

Programme Specification

Award and title: MA Creative Writing and English Literature

<i>School:</i>	Humanities
<i>Subject area:</i>	Creative Writing/English Literature
<i>Entry from academic year:</i>	2026-27
<i>in the month(s) of</i>	September
<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>	Postgraduate Certificate Creative Writing and English Literature Postgraduate Diploma Creative Writing and English Literature
<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 MA level and are therefore a guide only)
<i>Mode/s of study:</i>	Postgraduate periods of study ¹ 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>Opt-in YSJU Placement Year opportunity:</i>	No
<i>Excluding a year-long placement/professional experience, are there placement/field trip/work experience(s) totalling 20 days or more?</i>	No

Introduction and special features

The MA Creative Writing and English literature is part of a thriving postgraduate writing community housed within the York Centre for Writing. The MA offers a mixture of modules in English Literature and Creative Writing that allow students to pursue their own interests, whilst foundational, core modules ensure that all students develop a range of key skills in critical reflection and creative practice. Class sizes are kept to small, intimate groups so that you can share and workshop writing in progress and hone your editorial skills. As a creative writer, you are provided with the opportunity to experiment with a range of forms and genres, from poetry to fiction, script to memoir, whilst all the time developing the writing projects which you are most passionate about. You will gain an insight into creative writing and English Literature as academic subjects, interrogating the place of writing in cultural, political and environmental contexts. This degree will enable you to develop your existing expertise as a sophisticated reader and critic of a range of literary materials, whilst also supporting you in the development of a growing portfolio of professional skills which will aid you in the wider postgraduate job market.

¹ The standard period of study will apply unless otherwise stated; please refer to the Regulations for Taught Postgraduate Awards <https://www.yorksj.ac.uk/policies-and-documents/regulations/> for information on standard periods of study

You will also have the opportunity to deepen professional writing skills through a range of exciting opportunities, including the chance to have a one-to-one meeting with an agent, publisher or editor, and to meet industry professionals who facilitate writing groups in a variety of community contexts. As well as the taught modules, you will research and write a final creative writing portfolio under the one-to-one supervision of an expert writer on the team, allowing you to produce a sustained, independent project as part of what will become an extensive portfolio of original work by the end of the MA. You will also work on a dissertation module for Creative Writing and English Literature, writing on the literary topic of your choice. For this, you will have free reign to work on texts from any literary period. You will be assigned a supervisor from our team, whose research expertise span a wide range of specialisms.

In addition, York is a fantastic place to be if you love books and reading. There is a rich literary history in the city, and each year, the city celebrates its literary heritage with the York Literature Festival, for which our department organises several events. In recent years, our students have had the chance to attend talks and readings by Margaret Atwood, Susanna Clarke, Jessica Andrews, Julia Armfield, David Almond, Sarah Hall, Carol Ann Duffy, Mark Gatiss, Andrew McMillan, and Lemn Sissay. As part of the York Centre for Writing, you will have the chance to get involved in a wide range of similar activities, as well as the opportunity to attend free workshops, writing sessions, and readings as part of your postgraduate degree experience. As a student on our MA Creative Writing and English Literature programme, you will also be joining a vibrant and ever-growing research culture, with the MA sitting at the heart of several active and welcoming Research Groups including: The Hauntology and Spectrality Research Group, the Interdisciplinary Witches Research Group, the Music, Memory and Memoir Research Group, the York Research Unit for the Study of Satire and the York Centre for Writing.

You will gain:

- Enhanced and developed strategies for creative practice
- An introduction to a number of contemporary creative texts in a range of forms (prose/script/poetry) with the tools to analyse and discuss those texts
- Critical skills in relation to both the reading and generation of new creative texts
- Critical awareness of the contexts for the production of creative texts (political, psychological, environmental)
- A sense of belonging to a writing community through the York Centre for Writing
- Opportunity to meet agents, publishers, editors and published authors
- Opportunity to engage in writing retreats in regional settings (these are heavily subsidised and are at a small cost to students)

Special features:

- Members of staff who are all practising, published, award-winning writers in a range of forms and genres including: creative non-fiction; fiction (short stories/novels); script (radio, screen, stage), contemporary poetry. Staff also have a range of critical interests including climate change, motherhood, body politics, northern writing, experimental poetry, history, science
- Small teaching groups of students to allow for in-depth work-shopping and development of writing practice
- Modules which develop creative and critical skills, but also develop professional skills in terms of publication experience, the study of facilitation strategies (for those students interested in possible workshop leading) and an awareness of community, political contexts and environment
- A focus on the relationship between critical thinking and creative writing
- The York Centre for Writing. The centre 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 undergraduate and postgraduate students. We also manage the Northern Independent Press Collection, supporting independent presses based in the North of England
- Opportunity for one-to-one meeting with an agent/publisher

- Opportunities to progress to the MFA, taught on a one-to-one supervised basis (low residency) for those wanting to continue to complete a full-length work (novel, collection, script) – only offered at a small number of UK universities
- Opportunities to progress to PhD in Creative Writing if appropriate

The Creative Writing and English Literature modules at YSJU are distinguished by:

- Their emphasis on drawing and understanding transhistorical connections and relationships between literary texts
- Their blending of text-led and criticism-led approaches to foreground disciplinary questions about what it means to participate in the critical field of literary studies
- Their positioning at the heart of a wide array of Research Centres populated by academics and PhD students from within and beyond YSJ
- A wide range of assessment techniques, developed by literary experts and industry specialists, with reflective components designed to foreground the applicability of the skills you will be rehearsing to specific professional contexts
- Access to local archives and repositories containing rare primary sources from the eighteenth century and earlier, such as York Minster Library and Archive and the Bar Convent Archive.
- Access to a wide range of visiting speakers and events, hosted by YSJU or local literary events such as the York Literature Festival, The York Festival of Ideas and the York Georgian Festival.
- A flexible part-time route that allows for returning learners as well as those wishing to take an MA as a route to further postgraduate study.

You will have the flexibility to pursue projects that you are passionate about, and will be supported by the expertise of the staff team. This allows for a range of diverse learners 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.

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 fosters an important sense of belonging and community.

Creative Writing and English Literature at YSJ are further 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

Admissions criteria

You must meet the minimum entry requirements which are published on the programme specific webpage. In addition, you must have:

- a BA degree at 2:2 grade or higher (or equivalent). We are open to considering previous degrees in the Humanities, Arts, Sciences and Social Sciences.
- MA candidates also need to submit a sample of creative writing, either in Prose, Script or Poetry of at least 1,000-2,000 words (or 3 poems) in order for staff to ascertain if the writing is of an appropriately high standard.

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)

- Enhanced and developed strategies for critical and creative practice, including an introduction to contemporary creative texts in a range of forms (prose/script/poetry) and the tools to analyse and discuss those texts, including questions of literary value and how it is determined.
- A strong awareness of the creative industries and provide opportunities for the development of professional skills, including opportunities to meet agents, publishers, editors and published authors and gain professional feedback
- A sense of belonging to a writing community through the York Centre for Writing, and opportunities for publication and editorial experience through journals, anthologies, and blogs

Programme learning outcomes

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

Level 7

- 7.1 Produce original creative writing that demonstrates technical proficiency and innovative engagement with contemporary literary strategies.
- 7.2 Critically reflect on the nature and production of literary texts in relation to wider political, social, and cultural contexts.
- 7.3 Employ a range of genre conventions with a comprehensive understanding of audience and reader expectations.
- 7.4 Exhibit originality and independent scholarship in creating a cohesive collection or substantial piece of writing in a chosen genre.
- 7.5 Communicate creative and critical ideas effectively to diverse audiences using verbal, written, and digital forms relevant to professional, academic, and public contexts.
- 7.6 Plan, manage, and deliver a substantial creative project with resilience, initiative, and adaptability, evidencing skills applicable to professional and freelance creative work.

Programme structure

Code	Level	Semester	Title	Credits	Module status	
					Compulsory (C) or optional (O)	non-compensable (NC) or compensable (X)
CRW7033M	7	1	The Writing Life	30	C	X
LIT7011M	7	1	Influence and Intertext	30	C	X
CRW7035M	7	2	Speculative Writing	30	O	X
CRW7036M	7	2	Writing the Uncanny	30	O	X
LIT7012M	7	2	World, Globe, Literature	30	C	X
CRW7039M	7	2 & 3	Creative Writing and English Literature Project Portfolio	60	C	NC

Please note that not all options may be available every year as they depend on student demand and staff availability.

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

Learning, teaching and assessment

You will be taught via peer workshops aimed to support independent writing practice, the discussion of contemporary texts, and redrafting and editing skills. The professional writers on the team will facilitate the groups and offer one-to-one meetings for discussing work in progress, giving advice about redrafting, sources of research, advice on genre, language, characterisation, setting, form, etc. (as appropriate to the individual project). The idea is that on each module, and in the final project, you work on the projects you are passionate about.

Creative writing modules are assessed via portfolio – original creative writing produced during the module, inspired by the themes and texts explored, and a contextual reflection which discusses the influences on your work and your creative process - while literature modules are assessed by a range of methods, including essay, annotated bibliography, presentation, abstract, and critical reflection. In each case, you will be supported with formative activities helping you to develop these skills, and your writing practice, in order to produce your best work in terms of both creative output and reflective discourse.

The final portfolio and dissertation are supervised one-to-one with experts on the team, matched closely to your creative and critical interests. In terms of the context component and presentation assessments, supervisors will advise on the appropriate critical/reflective angle and on the use of secondary sources, which might include historical, theoretical, scientific or experiential research. You will hone your editorial skills in supportive workshopping and discussion environments, writing on a regular basis and producing work which can then be shared with your peers. Supervisors will discuss the appropriate routes to possible dissemination of a particular work – e.g. students wishing to publish a novel will have a professional understanding of how to write a cover letter to an agent and submit a high quality sample of their work. There will be opportunities to meet agents, publishers and editors during the course of the degree.

Progression and graduation requirements

The University's [regulations](#) for taught 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-compensable.

Internal and external reference points

This programme specification was formulated with reference to:

- [University Mission, Culture and Values](#)
- [University 2026 Strategy](#)
- [QAA subject benchmark statements](#)
- [Frameworks for Higher Education Qualifications](#)

Date written / revised: 27/10/2025

Programme originally approved: 25/04/2018