

MA Creative Writing and Publishing

Programme Summary	
Awarding body	University of Sussex
Teaching institution	West Dean College
Programme title	Creative Writing and Publishing
Final award / FHEQ level	Master's Degree / Level 7
Mode of study	Part-time block delivery
Programme Leader	Martine McDonagh
External reference points/benchmarks	• The UK Quality Code for Higher Education Chapter A1 Qualification Descriptor Level 7 • QAA Subject Benchmark Statements for Creative Writing are currently "under consideration or in development"
Criteria for admission to the programme	The following qualifications will be considered for entry on to the MA in Creative Writing and Publishing programme: • A good Honours Degree or equivalent qualification in English Literature or Language or a related discipline • Relevant work experience in a related field which demonstrates the ability to study at postgraduate level • Portfolio showing evidence of current practical work and related development and an appropriate level of engagement with current debates in the publishing industry • English language: CEFR (Common European Framework of Reference for Languages) Level B2 or IELTS 6.5

Programme Aims

Practical

- Provide facilities and support through which students can further develop their skills and fluency to an advanced level as accomplished creative writing practitioners, gaining a comprehensive understanding of techniques applicable to their own research or advanced scholarship
- Provide access to facilities, workshops and expertise for the development of work relating to the individual student's approach and intentions
- Develop practical understanding of how established techniques of research and enquiry are used and demonstrate originality in the application and transformation of source material

Theoretical

- Encourage innovative approaches to writing and publishing through which conceptual ideas are tested and informed by experimentation and practical research in writing and other creative disciplines
- Provide a stimulating environment of theoretical enquiry, which encourages critical evaluation and advanced scholarship and practice in creative writing and publishing
- Foster a climate of critical debate within which theoretical, cultural, historical, philosophical and interdisciplinary perspectives are explored, compared and utilised in order to develop objectivity skills essential to creative writing practice

Professional

- Evaluate methodologies relating to writing and publishing practice and, where appropriate, propose new and original strategies
- Consolidate a systematic understanding of knowledge and critical awareness of current problems and/or new insights in current writing and publishing practice
- Consolidate students' aptitude for professional practice, research and employment by encouraging independence and self-management in addressing problems, as well as planning and implementing projects
- Educate students to possess independence, self-reliance, as well as promotional enterprise skills, motivated toward future learning, practice or employment

Learning Outcomes

On successful completion of the MA in Creative Writing and Publishing programme, students will be able to:

1. Ideas and Intentions – Evidence and deploy a comprehensive understanding of a variety of approaches to creative writing and publishing research and practice.
2. Innovation and Creativity – Demonstrate an objective critical awareness of how diverse resources for creative writing and publishing practice and research are incorporated and evaluated in their own work
3. Contextual Knowledge – Demonstrate a critical understanding of their own work, and the work of other students and practitioners, in the broader context of the current environment, its theory and critical discourse
4. Conceptual Understanding – Apply an advanced understanding of the synthesis between objective analysis and creativity in relation to practice
5. Communication – Demonstrate advanced scholarship and confidence in both writing and other methods for articulating considered ideas and objective analysis to other writers and practitioners from other disciplines
6. Independence and Self-Management – Demonstrate advanced decision-making and organisational skills in independent study through the application of accrued knowledge and considered use of resources. Create a functioning author profile in the public domain.

Alignment to External Reference Points

The Programme Leader and tutors are all members of nationally recognised professional bodies and organisations, including The Society of Authors (SoA), Alliance of Independent Authors (ALLI), English PEN, The Crime Writers' Association (CWA) and National Union of Journalists (NUJ). All tutors have extensive creative writing and publishing experience, contribute features and articles to journals, magazines and national press and are engaged, as authors, with the community. The Programme Leader and all core tutors have postgraduate qualifications and substantial undergraduate and postgraduate teaching experience. Programme Leader, Martine McDonagh has 30 years' experience of artist management, working with musicians, songwriters and other artists to build successful international careers. As a published author, she has a special interest in shared aspects of the music and publishing industries, in terms of creative process, artist development and industry practice.

Tutors are recipients of numerous awards and nominations, e.g. Mary Higgins Clark Award, Theakston's Old Peculiar Crime Novel of the Year, The People's Book Prize for Fiction, Sainsbury's eBook of the year, Booker Prize and RSA First Novel Award.

Core tutors have been recipients of Arts Council England's Grants for the Arts funding support. Visiting tutors and guests are established and award winning publishing industry professionals. The course has strong professional links with publisher Myriad Editions through First Fictions literary festival and the Writer's Retreat Competition held at West Dean College.

Programme Structure

All units in each year run concurrently over 36 weeks.

Year	Unit No	Unit Title	Credit allocation
1	1	Authorial Practice 1: Writing a first draft	50 credits
1	2	Authorial Practice 2: Critical analysis	20 credits
1	3	Interdisciplinary Practice	20 credits
2	4	Authorial Practice 3: Editorial and revision	30 credits
2	5	Professional Publishing Practice	60 credits

COURSE CONTENT

Term 1:

- Place and Time
- Transforming Material
- Finding the Plot

Term 2:

- Whose Story Is It?
- Experimenting with Narrative
- Experimenting with Style

Term 3:

- Independent study and tutorials
- End of term interdisciplinary event

Term 4

- Rewrites, redrafts, revisions
- Approaches to publication
- Marketing strategies

Term 5

- Building an author platform
- Promotional strategies
- Publishing and beyond

Term 6

- Independent study and tutorials
- Anthology publication and launch

Distinctive Programme Features

The programme is designed to advance students' capacities in practical, theoretical and professional domains, through the development of independent and immersive collaborative study, leading to the consolidation and realisation of a sustainable artistic practice.

In year one, students focus on building a portfolio of written work that demonstrates the use of experimentation and study within a framework of clear methodology and intent, to create the first draft of a novel. Workshops include collaboration with students and staff from other departments, such as Visual Arts and Clockmaking, in scheduled interdisciplinary sessions.

In year two, students develop their work further through the application of revision and editorial skills and techniques. Practical experience of the publishing process is acquired through the production of a West Dean anthology, featuring students' first chapters and published via Edward James's imprint, The James Press.

The programme makes use of the historic house, its archive and extensive grounds in exploring site-specific work and its application. The unique setting at West Dean, with its history of literary and publishing experimentation offers a stimulating and inspiring environment for writers. Its facilities provide an opportunity for collaborative and immersive atelier-style working.

Ongoing exposure to prominent visiting guests and tutors, writers and publishing professionals provides students with a realistic context for the development of their own professional practice within the publishing industry.

Learning and Teaching – methods and strategy

“Right now, I think we need writers who know the difference between the production of a market commodity and the practice of an art.”

Ursula K. Le Guin at the National Book Awards 2014

This course aims to employ a mix of traditional and experimental approaches to writing and publishing to encourage and support writers at West Dean as they explore and develop their own creative process.

Education about the publishing process, and the writer's relationship to the publishing industry in general, aims to empower students, both through consideration of current practice and through investigative research of existing and emerging opportunities.

The Learning and Teaching Methods seek to reflect the rationale, aims and learning outcomes of the programme and engage the active participation of a committed group of academic staff and students within practice and text-based academic frameworks. The methods support the practical and scholarly work required at Level 7 of the QAA Quality Code.

Independent study

This MA progresses through three stages: the student writes a first draft of a novel, revises it to bring it closer to a publishable standard, and learns about the process of publishing itself. The teaching approach allows for a high level of student autonomy and self-direction. Students are expected to be self-motivated and to manage their own agreed programme of work. They are also required to work as part of a team and are encouraged to engage in group and peer co-operation, collaboration and support. Extensive, appropriate reading is expected, as is effective use of learning resources (including Library and IT services), both within and outside the College, for research purposes.

Negotiated learning is central to the MA. It is practised through individual feedback sessions with tutors to discuss monthly submissions, during which the student and academic staff negotiate and agree upon how work will proceed. Other negotiated learning takes place through working in interdisciplinary workshops with students and staff in other departments at West Dean, and also through collaborative publishing experience.

Students are encouraged to develop both self-reliance and group co-operation, and the positive attitude to lifelong learning that is essential in a career as an author.

Evaluation and Assessment

A number of different approaches to evaluation and assessment are used to inform learning and teaching. Appraisals from tutors and academic staff are provided in formal and informal settings, with critical feedback (written and oral), addressing learning outcomes as appropriate. Peer evaluation of students' progress is also employed, with fellow students giving and receiving constructive criticism in

order to develop a self-awareness and self-critical attitude to their work. Summative assessment takes place at the end of each year of the course.

Workshops and Group Critiques

Practical teaching is delivered through demonstration, analysis of published texts, tutor review, peer review, experimentation, workshops and group discussion. Workshops and group critiques allow students the opportunity to learn, practise and adapt skills, while gaining valuable insight into collaborative learning and decision-making. All students are encouraged to engage in critical reflection and judgement, offering considered and constructive criticism of the work of their peers.

Lectures and Seminars

A programme of lectures and seminars provide specialist input for students, introducing and reinforcing knowledge of theoretical, historical and critical concerns that inform contemporary practice. Lectures are designed to reflect and further inform students' work, emphasising the key relationship between theory and practice. A range of important themes, ideas and techniques are presented throughout, generating a stimulating climate of exploration and debate. Seminar sessions provide an opportunity for ideas and understanding to be further developed through discussion and collaboration between peers, tutors and guest speakers (including visiting authors, professionals, etc.).

Individual Tutorials

Tutorials are an important point of ongoing contact between staff and students. One-to-one sessions aim to foster a climate in which a student-led, in-depth discussion of an individual's development can take place. Tutorials occur regularly within each block of study, either formally scheduled, or requested by staff / student.

Professional Practice

The course is structured to follow the professional writing cycle from first draft to publication, during which students are encouraged to develop their own professional approach to writing and publishing practice. All tutors on the MA are authors currently working with agents, editors and publishers and are fully engaged with the publishing process from presentation of manuscript to post publication promotional and marketing activity. In addition, students have regular contact with visiting professionals (editors, agents, self-published authors etc.) working within the publishing industry.

IT skills

Familiarity with common information technology skills is assumed. Students are introduced to aspects of specific relevant IT programmes, such as InDesign and WordPress and are encouraged to develop essential technology-related skills in support of their individual career plans and collaborative work.

Learning Support

Students can seek support in relation to language training, study and research skills, including the use of the College Library. There is also provision for English language support and learning difficulties (such as dyslexia).

Practical Experience & Work Placement

Literary events include:

- First Fictions Festival
- Writer's Retreat Competition
- Anthology Launch Event
- Interdisciplinary Event
- Competitions nationwide.

Students are encouraged to attend literary events outside the college and to submit work to competitions and publications as an aid to building their profile as an author.

The first chapter of each student novel is submitted to and published in a collaboratively produced anthology, published by The James Press. Students are required to work as a team producing and publishing this anthology.

Students take part in a public event at the end of the second year to launch and promote the anthology, which involves reading their work and answering audience questions.

Assessment – methods and strategy

- Work is assessed on a continuous basis independently by at least two supervisors (normally the programme leader and a programme tutor). This assessment is fed to students informally on an ongoing basis through tutorial discussion and formally at assessment and review points
- Due to the holistic nature of the work undertaken on the Creative Writing and Publishing course summative assessment occurs at the end of each year of study. Written formative feedback is provided at review points each term and supported by regular tutorial feedback on an ongoing basis.
- Work is assessed independently and graded according to the unit assessment criteria
- All unit assessment is formalised as grades on a scale of 1-4 as set out in the assessment definitions. Final awards are graded Distinction, Pass or Fail.
- Assessment is reviewed and moderated by the external examiner

Student Support and Information

Academic Support and Resources

Tutorial support: Each student has a personal tutor who, in some, but not all, cases is their Programme Leader. Tutorial support beyond the delivery of the programme curriculum is intended to foster a climate in which in-depth discussion of individual progress and development can take place. Tutorials may be scheduled at the request of either staff or students and provide an opportunity to ensure that students' progress and general welfare can be monitored and supported.

Library and study skills: Students have access to West Dean's specialist Art and Conservation library providing a wealth of research opportunities. The library is open 9.00am-5pm weekdays with library staff on duty within these times, but it is also accessible outside of these hours during evenings and weekends. The library has a collection of approximately 11,000 items (books, journals, e-journals and audio-visual materials) and subscribes to 98 periodicals and a number of specialist electronic databases. The library catalogue and homepage can be accessed online. In addition, the Library has established links with other libraries and offers an inter-library loan service. Students are introduced, as part of the induction programme, to the library and its resources. A further set of workshops are run by the Librarian during the autumn term on research skills and students are strongly encouraged to participate. These include: Literature searching: Using library catalogues, searching specialist literature and image databases and electronic resources in conservation. Specialist publications relating to creative writing and publishing are available.

IT support: Students have access to IT facilities in a dedicated computer suite, the library and in the studios and workshops. Each student is allocated a West Dean College network account with a personal login, email address and allocated file storage. Students also have access to useful information and resources regarding the college and its departments through the College Intranet. IT staff introduce students to the IT facilities and the Student Intranet during the induction period at the beginning of the academic year and provide support to students as and when required.

Programme-specific resources: Programmes are delivered in dedicated workshops and studios. Each workshop is provided with equipment specific to the discipline, which is under continual review in respect both of its suitability for its purpose, and of health and safety requirements. Tutors are encouraged to bid for new equipment at any time, and funding is allocated by negotiation with the Director of Education. There are also common lecture rooms and workshops used by all programmes.

The workshops have the backup of a team of technicians and a Workshop Manager. They carry out the maintenance of most equipment and providing day-to-day technical backup for all students and staff.

Short courses: Students are encouraged to take part in an extensive and varied programme of short courses at West Dean, and all full-time students are entitled to participate, free of charge, in a specified number of short courses in each academic year.

Student support and guidance

The College endeavours to ensure the welfare of all its students. A professional counselling service is offered to students individually, by appointment, at specified times and connections can be made with other specialist support services outside the College wherever necessary. The students' views are sought with regards to the pastoral and welfare provision through the Student Association. The President of the Association reports to the Chair of the Academic Board on a termly basis on academic and non-academic issues.

The obstruction of a student's academic progress is avoided wherever possible. If a significant period of absence from study is unavoidable due to illness or other circumstances, the option to intermit is generally available.

The College acknowledges the importance of students having access to appropriate advice and guidance on the careers and opportunities available to them following graduation. Professional and business skills seminars are arranged during the spring term covering CVs and letters of application, interview techniques, time management, self-employment and finance.

Methods for Evaluating and Improving the Quality and Standards of Learning

West Dean College is quality assured by the QAA. West Dean full-time courses are validated by University of Sussex and undergo regular periodic review and revalidation. Each year an annual monitoring report, including feedback from students and external examiners, is submitted for approval to the University.

There is a QA committee structure with termly meetings of programme level boards, an overall quality committee and academic board. All committees have representation from students. The MA in Creative Writing and Publishing has an external examiner and a programme adviser who visit twice a year.