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**Programme Specification**

**Title of Course: MFA Creative Writing Distance Learning**

**Date Specification Produced: January 2013**

**Date Specification Last Revised: August 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:** | MFA Creative Writing Distance Learning  |
| **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 programme currently being successfully delivered 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 Distance Learning version of this programme offers a distinctive, flexible format for students wishing to study on freer and more wide-ranging terms than those offered by a conventional residential course. The Distance Learning MFA is tailored to students for whom a structured weekly programme is either unwanted or inconvenient. The programme makes use of the range of modern communications technologies that make distance learning an increasingly viable and attractive option for students.

Distance students will undertake the same modules as students doing the residential MFA and will enjoy the same benefits of extensive writing practice, contextual reading, regular tutor interaction and feedback on their work, and circulation of work among their peers for commentary and criticism. During the two non-compulsory campus days, students can attend lectures or writing workshops and meet tutors and other members of their creative writing cohort; the rest of the time they will be able to focus on their own work, assisted by a tailored timetable of dedicated tutor feedback and support. This method of study has the obvious benefit of fostering individual creativity and enabling students to concentrate on their own creative goals and projects, while still providing the cohort and workshop contact that forms an enjoyable and stimulating aspect of creative writing programmes.

The Distance Learning MFA seeks to employ the most modern and effective methods of communication to deliver the online elements of programme in a scholarly, rigorous and passionate manner. Course tutors design and structure both individual and group online contact with students by any combination of a number of methods, including email, phone, Skype and online blogs and other forums, and can deliver course content for certain modules by digital voice file and filmed lectures. Students combine intensive workshopping of their writing, module seminars and a tailored programme of talks, lectures and readings. Campus days provide the opportunity to meet one another and there may also be the opportunity to attend events with professionals in the fields of publishing and literary agency, and of course the range of writers associated with the Writers’ Centre Kingston (WCK).

The first year of the Distance Learning MFA, in which students take four 30 credit taught modules, is identical with the one year Distance Learning 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 further develop their critical skills as writers and readers of creative prose and poetry in two non-accredited advanced workshop modules. All modules emphasise a practice-based character while encouraging critical reflection on professional techniques and close reading. Regular tutor feedback, and peer review of student writing, fosters a mutually supportive cohort spirit in this distance learning format.

Kingston’s Distance Learning MFA provides an unprecedented amount of one-to-one support to its students. In the first weeks, students are assigned a Personal Tutor who will help them negotiate the programme over the course of their studies; then, in the first two months of their second year, students are assigned a genre-focused MFA dissertation adviser, who works with them to develop their final project. Students are also invited in each teaching block to attend live online masterclasses with guest writers and teachers, who provide individual advice and share their extensive knowledge of teaching and writing in a wide variety of venues. These are run via a synchronous communication tool integrated into Canvas.

The ‘advanced dissertation project’ constitutes the sole summatively assessed element following the students’ first 120 credits (the normal Distance Learning MA year.) This project consists of a 40,000 word prose dissertation (or approved equivalent in poetry or drama) and a critical reading log of literary texts appropriate to the students’ genres and interests. 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 with the collective support of staff and guest faculty in the non-credited support modules.

A Creative Writing Distance Learning MFA Canvas site has been developed to support students. The site has been designed for easy access, including on mobile devices accessing content via the Canvas Mobile app. The site is designed to function as a one-stop shop with links to relevant web sites, course documentation, assignment briefs and contact details of the course team. Dedicated group areas have been created to support the development of cohort identity. Students will be offered the opportunity to discuss their progress/work with their personal tutor via Skype or Canvas. Should students wish to make and share digital recordings of their writing, we have enabled 'voice boards' on the Canvas site. These function in a similar way to text-based discussion board forums but allow audio as well as text to be posted and commented on.

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 othersin 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 popular 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 |  |  |  |

**D. Entry Requirements**

The following will be regarded as typically the appropriate admission requirements for the Distance Learning 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, normally a good second class honours undergraduate degree or its equivalent
* a writing sample that displays abilities that might well 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
* achievement of a first in at least one MA module for those students wishing to graduate from the Distance Learning MA to the Distance Learning MFA

**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.

**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.

The online masterclasses opportunities allow students to gain from the experience of professional guests and standing faculty, and to evaluate the relationship between classroom-based theory and discussions and professional practice in schools and communities.

**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 Distance Learning 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. The first year of Distance Learning MFA course work is identical to the Distance Learning 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 Distance Learning MFA, students are supported by their dissertation supervisor in one-to-one sessions, as well as by access to peer support and online Masterclasses from distinguished Writers in Residence. There may also be the opportunity to attend talks by industry figures on the non-compulsory Campus Days.

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 | CW7021 | 30 | 7 | 1 |
| Special Study Workshops | CW7024 | 30 | 7 | 2 |
| Structure and Style | CW7023 | 30 | 7 | 1 |
| Critical Challenges | CW7022 | 30 | 7 | 2 |
| Creative Dissertation | CW7225 | 0 | 7 | 3 |
| Professional Placement | HU7100 | 120 | 7 | TB3 (Yr 1)andTB1&TB2(Yr 2) |
| **Level 7 – Year Two** |
| MFA Dissertation | CW7120 | 120 | 7 | 3 |

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

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

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

The Creative Writing Distance Learning MFA extends the teaching and learning strategies previously validated for the Creative Writing Distance Learning MA (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.

A Personal Tutor will be assigned to help students throughout their MFA programme. The Personal Tutor provides each student with a single point of contact and appropriate academic, career and personal guidance by helping to identify individual needs. A Dissertation supervisor will work regularly with each student across Teaching Block 3 to complete a formatively assessed 15,000 word creative project and a formatively assessed 3,000 word critical essay. At the end of the first year, the Personal Tutor will organise a one-to-one personal tutorial with each assigned student to discuss their transition into the second year of the programme. At this stage, the role of the Personal Tutor will be complemented by that of the MFA Dissertation supervisor, who will be assigned to each student, typically by Week 6 of Teaching Block 1. Each student will then meet regularly online with their Dissertation supervisors (and, if necessary, follow up with their Personal Tutor) until they complete their Dissertations in late September of the following year. Supervisions will be scheduled online eight times across the year to ensure students receive timely feedback and encouragement, and students will be required to prepare carefully for all supervisory sessions during which their Dissertation supervisor will guide them in the redrafting of their manuscripts. As in year one (or equivalent) of the programme 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 Creative Writing Distance Learning MFA 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 specific assessment strategy for year two (or equivalent) of the Distance Learning MFA mixes formative activities and feedback with a summative assessment comprised of two complementary elements. This mixture is designed, on the one hand, to test students’ application of techniques of revision, drafting, and self-evaluation, as well as their skills in meeting professional standards of time management and the advanced critical skills associated with a directed and critical study of literary texts. On the other, it is devised to ensure that students develop their imaginative responses to their own texts and to the texts of others, both peers and established writers, in an open, respectful and constructive context. Such an environment will be characterised by the individual and collective support of a community of writers.

The assessment strategy for the dissertation element of the final project leading to the Distance Learning 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 programme leader.

Good writers must be good readers, and the assessment strategy for the critical reading log that forms the second element of the advanced dissertation project will require students to demonstrate their ability to read literary texts to a standard that is sufficiently advanced to help them improve their own writing while also engaging them with key debates about contemporary literature. Consisting of a portfolio of critical reports on assigned and individually selected texts totalling approximately 4500 words, this element will require students to articulate practical insights into the possible value and practical application of subtle and sophisticated literary techniques derived from established writers. It will also require them to express a critical understanding of issues such as canon formation and literary value. 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.

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

Students are supported by:

* A Module Leader for each module
* A Course Leader to help students understand the programme structure
* Personal Tutors to provide academic and personal support
* A placement tutor to give general advice on placements
* Technical support to advise students on IT and the use of software
* A designated Course Administrator
* An induction week at the beginning of each new academic session
* 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 substantial Study Skills Centre that provides academic skills support for both UG and PG students
* Student support facilities that provide advice on issues such as finance, regulations, legal matters, accommodation, international student support etc.
* A Student Achievement Officer who provides pastoral support
* Support for students with disabilities
* The Union of Kingston Students
* Careers and Employability Services Team, who will provide support for students prior to undertaking work placement(s).

**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
* Conform to creative writing workshop standards as recommended by the AWP

**I. Employability Statement**

The Creative Writing Distance Learning 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. The Distance Learning MFA students may enjoy contact with agents, publishers, writers and poets from throughout the world who share their tips on becoming a working writer, online and during campus days. Most students can expect to receive twenty to thirty hours of directed supervision by writing professional of a high calibre. Opportunities to network and share work experience are huge.

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.

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

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

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

The Writers’ Centre Kingston which offers an open, inspirational and innovative environment that transcends the university. The WCK website provides details of readings and writers’ workshops, as well as talks by publishers, editors and literary agents. These offer the chance to maximise the impact of your work. Web reference: <http://fass.kingston.ac.uk/wck/>

The awards made to students who complete the field or are awarded intermediate qualifications comply fully with the National Qualifications Framework.

All of the procedures associated with the field comply with the QAA Codes of Practice for Higher Education.

**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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|  |  |  | **Level7** |
|  | **Module Code** |  | CW7021 | CW7022 | CW7023 | CW7024 | CW7120 |
| **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 |
| **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 CertPG 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:** |  |