will have the opportunity to meet industry professionals such as agents, publishers, and editors and to professionalise your approach to your writing. You will be supervised one to one by a professional writer from the York St John Creative Writing team and have the opportunity to attend workshops twice per semester with like-minded peers to share work in progress. Workshops take place on site with your groups at our beautiful campus, and one to one supervisions can take place either online or in person to suit your needs.

- Your project will be supported by one to one, expert supervision with a professional writer from the Creative Writing team. This supervision can be undertaken full- or part-time, face to face, online or a blended approach to suit your circumstances.
- You will also take part in a twice semesterly Writers' Workshop to share work in progress with like-minded peers in a nurturing atmosphere.
- All students have the opportunity to take part in a Creative Writing Industry Day to learn more about the publishing industry from expert panels of agents, publishers and editors. In addition, all students have the opportunity to have a one-to-one session dedicated to their work in progress with an agent or editor.
- 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. Please note: This is an optional retreat and requires a financial contribution from the student.
- 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.

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, the short story, creative non-fiction (including memoir and true-crime), and are able to support writing in a number of genres. In addition, the Creative Writing (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, hauntology, motherhood, and pollination.

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 a Writing Retreat 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 minimum entry requirements which are published on the programme specific webpage. 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. (See below for 'equivalent' MA subjects)
- 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. NB Proposal form appended to the end of document.

Please note:
We normally consider applicants who have a Master's in Creative Writing or a related subject, such as:

- MA in Poetry
- MA in Fiction
- MA in Life Writing
- MA in Script Writing
- MA in Literature /English Literature/ Literature Studies
- MA in Publishing

However, we will consider applicants with any Master's qualification, and assess your application based on your personal statement, writing proposal and writing sample.

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.yorksj.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.
- To professionalise your approach to your writing throughout the course, including an opportunity for a one to one with a professional literary agent, editor or publisher.

Programme learning outcomes

Level 7

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

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 Participate in an active writing community as part of their ongoing professional development.

Programme structure

Full-time students (February start)

Code	Level	Semester*	Title	Credits	Module status	
					Compulsory (C) or optional (O)	non-compensatable (NC) or compensatable (X)
CRW7028M	7	2*	Portfolio Progress	20	C	C
CRW7029M	7	2, 3 & 1*	Manuscript and Critical Commentary	160	C	NC

Part-time students (February start)

Code	Level	Semester*	Year	Title	Credits	Module status	
						Compulsory (C) or optional (O)	non-compensatable (NC) or compensatable (X)
CRW7028M	7	2, 3, & 1*	1	Portfolio Progress	20	C	C
CRW7029M	7	2, 3 & 1*	1 & 2	Manuscript and Critical Commentary	160	C	NC

Any modules that must be passed for progression or award are indicated in the table above as non-compensatable. A non-compensatable module is one that must be passed at the relevant level (with a mark of 50 in order to progress.

* Please note that the semesters correspond to the standard University postgraduate semester calendar (i.e., a September start) as follows:

Standard University year	Semester starts
Semester 1	September
Semester 2	February
Semester 3	June

Key academic dates including the standard postgraduate semester calendar are published on the website.

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 two Writing Workshops per term to share work in progress and a Residential Writing Retreat Weekend (paid for by the University). 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. You will share a 20-minute presentation reflecting on your work in progress, your inspirations, challenges and techniques. This oral presentation also reflects a ‘pitch’ to an agent, publisher, funder or festival audience and provides experience of an essential part of a professions writer’s skill-set. 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.

Workshops will normally take place in the Writing Room in the impressive Creative Centre on York St John’s beautiful city centre campus. This room provides reading resources and a nurturing atmosphere to support your creative practice.

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 and more. There are also opportunities to become involved in our two in-house publications, The York Literary Review and the Beyond the Walls anthology.

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
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Date written / revised: 7th September 2023
Programme originally approved: July 2018

Appendices:

- **MFA Creative Writing Proposal Form:**

- Your final manuscript will comprise 40,000-70,000 words of prose or approx. 1,200 lines of poetry (the aim being a book-length manuscript appropriate to the chosen the form). It will be accompanied by a Critical Commentary of 6,000 words which reflects on the process of composition.

Applicant Name:
Year of Entry:
Full time/Part time?
Do you currently hold an MA in Creative Writing or a related subject? Please list the • **Title of the MA:** • **Classification (or predicted if near completion) (i.e. Merit, Distinction) :** • **Awarding institution:** • **Date of completion:**
Proposed title of MFA Creative Writing project:
Description of the 40,000-70,000 word [or 1,200 line poetry[creative component of your work including form and genre: <u>Please write 300-500 words here.</u>
Description of the 6,000 word Critical Commentary topic including comment on the existing field of creative/critical work: <u>Please write 100-300 words here</u>

Suggested bibliography (book/resource list) of both primary and secondary sources (please give 6-15 suggestions):
Other types of research required? (fieldwork/experiential; interview; scientific, historical etc.) – where appropriate
Publication/dissemination -please describe how you envisage your work being disseminated – e.g. print publication of collection or novel; exhibition; performance; mixed –media etc.
Please list any work previously published with dates and publishers/journals/websites [not essential]
Do you currently have an agent or publisher (please give details)? [not essential]

Are there any ethical considerations (i.e. does your work include interviews, qualitative data, sensitive material)? Please see York St John University's Research Ethics policy https://www.yorksj.ac.uk/research/research-ethics--integrity/

Checklist:

I have submitted a sample of creative writing of 1,000 words (or 3 poems) Y/N

I have completed the MFA Creative Writing Proposal Form Y/N