

About the Creative Writing MA/MFA

Course overview

Our MA and MFA (Master of Fine Arts) courses are uniquely flexible programmes designed to enable you to develop the craft of creative writing while specialising in a chosen genre of popular literature: writing fiction, writing children's literature, writing creative non-fiction or poetry. The approach we take is very practical, with no distinction between writers working in different genres or disciplines: a thriller writer is as welcome as a poet, and both will learn a great deal about their craft.

You will receive expert guidance and rigorous, constructive feedback from established, published creative writers in the genre or form of your choice. Professional writers and visiting professors provide regular input to workshops in specific genres or forms.

Creative writing MFA

Kingston University is proud to offer the first Master of Fine Arts in Creative Writing available in the UK. This course gives talented and aspiring writers the chance to refine their skills under the tutelage of acclaimed professionals while having the chance to receive accredited training and experience in teaching in higher education.

Admissions to the two-year (full-time) or four-year (part-time) MFA will be highly selective and based upon the quality of a writing sample as well as an assessment of your publishing potential.

Careers

These courses provide you with a detailed knowledge and expert awareness of the power of the written word, and are particularly valuable if you wish to enhance your career in publishing, journalism, teaching, the arts, communications or creative writing.

The unique combination of creative and practical skills provided by these courses will also allow you to prepare yourself simultaneously for a career as a writer and a workshop facilitator in creative writing as well as in advertising, publishing, the public service, business and the creative economy.

Research areas

In addition to being published authors, many of the staff are research active. This ensures they are in touch with the latest thinking and bring best practice to your studies.

Areas of research include the following:

- 19th- and 20th-century British and American fiction
- Fictions of globalisation
- Modernism
- Gothic writing
- Travel writing
- Literary representations of the Balkans
- Narratives of slavery
- Women's writing from the 18th century to the present
- New Woman and fin de siècle fictions
- Shakespeare
- Literature of the English Reformation period
- English women's religious poetry during the 17th century
- Postcolonial studies

This research focuses around three initiatives:

- Centre for Iris Murdoch Studies, established in 2004 to oversee research on the Iris Murdoch archives acquired by Kingston University in 2003/4.
- Performing History, in collaboration with Hampton Court Palace, is a project that looks at early Tudor plays in performance at Hampton Court and the relationship between architectural space and the performance of drama.
- Centre for Suburban Studies is committed to pioneering interdisciplinary approaches to the study of suburbia.

What you will study

Creative Writing MA

You will have opportunities to develop your creative writing skills in general, as well as specialise in a chosen genre. You will study literary criticism and theory, and develop an understanding of professional skills and development, such as copyediting, structure and style, and how to get your work published. You will have the unique opportunity to work in a focused workshop, in which you will develop your craft on a one-to-one basis or in small groups with experts in your chosen genre working towards producing a substantial piece of creative writing within that area.

You can elect to write within your chosen genre from the beginning of the course or you may wish to experiment within various genres in the first stages. The Special Study module is designed to enable you to fully concentrate on your chosen specialism. Experts in poetry, prose writing, creative non-fiction and hybrid forms will work with you on refining your genre choice. In the subsequent Dissertation modules, you will be encouraged to fully explore and engage with (or against) the codes and conventions of your chosen genre. These may include specialisms such as travel writing, writing for children, experimental or plot-based fiction, drama or screen play, short story and/or hybrid forms or poetry.

Optional extras include a weekly session with visiting publishers, editors and agents. All modules are taught within a context that provides extracurricular opportunities, such as guest readings, masterclasses, a student-led literary magazine and a student reading series.

Creative Writing MFA

The first stage of the course, which is co-terminus with our popular MA in Creative Writing, includes two writing workshops, where you present and discuss your own and other students' work. In stage one you will also take the Ten Critical Challenges for Creative Writers module as well as Structure and Style, a module designed to enable you to experiment outside your genre of writing. In addition, you will write a 15,000-word creative dissertation.

In stage two of the MFA, after completion of the modules co-terminus with the MA, you will attend smaller, more-focused writing workshops. You will also attend seminars designed to improve your critical reading skills. The MFA spring Writing-Teaching Workshop will feature experienced guest-writers and teachers from around the world – recent and forthcoming guests include Steve Erickson (Zeroville), director of the Cal Arts MFA; Brian Evenson (The Open Curtain), director of the MFA at Brown University; and J Robert Lennon (Castle), director of the MFA at Cornell University. The MFA residents will also offer one-to-one tutorials to the MFA students.

You will have the option of participating in modules that lead to the award of Kingston University's Postgraduate Certificate in Learning and Teaching in Higher Education (PGCLTHE). Teaching practice towards completion of this Certificate entails leading undergraduate classes under supervision.

You will receive the MFA qualification on completion of the advanced dissertation project in stage two of the course. The one-to-one supervision for this advanced dissertation (40,000 words or the equivalent) will be conducted by one of the course's permanent staff, one of our writers-in-residence or an editor from a leading UK publishing company. There may also be opportunities to gain experience assisting with book publication at Kingston University Press which offers a number of bursaries annually.

Course content – Creative Writing MA

Core modules

Writers' Workshop

In this module you will present and discuss your own and each other's work in a weekly workshop. The draft work presented may include several genres and forms, such as crime writing, fantasy fiction, children's literature, historical fiction, science fiction, romance and autobiography. Practical criticism will be accompanied by discussion of the scope or constraints of the various genres, as well as the implications of particular forms. Attention will be paid to the components of good writing: appropriate use of language, narrative pace, dialogue, expression, characterisation and mood.

Structure and Style

This module will provide the opportunity to write across three genres – including prose, poetry and playwriting – and will teach you how to apply literary techniques from other forms to your own work. It will include an in-depth look into issues of voice, imagery, tone and characterisation, as well as elements of narrative, dramatic and lyrical forms. Contemporary works will be studied so that you can master structure and style and understand how various literary forms function. You will submit a portfolio of writing exercises in the different genres studied.

Special Study: Workshops in Popular Genre Writing

This module offers a regular and intensive review of your writing. You will be advised on how to strengthen your knowledge of the codes and conventions of your chosen genre to reflect critically and constructively on your writing and its publication context. You will produce a substantial piece or collection of work that reflects your knowledge of and engagement with your genre.

Ten Critical Challenges for Creative Writers

This module will introduce you to some of the basic issues of critical and literary theory. By making you aware of how your writing impacts with wider literary, cultural, political and philosophical debates, we aim to encourage more original, creative and critical thinking. You will explore debates about literature and the practice of creative writing through readings of essays and texts that are relevant to criticism and theory. You will be expected to produce both bold, experimental work that explores these challenges in an imaginative form, and a serious, academic analysis of these issues through a critical essay.

Creative Dissertation and Critical Essay

This module is devoted to writing and research carried out in your chosen form or genre. It is developed in consultation with your supervisor and taught via one-to-one tutorials. You will produce two pieces of writing:

- A creative dissertation, which will take the form of a portion of a novel, poetry, a play, screenplay or other creative form of no more than 15,000 words
- A critical essay of approximately 3,000 words that considers the relationships between your writing and the literary contexts and theoretical concerns that inform a range of published writing in your chosen genre or form.

Course content – Creative Writing MFA

Core modules (see Creative Writing MA, left, for module descriptions)

Writers' Workshop

Structure and Style

Special Study: Workshops in Popular Genre Writing

Ten Critical Challenges for Creative Writers

Creative Dissertation

Advanced Dissertation Project

Option modules

Accredited modules in teacher training

Non-assessed (formative) modules

Advanced Writers' Workshop

Advanced Critical Reading for Creative Writers

Peer-led Teaching and Writing Workshops

Special features

- Our teaching staff includes prize-winning authors and leading practitioners – Hanif Kureishi, Rachel Cusk, Scott Bradfield, playwright Winsome Pinnock, crime writer Adam Baron, poets Siobhan Campbell and Todd Swift, and memoirist Vesna Goldsworthy.
- You will benefit from our UK-based writers-in-residence, such as Liz Jensen and Paul Bailey, as well as visitors, such as J Robert Lennon and Brian Evanson.
- The reading series has welcomed leading innovators. Speakers include Will Self, Ali Smith, CD Wright and recently, David Lehman, Daisy Goodwin, Jen Hadfield and Bill Manhire.
- The flexibility of the MA and the MFA gives you the chance to develop your creative writing skills in general or specialise in a specific genre.
- You will receive expert guidance and constructive feedback from established, published creative writers in the genre of your choice.
- Professional writers and visiting professors provide regular input to workshops and a range of voices and styles to extend your experience of approaches to writing.
- You will be introduced to the professional elements of writing by experts such as copyeditors, producers, literary agents and literary editors.
- We also offer a joint MA in Creative Writing and Publishing – see the University's website for more details.
- In tandem with our Publishing MA, we have links with publishing companies and agents.
- Faber and Faber sponsors a prize for the Creative Writing MA.



About the Creative Writing Low Residency MA/MFA

Course overview

The Creative Writing Low Residency MA provides the opportunity to work with a range of established and award-winning writers in the most dynamic writing environment in the UK without having to relocate or give up your current job.

Developed to complement the University's growing and acclaimed suite of courses in creative writing, the low residency option enables you to complete the majority of your credits through distance learning while enjoying both accredited and non-accredited residency periods on campus, scheduled in mid-September and early June. All residency periods combine writing workshops with critical reading seminars, masterclasses, guest readings, supervisions and visits to cultural events in London. Accommodation is located close to the University and arranged before arrival by the course team.

What you will study

The low residency programme follows the same course structure as the popular Creative Writing MA and Creative Writing MFA degrees (see left).

If studying full time, you will take two 30-credit modules in semester 1, combining the first residency module with a Writers' Workshop module. In semester 2, you will take two more 30-credit modules, this time following your choice of a Special Study workshop with your second residency module in June. During this time you will complete work on structure and style begun online during the semester, while participating in general workshops and reading sessions and tutorials with your assigned dissertation supervisor. MA students may then choose to complete a 15,000-word, 60-credit dissertation accompanied by a 3,000-word critical review, whereas MFA students complete a 15,000-word formatively assessed dissertation across the summer leading to the third residency module, which is non-accredited and optional. You will begin to plan your dissertations as part of the June residency, and will receive one-to-one supervision as you work towards a September completion.

Supervisors for the MFA will be assigned during the third residency period, with one-to-one supervision for the dissertation starting during this time. This will give you the chance to work closely in person with your supervisor before the summer period and the following September completion date. You will then be required to write a 40,000-word, 120-credit advanced dissertation project to be finished in one year if full time and two years if part time.

Instruction during the residency periods will combine small group workshops and reading classes along with readings by colleagues, writers-in-residence, students and guests. Modules delivered by distance learning will be organised with staff-student ratios of 8:1 at the most, and will include individual tutorials. You will be able to access supporting materials, including streamed lectures and readings held at or sponsored by the University.

Course content

MA modules (for more information, please see the webpage)

Creative Writing Dissertation (Low Residency)
Ten Critical Challenges for Creative Writers (Residency Module 1)
Special Study: Workshops in Popular Genre Writing (Low Residency)
Structure and Style (Residency Module 2)
Writers' Workshop (Low Residency)

MFA modules (for more information, please see the webpage)

Advanced Dissertation Project
Critical Challenges for Creative Writers (Residency Module 1)
Special Study: Workshops in Popular Genre Writing (Low Residency)
Structure and Style (Residency Module 2)
Writers' Workshop (Low Residency)
Advanced Critical Reading for Creative Writers (Residency Module 3)
Advanced Writers' Workshop
Reading, Genre and Impact (Residency Module 4)
Teaching and Writing Workshop

About the Creative Writing and Pedagogy MA*

Course overview

The new MA in Creative Writing and Pedagogy* is intended to be a one-year, 180-credit programme, offering top-level creative writing and pedagogy training. It will provide a forum for you to work on your own writing in different genres while being supported by published practitioners. Its distinguishing feature is that it will also prepare you to become a teacher of creative writing.

The programme is designed to provide confidence and competence in the professional practice of creative writing and the theory and teaching of creative writing, preparing you to become not only a writer, but also a teacher of creative writing.

Course content

Modules (please refer to Creative Writing MA for module descriptions)

Structure and Style
Writers Workshop
Dissertation

Creative Writing: Pedagogy 1

This module will focus on the major concepts and approaches in creative writing pedagogy history to provide you with a comprehensive overview of the discipline and enable you to develop a framework for analysing and discussing creative writing pedagogy.

Creative Writing: Pedagogy 2

The aim of this module is to help you to develop and refine your theories of creative writing pedagogy and gain experience of teaching creative writing by focusing on the major concepts and debates in contemporary creative writing pedagogy.

**subject to validation*



Teaching staff

Our creative writing courses are taught by a combination of appointed staff, writers-in-residence, guest speakers with expertise in the area of publishing, and visiting writers.

Paul Bailey, distinguished writer-in-residence, has been shortlisted twice for the Booker Prize and has won a clutch of other awards. His novels include: *At the Jerusalem*, *Peter Smart's Confessions*, *Gabriel's Lament*, *Sugar Cane*, *Kitty and Virgil*, and *Uncle Rudolf*. Non-fiction includes: *An English Madam: The Life and Work of Cynthia Payne*, *An Immaculate Mistake: Scenes from Childhood and Beyond*, and *Three Queer Lives: An Alternative Biography of Naomi Jacob*, *Fred Barnes and Arthur Marshall*. He also edited the *Oxford Book of London*. Paul has taught at the University of East Anglia and in Italy.

Adam Baron is an internationally renowned crime novelist whose work has been translated into French and German. He has published four novels with Macmillan: *Shut Eye*, *Hold Back the Night*, *Superjack* and *It Was You*. *Shut Eye* and *Hold Back the Night* have been broadcast on BBC Radio 4.

Alison Baverstock began a career in publishing before setting up a marketing consultancy on all aspects of marketing and communications. She has published widely, including 11 books and numerous articles for the professional and general press. Her book, *How to Market Books*, is often referred to as the 'bible of book marketing'.

Scott Bradfield is the author of five novels, a book of criticism, three short story collections, numerous essays and reviews, and several filmscripts for producers as diverse as Sony, Working Title, Universal and Roger Corman. Formerly professor of creative writing and American literature at University of Connecticut, his stories have appeared in many 'best' of the year anthologies, and his work is translated into over a dozen languages. Novels include: *What's Wrong with America*, *Good Girl Wants It Bad*, *Animal Planet*, and, most recently, *The People Who Watched Her Pass By*.

Siobhan Campbell is the author of five books of poetry; most recently, *Cross-Talk* (Seren). She has been shortlisted for the Michael Marks Award and has won prizes in the National, the Troubadour and Wigtown competitions. Represented in the major contemporary anthologies, she publishes regularly in the US and the UK. Founder of the Military Writing Network at Kingston, she also acts as managing editor for Kingston University Press.

Professor Norma Clarke is a renowned scholar of 18th-century literature and the author of a series of children's novels.

Rachel Cusk, distinguished writing fellow, is the author of several novels and works of creative non-fiction. She is also in demand as a cultural commentator for the *Guardian* and elsewhere. Winner of a Whitbread First Novel award and of the Somerset Maugham award, she has been shortlisted for the Orange Prize. Recent publications include: *The Last Supper: A Summer in Italy* and *The Bradshaw Variations*.

Dr Vesna Goldsworthy is the author of *Inventing Ruritania*, a groundbreaking study of representations of the Balkans, and the widely acclaimed *Chernobyl Strawberries*, *A Memoir*. Vesna has a background in the study of travel writing, 20th-century fiction and popular culture.

Dr Meg Jensen is deputy head of the School of Humanities, director of the Centre for Life Narratives and principal lecture in English literature and creative writing. She publishes both creative writing and literary criticism and her focus is upon writers' lives: what writers read, to whom writers talk, what writers think, and how writers write. She has recently completed her second novel.

Dr Jane Jordan is a specialist in Victorian writing and the author of biographies on Josephine Butler and Kitty O'Shea. Jane teaches the study of biography and draws on her knowledge of Victorian popular culture. She is co-editor, with Meg Jensen, of the major work on contemporary life-writing, *The Spirit of the Age*.

Hanif Kureishi is the multi-award-winning author of numerous novels, essays, stories and screenplays. His early work includes the seminal *My Beautiful Laundrette* and *The Buddha of Suburbia*. His more recent works include *Gabrielle's Gift* and *My Ear at His Heart*. He also wrote the screenplay for the acclaimed film *Venus*, which was released in early 2007.

Dr James Miller was *Time Out* magazine's 'Rising Literary Star' 2008, and is the author of the highly acclaimed novels *Lost Boys* and *Sunshine State*. His short stories have been published in a range of anthologies. He is also an academic, specialising in African-American and post-war American literature.

Dr Paul Perry is a poet and fiction writer and the author and editor of a number of books, including *The Orchid Keeper* and, most recently, *The Last Falcon* and *Small Ordinance*. Awards include the Hennessy Prize for Irish Literature and The Listowel Prize for Poetry. Translations include *108 Moons: The Selected Poems of Jurga Ivanauskaitė*.

Winsome Pinnock's plays include: *The Wind of Change* (Half Moon Theatre); *Leave Taking* (Royal National Theatre and Lyric Hammersmith, Studio); *A Hero's Welcome*, *A Rock in Water* and *Talking in Tongues* (Royal Court Theatre); *Water* and *One Under* (Tricycle Theatre). Radio plays include: *Her Father's Daughter*, *Water*, *Let Them Call It Jazz* (adaptation of a Jean Rhys story) and *Something Borrowed* (BBC Radio 4). Contributions to TV series include *Chalk Face* and *Eastenders*, and the screenplay *Bitter Harvest*. Awards include the George Devine Award and the Carlton Television best play award.

Fiona Sampson is a major contemporary poet whose collections include *Folding the Real*; *The Distance Between Us*; and *Common Prayer* (2007), which was shortlisted for the 2007 TS Eliot Prize. She has also written and edited influential works on the theory of creative writing.

Todd Swift has worked as a successful TV writer (HBO, Fox, Paramount, Hanna-Barbera, CBC), is the author of six collections of poetry and editor of several international poetry anthologies. As Oxfam GB Poet In Residence, he runs the Oxfam London poetry series. Forthcoming are further collections and the *Oxfam Anthology of Young British Poets* (2012).

Kingston Writing School

As a creative writing student you'll be part of our community of writers, journalists, publishers and academics who form the Kingston Writing School, London's most vibrant accredited writing school. The School provides undergraduate and postgraduate courses across a range of disciplines including Creative Writing, English Literature, English Language and Communication, Journalism and Publishing. With internationally acclaimed staff, high quality teaching, innovative course design and an extracurricular activities programme that includes esteemed guests, writers in residence, short courses, sponsorships, and out-reach programmes that take writing and its benefits beyond the University, the Kingston Writing School has much to offer students, professionals and organisations interested in all types of writing. See www.kingstonwritingschool.com for more information.

"The Kingston Writing School has become one of the most dynamic places for students and writers in the UK. It's a pleasure to be part of it and to have seen it grow so quickly in such a short time." Hanif Kureishi

Student feedback

Alice, MA in Creative Writing

"This course is giving me the structure, self-discipline and direction I need. I've always written poetry – I started when I was just seven – but I have done it in a very unstructured way. By the end of the course, I aim to be writing in a more disciplined way on a regular basis and would like to get my work published."

"Completing work for the weekly writers' workshops has been very useful. I've attended creative writing evening classes before, but the comments and criticism from other students on the MA is at a much higher level. For the workshops you can choose your own genre: I've written mainly poetry and some prose. Next year, I will be able to specialise in poetry for the Special Study workshops. The module on publishing has also been much more interesting than I expected. A variety of speakers provided insights into the practical side of getting work accepted. Writers in different genres, as well as a publisher and agent, talked about their experiences from their differing points of view."

Alex, MA in Creative Writing

"The course covers a wide spectrum of styles and types of writing. You can develop your expertise in one genre to a high standard or try your hand at a variety of different forms of writing to find your own voice. One of the many highlights of the MA is the experience I have gained working with the range of talented writers and listening to readings and advice of the inspiring series of guest speakers that regularly visit Kingston University."

"I would recommend the course to writers who are looking to practise their writing in various areas, and to those wishing to gain critical and professional feedback. There is a particularly useful module that gives an excellent insight into the publishing world."

Katerina, MA in Creative Writing

"One of the main reasons I've chosen the MA in Creative Writing at Kingston University is the variety of genres you can choose from. I am writing poetry but I wanted to get involved with people who are writing different things so that I could experiment with other genres and learn from them too. I believe that the MA in Creative Writing not only gives you that opportunity but, more than that, you can choose workshops that reflect exactly your style of writing."

"One of the most useful modules focuses on the practical side of being a writer: it offers tips from how to stay positive, to advice on how to present your work to get published."

"By the end of this course I believe that I will have significantly improved my writing skills and that, by being in contact with other writers, I will become more confident to present myself as a writer (through readings, feedback and advice from both tutors and students)."

Further information

Contact details

Please contact the Faculty's Admissions Office for an application form or with any further queries.

Admissions Office (Postgraduate Courses)
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Creative Writing courses

Entry requirements

One or more of the following:

- A second-class degree or above, or equivalent, in creative writing, English literature, literature and language, drama or theatre studies, or a similar subject, and/or a demonstrable interest in creative writing
- Relevant professional experience

We will ask you to submit a creative writing sample of up to 2,000 words with your application, along with references. Consideration is also given to non-standard entrants and all applicants are normally invited for interview.

All non-UK applicants must meet our English language requirements. For this course it is IELTS of 6.5 overall, with special conditions for students who require a Tier 4 student visa. Please make sure you read our full guidance about English language requirements on the course webpage, which includes details of other qualifications we'll consider.

Duration

- **MA:** One year full time or two years part time
- **MFA:** Two years full time or four years part time
- **Low Residency:** Residency periods take place in mid-September and early June. Timetables for modules delivered as part of the long-distance element will be worked out as conveniently as possible according to the time zones and situations of students.

Attendance/delivery

These are modular programmes based on credit accumulation. You will be expected to study at home as well as attending classes at University. We offer a flexible programme to fit in with the work commitments of part-time students.

Assessment

Assessment methods include portfolios of exercises, edited and revised creative writing with evidence of extensive drafting, essays, presentations, research projects, critical commentary and a substantial piece of creative writing of publishable standard.

Location

Located beside the River Thames, Kingston University is within the London travel-pass zone. Easily accessible from surrounding areas such as Surrey and Middlesex, its local train stations (Kingston; Surbiton) are also only 25 minutes from London Waterloo.

