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**Programme Specification**

**Title of Course: Creative Writing, MFA 2013-14**

**Date Specification Produced: January 2013**

**Date Specification Last Revised: August 2016**

This Programme Specification is designed for prospective students, current students, academic staff and potential 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 he/she takes 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 Student Handbooks and 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 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 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 as well as talks from visiting writers at Kingston Writing School. Students will be allocated a dissertation supervisor during TB1 of their second year and they will 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. Finally, students benefit from the experience of many guest writers and teachers, who provide individual tutorials, give readings and share their extensive knowledge of teaching and writing in a wide variety of venues. (Guests have included writers such as Wendy Cope, Barrie Keefe, Liz Jensen, Mary Lawson, Alex Preston, and David Lehman, as well as directors of major US MFA programmes - Brian Evenson of Brown, J. Robert Lennon and Lamar Herrin of Cornell, Steve Erickson of Cal Arts, etc. - and editors of internationally prestigious literary journals (Paul Maliszewski of *Denver Quarterly* and *McSweeney’s*, Lynn Tillman of *Fence*, etc.)

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 with the collective support of staff and guest faculty in the non-credited support modules and associated writers-in-residence programme.

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>) 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 semester one and lead a formally timetabled teaching and learning workshop in the second semester. 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 programme features a number of extracurricular, employment-related opportunities. These may include: a student-edited on-line blog which features essays, poems and stories by MFA students; a feed from the programme's Twitter account (<https://twitter.com/kingstonmfa>); a link to join the student-administered Facebook page (<http://www.facebook.com/pages/Kingston-University-MFA-Writers/144654935691051> A bursary may also be available for an MFA student to chair the student committee for the Kingston Writing School, initiating, organizing and managing a budget for events and activities for students across KWS. Other creative and publishing opportunities that have been available for our MFA students in the past have included: a student-edited, end-of-year literary journal, the undergraduate student literary magazine, “Ripple,” and work experience with Kingston University Press. MFA students also have the chance to introduce guest writers at readings and university-sponsored events.

**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
* develop students’ understanding of the nature of self-publishing, its theoretical underpinning, role and relevance, within the context of the publishing industry, the wider creative economy – and society in general
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 Framework for Higher Education Qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland (2008), 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 – able to:****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) |
| **Key Skills** |
|  | **Self Awareness Skills** |  | **Communication Skills** |  | **Interpersonal Skills** |
| AK1 | Take responsibility for own learning and plan and record own personal development | BK1 | Express ideas clearly and unambiguously in writing and the spoken word | CK1 | Work well with others in a group or team |
| AK2 | Recognise own academic strengths and weaknesses, reflect on performance and progress and respond to feedback | BK2 | Present, challenge and defend ideas and results effectively orally and in writing | CK2 | Work flexibly and respond to change |
| AK3 | Organise self effectively, agreeing and setting realistic targets, accessing support where appropriate and managing time to achieve targets | BK3 | Actively listen and respond appropriately to ideas of others | CK3 | Discuss and debate with others and make concession to reach agreement |
| AK4 | Work effectively with limited supervision in unfamiliar contexts |  |  | CK4 | Give, accept and respond to constructive feedback |
|  |  |  |  | CK5 | Show sensitivity and respect for diverse values and beliefs |
|  | **Research and information Literacy Skills** |  | **Numeracy Skills** |  | **Management & Leadership Skills** |
| DK1 | Search for and select relevant sources of information | EK1 | Collect data from primary and secondary sources and use appropriate methods to manipulate and analyse this data | FK1 | Determine the scope of a task (or project) |
| DK2 | Critically evaluate information and use it appropriately | EK2 | Present and record data in appropriate formats | FK2 | Identify resources needed to undertake the task (or project) and to schedule and manage the resources |
| DK3 | Apply the ethical and legal requirements in both the access and use of information | EK3 | Interpret and evaluate data to inform and justify arguments | FK3 | Evidence ability to successfully complete and evaluate a task (or project), revising the plan where necessary |
| DK4 | Accurately cite and reference information sources | EK4 | Be aware of issues of selection, accuracy and uncertainty in the collection and analysis of data | FK4 | Motivate and direct others to enable an effective contribution from all participants |
| DK5 | Use software and IT technology as appropriate |  |  |  |  |
|  | **Creativity and Problem Solving Skills** |  |  |  |  |
| GK1 | Apply scientific and other knowledge to analyse and evaluate information and data and to find solutions to problems |  |  |  |  |
| GK2 | Work with complex ideas and justify judgements made through effective use of evidence |  |  |  |  |
| **Teaching/learning methods and strategies** |
|  The range of learning and teaching strategies include* Formal lectures
* Practical classes
* Seminars and workshops
* ‘Workshopping’ – or interactive lectures
* The participation of Writers in Residence and visiting speakers and practitioners
* Participation in the MFA Residencies programme, which brings in guests from various MFA and teaching programmes throughout the world
* Individual feedback sessions
* A dedicated MFA site on StudySpace
* Peer “brainstorming” and project mapping sessions
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| **Assessment strategies** |
| The assessment strategies employed in the Fields include the following:* Formative diagnostic assessment in all modules
* Portfolio
* Critical commentaries
* Critical essays
* Extended creative writing projects and collections of shorter pieces of creative writing
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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 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

1. **E. Programme Structure**

This programme is offered in full-time/part-time mode, and leads to the award of MFA. 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, including sandwich programmes

All MFA students are eligible to complete the PGCLTHE, with teaching experience made available in the undergraduate creative writing programme. Career and employment advice is part of the weekly discussion in the Advanced Writing Teaching Workshop – although it is the responsibility of individual students to source and secure such placements. These opportunities allow students to reflect upon their own personal experience of working in an applied setting, 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 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. .

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| **Level 7 Year One** |
| **Compulsory modules** | **Module code** | **Credit****Value** | **Level** | **%****Written exam** | **% practical exam** | **%****course-work** | **Teaching Block** |  |
| Writers’ Workshop | CW7001 | 30 | 7 |  |  | 100 | 1 |  |
| Special Study Workshops | CW7004 | 30 | 7 |  |  | 100 | 2 |  |
| Ten Critical Challenges | CW7002 | 30 | 7 |  |  | 100 | 1 |  |
| Structure and Style | CW7003 | 30 | 7 |  |  | 100 | 2 |  |
| Creative Dissertation | CW7025 | 0 | 7 |  |  | 100 | 3 |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Level 7 Year Two** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| MFA Dissertation | CW7020 | 120 | 7 |  |  | 100 | 3 |  |
| Students exiting the programme with 60 credits are eligible for the award of PgCertStudents exiting the programme with 120 credits are eligible for the award of PgDip |

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 CW 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 MFA mixes formative activities, exercises 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, including those associated with the Kingston Writing School.

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 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. 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.

Students will also enjoy the chance to benefit from the MFA’s close ties with both the Kingston Writing School and Kingston University Press, the latter offering small bursaries to allow students to gain first-hand work experience. This experience may include reading and reporting on manuscripts, supervised proof-reading and editorial work, assistance with the production of the Iris Murdoch Review and, potentially, online editorship of a student literary magazine such as *Ripple*, produced on the School’s MA Publishing course. All of these opportunities can enhance the professional engagement of students.

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
* 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
* Study-space- a versatile on-line interactive intranet learning environment
* A Centre for Academic Support (C.A.S.E) 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
* Support for students with disabilities
* The Students’ Union

Careers and Employability Service

* A dissertation supervisor who will provide twelve hours of one-on-one tutorial support and instruction in developing the MFA Dissertation
* Numerous opportunities for collective feedback from their cohort during interactive lectures
* Numerous opportunities for one-on-one tutorial support from a wide range of guest faculty and visiting writers
* The MFA Residencies Programme, which brings experienced teachers and creative writers into the classroom to discuss best practice in the teaching of, and production of, good writing
* Faculty Pastoral Officer
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 review and development
* Periodic review undertaken at the subject level
* Student evaluation
* Moderation policies
* 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.

1. **J. Approved Variants from the UMS/PCF**

The 120 credit dissertation is an approved variant of PCF.

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

The [National Association of Writers in Education (NAWE)](http://www.nawe.co.uk/metadot/index.pl?op=show&iid=2383) which supports the study of creative writing and research at all educational levels including Higher Education, and provides a range of resources concerning Creative Writing. These include conferences, a professional directory, a professional development programme, and Higher Education network. Web reference: <http://www.nawe.co.uk/>

The Kingston Writing School which offers an open, inspirational and innovative environment that transcends the university. The KWS 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/writing/>

The US Association of Writers and Writing Programs (AWP) which provides community, opportunities, ideas, news, and advocacy for writers and teachers of writing and hosts an annual conference which is attended regularly by Creative Writing staff. The Association website also provides an extensive library of pedagogical tools. (Web reference: <https://www.awpwriter.org/>)

The English Subject Centre at Royal Holloway is a useful point of reference, providing a variety of resources concerning Creative Writing. These include conferences and reports; working papers, for example on structures and trends in the teaching of Creative Writing; the provision of various on-line resources and contacts; and a range of projects and initiatives relating to the subject. Web reference: <http://www.english.ltsn.ac.uk/resources/topic/creative.htm>

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.

**Technical Annex**

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| **Final Award(s):** | *Masters of Fine Arts in Creative Writing* |
| **Intermediate Award(s):** | *PgCert**PGDip* |
| **Minimum period of registration:** | *2 years full time, 4 years part time* |
| **Maximum period of registration:** | *4 years full time, 8 years part time* |
| **FHEQ Level for the Final Award:** | *Masters* |
| **QAA Subject Benchmark:** |  |
| **Modes of Delivery:** | *Full time and part time* |
| **Language of Delivery:** | *English* |
| **Faculty:** | *Arts and Social Sciences* |
| **School:** | *Humanities* |
| **JACS code:** | *W800.*  |
| **UCAS Code:** | *n/a* |
| **Course Code:** | *HFFKPMA2FCRW* |
| **Route Code:** | *HPCRW* |