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**Programme Specification**

**Title of Course: MFA Creative Writing**

**Date Specification Produced: January 2013**

**Date Specification Last Revised: September 2018**

This Programme Specification is designed for prospective students, current students, academic staff and employers. It provides a concise summary of the main features of the programme and the intended learning outcomes that a typical student might reasonably be expected to achieve and demonstrate if they take full advantage of the learning opportunities that are provided. More detailed information on the teaching, learning and assessment methods, learning outcomes and content of each module can be found in the Course Handbook on Canvas and in individual Module Descriptors.

**SECTION 1: GENERAL INFORMATION**

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| **Title:** | Creative Writing, MFA |
| **Awarding Institution:** | Kingston University |
| **Teaching Institution:** | Kingston University |
| **Location:** | Penrhyn Road |
| **Programme Accredited by:** |  |

**SECTION2: THE PROGRAMME**

**A: Programme Introduction**

Kingston’s Masters of Fine Arts in Creative Writing is the first programme in the UK to provide a two year (full time) terminal fine arts degree in creative writing. Adapted from similar programmes in the United States, Kingston’s MFA expects students to produce a substantial creative project (a collection of poetry or short stories, memoir or novel, for example) which, upon further development and revision, could be submitted to commercial and/or academic publishers.

The first year of the MFA, in which students take four 30 credit taught modules, is identical with the one year MA in CW programme, with the exception of the MFA dissertation – which is formatively (rather than summatively) assessed. In the second year, students go on to produce a 40,000 word dissertation (or equivalent length for poetry) supported by further workshop modules and from visiting writers and industry professionals. Students will be allocated a dissertation supervisor during TB1 of their second year and work closely with their supervisor throughout the year.

Kingston’s MFA provides an unprecedented amount of one-to-one support to its students. Shortly after admittance, students are assigned a Personal Tutor who helps them negotiate the many opportunities available to them, both in the programme and in the various ‘enhanced’ or ‘value-added’ lectures, master-classes, and tutorials made available through the Kingston Writing School; then, in TB1 of their second year students are assigned a genre-focused MFA dissertation adviser, who works with them to develop their final project.

Central to the activities of this supportive community of writers and peers, the ‘advanced dissertation project’ constitutes the sole summatively assessed element following the students’ first 120 credits (the normal MA year.) This project consists of a 40,000 word prose dissertation (or approved equivalent in poetry or drama) and a critical reading log/ essay/ reflection discussing literary texts appropriate to the students’ genres and interests and explaining how these texts have contributed to the dissertation project. The creative dissertation project may take the form of a single manuscript or a collection of writing across one or more genres. Students will draft and complete their dissertation under formal one-to-one supervision of a member of the course team, and occasional support from other staff and peers via additional workshops and tutorials.

Another distinguishing feature of the MFA in Creative Writing is the opportunity for a limited number of students to earn a post-graduate teaching certificate and thus prepare themselves for a teaching career in higher or further education. Prospective students must note their interest in applying for the course in their applications for the MFA. The Introduction to Learning and Teaching Course leads to SEDA (Staff and Educational Development Association - [http://www.seda.ac.uk](http://www.seda.ac.uk/)) certification for those who successfully pass the course. This certification also leads automatically to AFHEA (Associate Fellow of Higher Education) status. The School of Humanities enables selected students to take full advantage of the MFA by covering the cost of the course. Students enrolled on the ILT course will normally teach or co-teach an appropriate Level 4 undergraduate seminar in both semesters. These teaching opportunities enable students to complete the assessments for the ILT course while simultaneously applying their understanding of general theory, practice and methodology to a workshop environment.

The course includes the option of an integrated work placement or placements, which enables students to further develop their professional skills and enhance their employability. From the start of the course, students will begin to work to secure (a) placement(s) suitable for their course and career, supported and advised by the Careers and Employability Services team and the Professional Placement Module Leader. Workshops are provided on CV creation, interview techniques and placement searching, with drop-in sessions to provide additional support. In order to take the Professional Placement module, students need to have arranged a placement, approved by the Course Leader, by the end the preceding teaching block. Students undertake the placement either before the final module, or following the completion of the final module. During the placement students will be supervised (online) by a tutor who, if possible, will visit during the placement. Depending on the location of the placement, meetings might take place face-to-face or via platforms such as Skype. The placement module will make use of the Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) Canvas for communication and dissemination of information between students and staff as well as making online learning materials available. Students will be required to keep a critical diary of the tasks and duties undertaken during their placement, to provide a framework for a reflective essay and work placement report, which is submitted for assessment at the end of the placement. They will also assemble and collate samples of work and evidence of achievement produced during their placement which will also be submitted for assessment. Placement providers will be asked to appraise the students’ work and this feedback will be made available to the student. The placement module will be assessed on a pass/fail basis.

This integrated placement(s) provides students with a valuable opportunity to apply and develop their knowledge and skills in a professional working environment, enabling them to deepen their knowledge of the industry, develop their self-confidence, and strengthen their CV. Students undertaking placement activities are in a stronger position to gain the skills and experience which are valued by employers.

**B: Aims of the Programme**

1. The general aims of the Course are to:

* develop professional writing skills, techniques and originality of expression through extensive writing practice, peer review and workshop activities
* enable students to master the skills necessary to the publication, presentation and/or performance of their original writing
* enhance students’ knowledge of a considerable range of contemporary writing in different forms and genres
* ensure that students gain the range of skills necessary to work effectively with others in the classroomin the generation and improvement of material, through offering and receiving constructive criticism
* develop knowledge and skills related to publishing as a professional writer
* create a supportive community of aspiring and professional writers
* enable students to produce a long, substantial piece of complex creative writing or a collection of creative pieces to a professional standard
* The 3-year programme with integrated placement(s) also provides students with an opportunity to enhance their professional skills, preparing them for higher levels of employment, further study and lifelong learning

1. **Intended Learning Outcomes**

The programme provides opportunities for students to develop and demonstrate knowledge and understanding, skills and other attributes in the following areas. Where appropriate, the programme outcomes are referenced to the QAA subject benchmarks for English and the Frameworks for Higher Education Qualifications of UK Degree-Awarding Bodies (2014), and relate to the typical student. Note that there is no benchmark statement relating specifically to Creative Writing at Level 7. Where appropriate, we are guided by the most recent QAA benchmark statement for Creative Writing at Honours level.

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| **Programme Learning Outcomes** | | | | | |
|  | **Knowledge and Understanding**  **On completion of the course students will be able to:** |  | **Intellectual skills**  **On completion of the course students will be able to:** |  | **Subject Practical skills**  **On completion of the course students will be able to:** |
| A1 | Independently produce a substantial, near-book-length piece of creative and critical writing | B1 | Shape complex creative material into a substantial project along with a self-reflective critique on the techniques and subject matter of their writing in relation to their chosen genre or form | C1 | Draft and edit a sustained, near-book-length piece of creative writing in their preferred genre which is of a quality – or near to a quality – acceptable for submission to a good commercial or academic publisher |
| A2 | Reflect critically on a sustained, near-book-length piece of creative writing | B2 | Independently evaluate the success of their work, and the work of others – in terms of style, subject, and technique – in individual discussions and group work | C2 | Demonstrate a critical awareness and creative understanding of a variety of genres |
| A3 | Develop a sophisticated understanding of the professional opportunities that are available to writers and poets both in, and outside of, the classroom | B3 | Explore professional (and voluntary or non-profit) opportunities in which to share their creative skills and concerns in the schools and community | C3 | Develop the skills and confidence needed to succeed in the professional arena |
| A4 | Show an in-depth knowledge of literary texts in their chosen form or genre | B4 | Demonstrate a capacity for sophisticated critical thought and the development of practices of constructive peer review, self-reflection, editing and redrafting | C4 | Demonstrate a teachable awareness of the intellectual, historical and theoretical framework of their chosen genre(s) |

In addition to the programme learning outcomes identified overleaf, the programme of study defined in this programme specification will allow students to develop a range of Key Skills as follows:

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| **Key Skills** | | | | | | |
| **Self-Awareness Skills** | **Communication Skills** | **Interpersonal Skills** | **Research and information Literacy Skills** | **Numeracy Skills** | **Management & Leadership Skills** | **Creativity and Problem Solving Skills** |
| Take responsibility for own learning and plan for and record own personal development | Express ideas clearly and unambiguously in writing and the spoken work | Work well with others in a group or team | Search for and select relevant sources of information | Collect data from primary and secondary sources and use appropriate methods to manipulate and analyse this data | Determine the scope of a task (or project) | Apply scientific and other knowledge to analyse and evaluate information and data and to find solutions to problems |
| Recognise own academic strengths and weaknesses, reflect on performance and progress and respond to feedback | Present, challenge and defend ideas and results effectively orally and in writing | Work flexibly and respond to change | Critically evaluate information and use it appropriately | Present and record data in appropriate formats | Identify resources needed to undertake the task (or project) and to schedule and manage the resources | Work with complex ideas and justify judgements made through effective use of evidence |
| Organise self effectively, agreeing and setting realistic targets, accessing support where appropriate and managing time to achieve targets | Actively listen and respond appropriately to ideas of others | Discuss and debate with others and make concession to reach agreement | Apply the ethical and legal requirements in both the access and use of information | Interpret and evaluate data to inform and justify arguments | Evidence ability to successfully complete and evaluate a task (or project), revising the plan where necessary |  |
| Work effectively with limited supervision in unfamiliar contexts |  | Give, accept and respond to constructive feedback | Accurately cite and reference information sources | Be aware of issues of selection, accuracy and uncertainty in the collection and analysis of data | Motivate and direct others to enable an effective contribution from all participants |  |
|  |  | Show sensitivity and respect for diverse values and beliefs | Use software and IT technology as appropriate |  |  |  |

1. **D. Entry Requirements**

The following will be regarded as typically the appropriate admission requirements for the MFA course as they are for the course leading to the MA award although non-standard entrants will always be considered for entry:

* successful completion of a certified programme of study, at least a good second class honours undergraduate degree (2:1) or its equivalent
* a writing sample that displays abilities with the potential to be developed to a high professional standard
* strong letters of recommendation from a previous tutor
* in addition, where a candidate’s first language is not English, advanced English language competence in the form of appropriate certificated learning (IELTS requirement of 6.5 overall and 7.0 for the written element) or equivalent must be demonstrated as detailed in Kingston University’s Admissions Regulations

1. **E. Programme Structure**

This programme is offered in full-time, part-time and ‘with professional placement’ mode, and leads to the award of MFA in Creative Writing. Entry is normally at level 7. Intake is normally in September.

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| Half field students must take \*  Major field students must take \*  Minor field students must take \*  Level 6 requires the completion of the compulsory modules and \*\* option modules.  Modify as appropriate. |

**E1. Professional and Statutory Regulatory Bodies**

N/A

**E2. Work-based learning**

As part of the University work placement initiative, students on the MA Creative Writing have the option of taking the programme with a placement year. If this option is taken, then students will complete 120 taught credits before taking a placement year, returning the following September to complete the programme.

Work placement is an integral part of the 3-year programme and students will receive support from the award winning Careers and Employability Services team. While it is the responsibility of individual students to secure appropriate placements, the Careers and Employability Services team offers each student support at all stages of the application process, including writing CVs, completing application forms, participating in mock interviews, assessment centre activities and psychometric tests. Sourcing and applying for placement(s) gives students the opportunity to experience a competitive job application process.

The experience of the work placement period enables students to apply their learning in the professional work environment, to reflect upon their own personal experience of working in an applied setting, to focus on aspects of this experience that they can clearly relate to their prior learning, and to evaluate the relationships between academic skills and employers’ expectations. Students will be assessed during and at the end of this period, through a portfolio of work, which will be marked as pass/fail.

All MFA students are eligible to complete the Introduction to Teaching and Learning certificate and teach on level 4 undergraduate modules.

**E3. Outline Programme Structure**

The Course comprises 240 credits. Year 1 (or equivalent) requires 120 credits and is co-terminus with the taught element credits of the MA Creative Writing. Year 2 (or equivalent) involves 120 credits, all of which are earned by students completing an advanced dissertation project. This project is supported by a substantial teaching and learning strategy delivered by writing workshops and a seminar for critical reading

The first year of MFA course work is identical to the MA year, with the exception of the MA Dissertation, which is not taken for credit. The MA Dissertation is designed to help the MFA student complete the first 15,000 words (or commensurate lines in poetry, drama or script) as a formative exercise to be fully completed with the roughly 40,000 word (or commensurate) MFA Dissertation.

During the second year of the MFA students are expected to focus on their dissertation. To support them will be a variable programme of activities including: workshops, presentations, peer presentations and talks by visiting writers, scholars and people from the creative industries.

Students on the 3-year programme (with integrated placement) must complete all modules in Year 1 (120 credits) and then work in their placement(s) for a maximum of 12 months. The student should confirm that their placement opportunity is available by the end of May, and the course team will confirm whether this is acceptable within two weeks. Students on placement(s) must complete a portfolio assessment which includes a reflection on how they have applied the skills they have developed during the previous year, within a professional working environment. Students will return in September to complete the second full year of the programme.

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| **Level 7 – Year One** | | | | | |
| **Compulsory modules** | **Module code** | **Credit**  **Value** | **Level** | **Teaching Block** |
| Writers’ Workshop | CW7001 | 30 | 7 | 1 |
| Special Study Workshops | CW7004 | 30 | 7 | 2 |
| Ten Critical Challenges | CW7002 | 30 | 7 | 1 |
| Structure and Style | CW7003 | 30 | 7 | 2 |
| Creative Dissertation | CW7025 | 0 | 7 | 3 |
| Professional Placement | HU7100 | 120 | 7 | TB3 (Yr 1)  and  TB1&TB2  (Yr 2) |
| **Level 7 – Year Two** | | | | | |
| MFA Dissertation | CW7020 | 120 | 7 | 3 |

Students exiting the programme with 60 credits are eligible for the award of PgCert in Creative Writing.

Students exiting the programme with 120 credits are eligible for the award of PgDip in Creative Writing.

1. **F. Principles of Teaching Learning and Assessment**

The MFA in Creative Writing extends the teaching and learning strategies previously validated for the MA in Creative Writing (see programme specification document.) All of those strategies rest on the premise that students need to understand the important relationship between the creation of sophisticated imaginative writing and the acquisition of critical reading skills. They give students the chance to acquire skills necessary to the publication, presentation and/or performance of their writing, including excellent time management skills and the confidence as well as the ability to work independently.

Supervision throughout year two (or equivalent) will be led by the MFA Dissertation supervisor, who will be assigned to each student during the first semester of the MFA stage of their course. Each student will then meet regularly with their Dissertation supervisors until they complete their Dissertations in late September of their final year. Supervisions will be scheduled to ensure students receive timely feedback and encouragement, and students will be required to prepare carefully for all supervisory sessions during which a specialist member of the creative writing team will guide them in the redrafting of their manuscripts. As in year one (or equivalent) of the course, the knowledge that students gain in one-to-one supervision sessions will help them with the conception, development and completion of their dissertation. The sessions will be scheduled to foster a professional sense of time-management and the ability to work independently to produce a sophisticated, complex and sustained piece or collection of pieces of creative writing.

Assessments throughout the two years of the MFA Creative Writing relate not only to the learning outcomes for individual modules, but also reflect those of the course as a whole. These assessments collectively require the mastery of writing, rewriting, and editing techniques informed by in-depth critical reading and self-reflective writing, plus the use of best professional practice in the presentation of their work.

The assessment strategy for the dissertation element of the final project leading to the MFA award requires students to produce an example of creative writing of an accomplished and professional standard. This dissertation may take the form of a single, sustained piece of writing destined potentially to be a novel, collection of short stories, a book of poetry, a play or screenplay, a biography, memoir or other creative form; or it may be comprised of a collection of pieces across a range of genres. At approximately 40,000 words, this assessment is sufficiently long and complex in either format to reveal whether students can produce a substantial, sophisticated piece of writing appropriate to the award. As with the creative part of the dissertation at the end of year one (or equivalent), the final structure of the dissertation leading to the MFA must be approved in advance by the course leader.

Good writers must be good readers, and the assessment strategy for the critical reflective essay that forms the second element of the advanced dissertation project will require students to demonstrate their ability to engage with both literary texts and key debates around contemporary literature. The essay should demonstrate how the student situates their dissertation within a literary or genre context; how other texts and sources have informed or influenced the work and that the student is aware of and engaging with relevant literary/cultural/political/philosophical issues raised by their reading and their dissertation. The basic premise is that students must not only understand the important relationship between the acquisition of advanced critical reading skills and the creation of sophisticated imaginative writing but also be able to apply that understanding in both their creative and critical work.

1. **G. Support for Students and their Learning**

Students are supported by:

* Module leader for each module
* A Course Director to help students understand the programme structure
* Personal tutor to provide each student with tailored academic and personal support throughout the duration of the degree
* A placement tutor to give general advice on placements
* Formative diagnostic testing in all modules through creative and technical assessment of written work.
* Technical support to advise students on IT and the use of software appropriate to the degree
* A designated programme administrator
* An induction week at the beginning of the year and a re-induction talk in Teaching Block 2 to point students towards the Dissertation module
* Staff Student Consultative Committee
* VLE/Canvas – a versatile online interactive intranet and learning environment accessible both on and off-site
* Lynda.com – an online platform offering self-paced software tutorials
* A Centre for Academic Support (CASE) providing skills support throughout the academic year
* Student support facilities that provide advice and assistance on issues such as finance, regulations, legal matters, accommodation, international student support, study abroad etc
* A Student Achievement Officer who provides pastoral support
* Support for students with disabilities
* The Union of Kingston Students
* Careers and Employability Service team, who will provide support for students prior to undertaking work placement(s).
* A dissertation supervisor who will provide one-on-one tutorial support and instruction in developing the MFA Dissertation
* Numerous opportunities for collective feedback from their cohort during interactive lectures

1. **H. Ensuring and Enhancing the Quality of the Course**

The University has several methods for evaluating and improving the quality and standards of its provision. These include:

* External Examiners
* Boards of Study with student representation
* Annual Monitoring and Enhancement
* Periodic review undertaken at subject level
* Student evaluation including MEQs
* Moderation policies
* Feedback from employers
* Rigorous second marking procedures
* Conform to creative writing workshop standards as recommended by the AWP

1. **I. Employability Statement**

The Creative Writing MFA fosters a range of skills desirable to employers – in communication, self-management, editing and presentation, and the ability to reflect on one’s own work and to respond to constructive criticism.

In addition to a possible career as a writer, other careers may include work in publishing, journalism, advertising and marketing, film, television, radio, arts management, new media, business, teaching and therapeutic programmes.For those interested in further research, the course provides an excellent foundation for MPhil/PhD level study in related programmes.

Our students have gone on to become professional novelists, poets and dramatists but have also gained work in Creative Writing teaching, arts management and in various other areas of professional writing. We support our students through regular workshops with agents, publishers, and professional writers who come in to share their tips on becoming a working writer.

The 3-year integrated work placement programme is designed to provide students with enhanced opportunities for securing professional employment at the end of their degree, providing skills and experience that employers are looking for in their work force. These are supported by the Careers and Employability Services team, providing drop-in and scheduled events to support students in the preparation of CVs, applications, and preparation for interviews and assessment centres.

1. **J. Approved Variants from the Postgraduate Regulations**

* The 120-credit Dissertation is an approved variant of the Postgraduate Regulations.

1. **K. Other sources of information that you may wish to consult**

Course page on the KU website:

<https://www.kingston.ac.uk/postgraduate-course/creative-writing-mfa/>

**Development of Programme Learning Outcomes in Modules**

This map identifies where the field/course learning outcomes are **summatively** assessed across the modules for this field/course. It provides an aid to academic staff in understanding how individual modules contribute to the field/course aims, a means to help students monitor their own learning, personal and professional development as the field/course progresses and a checklist for quality assurance purposes.

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|  |  |  | **Level 7** | | | | | |
|  | **Module Code** |  | CW7001 | CW7004 | CW7002 | CW7003 | CW7020 |
| **Programme Learning Outcomes** | **Knowledge & Understanding** | A1 | S | S | S | S | S |
| A2 |  | S | S |  | S |
| A3 | S | S | S | S | S |
| A4 |  | S | S |  | S |
| **Intellectual Skills** | B1 | S | S | S | S | S |
| B2 |  |  | S |  | S |
| B3 | S | S |  | S | S |
| B4 | S | S | S | S | S |
| **Subject Practical Skills** | C1 | S | S | S | S | S |
| C2 | S |  | S | S |  |
| C3 |  | S |  |  | S |
| C4 | S | S | S | S | S |

**Students will be provided with formative assessment opportunities throughout the course to practise and develop their proficiency in the range of assessment methods utilised.**

**Technical Annex**

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| **Final Award(s):** | Masters of Fine Art in Creative Writing | |
| **Intermediate Award(s):** | PG Cert  PG Dip | |
| **Minimum period of registration:** | 2 years full-time, 3 years full-time (with Professional Placement), 4 years part-time | |
| **Maximum period of registration:** | 4 years full-time, 4 years full-time (with Professional Placement), 8 years part-time | |
| **FHEQ Level for the Final Award:** | Masters | |
| **QAA Subject Benchmark:** | Creative Writing (Honours) | |
| **Modes of Delivery:** | Full-time, Part-time and ‘with Professional Placement’ | |
| **‘Language of Delivery:** | English | |
| **Faculty:** | Kingston School of Art | |
| **School:** | Arts, Culture and Communication | |
| **Department:** | Humanities | |
| **UCAS Code:** | N/A | |
| **Course/Route Code:** | |  | |