

Programme Specification

MA Creative Writing

<i>School:</i>	Humanities
<i>Subject area:</i>	Creative Writing
<i>Entry from academic year:</i>	2023-24
<i>in the month(s) of:</i>	September
<i>Awarding institution:</i>	York St John University
<i>Teaching institution:</i>	York St John University
<i>Delivery location:</i>	York St John University
<i>Programme/s accredited by:</i>	Not applicable
<i>Exit awards:</i>	Postgraduate Certificate Creative Writing Postgraduate Diploma Creative Writing
<i>UCAS code / GTTR / other:</i>	Not applicable
<i>Joint Honours combinations:</i>	Not applicable
<i>QAA subject benchmark statement(s):</i>	See the QAA Benchmark document on Creative Writing for reference (these do not extend in Creative Writing to any specifics for MA level and are therefore a guide only)
<i>Mode/s of study:</i>	Postgraduate periods of study for full-time / part-time
<i>Language of study:</i>	English
<i>Paired with foundation year</i>	No
<i>Study abroad opportunities:</i>	No
<i>Placement year opportunity:</i>	No

Introduction and special features

The MA in Creative Writing is part of a thriving postgraduate writing community housed within the York Centre for Writing. The MA offer modules which allow students to pursue their own interests, whilst foundational, core modules ensure that all students develop a range of key skills in critical reflection and creative practice. Class sizes are kept to small, intimate groups so that you can share and workshop writing in progress and hone your editorial skills. You are provided with the opportunity to experiment with a range of forms and genres, from poetry to fiction, script to memoir, whilst all the time developing the writing projects which you are most passionate about. You will gain an insight into creative writing as an academic subject, interrogating the place of writing in cultural, political and environmental contexts. You will also have the opportunity to deepen professional writing skills through a range of exciting opportunities, including the chance to have a one to one meeting with an agent, publisher or editor, and to meet industry professionals who facilitate writing groups in a variety of community contexts.

As well as the taught modules, you will research and write a final Portfolio under the one-to-one supervision of an expert writer on the team, allowing you to produce a sustained, independent project as part of what will become an extensive portfolio of original work by the end of the MA.

You will gain:

- Enhanced and developed strategies for creative practice
- An introduction to a number of contemporary creative texts in a range of forms (prose/script/poetry) with the tools to analyse and discuss those texts
- Critical skills in relation to both the reading and generation of new creative texts
- Critical awareness of the contexts for the production of creative texts (political, psychological, environmental)
- A sense of belonging to a writing community through the York Centre for Writing
- Opportunity to meet agents, publishers, editors and published authors
- Opportunity to engage in writing retreats in regional settings (these are heavily subsidised and are at a small cost to students)

Special features:

- Seven permanent members of staff, all practising, published, award-winning writers in a range of forms and genres including: creative non-fiction; fiction (short stories/novels); script (radio, screen, stage), contemporary poetry. Staff also have a range of critical interests including climate change, motherhood, body politics, northern writing, experimental poetry, history, science
- Small teaching groups of students to allow for in-depth work-shopping and development of writing practice
- Modules on Writing and the Environment; Writing in the World: Facilitation, Collaboration and Publication; Writing Speculative Fiction; Writing the Uncanny; and Writing the Voice – a unique combination of offerings in the UK. Students are not required to stick to a particular form (fiction, poetry, script) but modules are instead thematically organised, allowing an individual to work across a number of forms if they wish to do so
- Modules which develop creative and critical skills, but also develop professional skills in terms of publication experience, the study of facilitation strategies (for those students interested in possible workshop leading) and an awareness of community, political contexts and environment
- A focus on the relationship between critical thinking and creative writing
- The York Centre for Writing. The centre acts as a hub for a number of exciting writing events, projects and publications in collaboration with Valley Press, The [York Literature Festival](#), and other community partners. In the past we have welcomed authors such as Kathleen Jamie, Sarah Hall, Michel Faber, Daljit Nagra and Margaret Atwood, who have inspired students and members of the local community alike
- The Centre curates two print publications, [Beyond the Walls](#), our student anthology, and [The York Literary Review](#), our international creative writing journal, both published by [Valley Press](#) and providing commissioning, editing and publishing experience to undergraduate and postgraduate students. We also manage the [Northern Independent Press Collection](#), supporting independent presses based in the North of England
- Opportunity for one-to-one meeting with an agent/publisher
- Opportunity to attend a weekend residential writing retreat
- Progression to the MFA, taught on a one-to-one supervised basis (low residency) for those wanting to continue to complete a full-length work (novel, collection, script) – only offered at a small number of UK universities
- Progression to PhD in Creative Writing if appropriate

You will have the flexibility to pursue projects that you are passionate about, and will be supported by the expertise of the staff team. This allows for a range of diverse learners in terms of learning experiences, ethnic diversity, disability, gender and age; projects will be developed and tailored to your learning needs. The staff team of award-winning writers have an exciting and diverse approach to creative writing and are able to supervise a huge range of proposed projects. All staff members are actively publishing their writing.

The team have expertise in speculative fiction, historical fiction, scriptwriting, screenwriting, adaptation, poetry, experimental poetry, hybrid forms, horror fiction, literary fiction, creative non-fiction (including memoir and true-crime), and are able to support writing in a number of genres. In addition, the Creative Writing team at YSJ has a strong focus on the relationship between critical theory and creative writing and the intersection of a number of theoretical perspectives with creative practice, including eco-criticism, psychoanalysis, biopolitics and regionality. Members of the team have undertaken interdisciplinary and collaborative research exploring music, memory, medicine, uncanny landscapes and pollination.

You are encouraged to take a professional approach and attend the variety of events provided by the York Centre for Writing, which include visits from agents, publishers, editors and writers and fosters an important sense of belonging and community.

Creative Writing at YSJ is further distinguished by:

- The integration of writing practice, critical appreciation of texts and employability skills
- A focus on contemporary writing
- Regular engagement with visiting speakers and writers
- Partnerships with local publishers and writing festivals
- The innovative use of the local and regional landscape in learning and teaching
- Research-led teaching
- Diverse and inclusive syllabi
- Opportunities for students to experience field trips as part of their learning experience

Admissions criteria

You must meet the University's general entry criteria for [postgraduate](#) study. In addition, you must have:

- MA candidates have usually already excelled at BA study; we therefore normally require a BA degree at **2:1 grade or higher** (or equivalent). We are open to considering previous degrees in the Humanities, Arts, Sciences and Social Sciences.
- MA candidates also need to submit a sample of creative writing, either in Prose, Script or Poetry of at least 1,000-2,000 words (or 3 poems) in order for staff to ascertain if the writing is of an appropriately high standard.

If your first language is not English, you need to take an IELTS test or an equivalent qualification accepted by the University (see <https://www.yorks.ac.uk/international/how-to-apply/english-language-requirements/>).

If you do not have traditional qualifications, you may be eligible for entry on the basis of [Recognition of prior learning \(RPL\)](#). We also consider applications for entry with advanced standing.

Programme aim(s)

To provide:

- Enhanced and developed strategies for creative practice
- An introduction to a number of contemporary creative texts in a range of forms (prose/script/poetry) with the tools to analyse and discuss those texts
- Critical skills in relation to both the reading and generation of new creative texts
- Critical awareness of the contexts for the production of creative texts (political, psychological, environmental)
- An awareness of the creative industries and provide opportunities for the development of professional skills
- A sense of belonging to a writing community through the York Centre for Writing
- Opportunity to meet agents, publishers, editors and published authors
- Opportunity to engage in writing retreats in regional settings

Programme learning outcomes

Upon successful completion of the programme students will be able to:

Level 7

- 7.1 Critically reflect on the nature of the literary text and its production in relation to wider political, social and cultural contexts
- 7.2 Produce a body of original creative writing that engages with the technicalities and creative strategies within contemporary writing
- 7.3 Proactively formulate employability skills through the effective verbal communication of original ideas to appropriate audiences
- 7.4 Demonstrate specialist, in-depth knowledge of the impact of 'voice' in creative contemporary expression
- 7.5 Employ genre techniques in relation to a comprehensive understanding of audience/reader expectations
- 7.6 Exhibit originality and independent scholarship in creating a collection or continuous piece of writing in their chosen genre

NB: [See the QAA Benchmark document on Creative Writing for reference](#) (these do not extend in Creative Writing to any specifics for MFA/MA level and are therefore a guide only)

Programme structure

Code	Level	Semester	Title	Credits	Module status	
					compulsory or optional to take C or O	non-compensatable or compensatable NC or X
CRW7001M	M	1	Critical Approaches to Creative Writing	30	C	X
CRW7002M	M	1	Writing the Voice	30	C	X
CRW7003M	M	2	Writing in the World: Facilitation, Collaboration and Publication	30	O ¹	X
CRW7004M	M	2	Writing and the Environment	30	O ¹	X
CRW7030M	M	3	Writing Speculative Fiction	30	O ²	X
CRW7031M	M	3	Writing the Uncanny	30	O ²	X
CRW7007M	M	2&3	Project Portfolio	60	C	NC

¹ Choose one of these modules

² Choose one of these modules

Learning, teaching and assessment

You will be taught via peer workshops aimed to support independent writing practice, the discussion of contemporary texts, and redrafting and editing skills. The professional writers on the team will facilitate the groups and offer one-to-one meetings for discussing work in progress, giving advice about redrafting, sources of research, advice on genre, language, characterisation, setting, form, etc. (as appropriate to the individual project). The idea is that on each module, and in the final project, you work on the projects you are passionate about.

Assessment is via portfolio – original creative writing produced during the module, inspired by the themes and texts explored, and a contextual reflection which discusses the influences on your work and your creative process. Modules in Term 2 develop your verbal presentation skills through a pitch presentation of your written creative work. In each case, you will be supported with formative activities helping you to

develop these skills, and your writing practice, in order to produce your best work in terms of both creative output and reflective discourse.

The final Portfolio is supervised one-to-one with an expert writer on the team, matched closely to your creative interests. In terms of the context component and presentation assessments, supervisors will advise on the appropriate critical/reflective angle and on the use of secondary sources, which might include historical, theoretical, scientific or experiential research. You will hone your editorial skills in supportive workshopping and discussion environments, writing on a regular basis and producing work which can then be shared with your peers.

Supervisors will discuss the appropriate routes to possible dissemination of a particular work – e.g. students wishing to publish a novel will have a professional understanding of how to write a cover letter to an agent and submit a high quality sample of their work. There will be opportunities to meet agents, publishers and editors during the course of the degree.

You will gain a firm foundation by taking the Critical Approaches module which develops a strong creative practice, hones peer workshopping skills and encourages discussion of a range of model texts in both primary forms (poetry, fiction, script etc.) and theoretical, reflective approaches. You will discuss the relationship between the creative and the critical, the place of creative writing in the academy, and consider various approaches to the notion of creative practice. Writing the Voice further develops this, allowing you to explore their own writer's voice, the notion of written voice as a concept that can be challenged, and ways in which voice manifests itself in creative works.

You then have the choice between Writing in the World and Writing and the Environment, both of which allow for a consideration of wider cultural and political contexts, but take slightly different foci. Writing in the World concentrates on the possible dissemination of writing, from collaboration and facilitation, to publication.

A further choice is presented between Writing Speculative Fiction, and Writing the Uncanny, each allowing the opportunity to consider the frameworks under which audiences and readerships are addressed. In both cases, again, you will gain skills in the complex understanding of genre and its relationship to culture and your writing practice.

The final Project Portfolio module is a 12,000-word project, 2,000 words of which will be a contextual reflection that critically engages with appropriate secondary research and creative models and the ways in which they have informed your process of composition, drafting and editing. This is an opportunity for independent and in-depth engagement with a larger project.

Progression and graduation requirements

The University's [general regulations for](#) postgraduate awards apply to this programme.

Any modules that must be passed for progression or award are indicated in the Programme Structure section as non-compensatable.

Internal and external reference points

This programme specification was formulated with reference to:

- [University mission and values](#)
- [University 2026 Strategy](#)
- [QAA subject benchmark statements](#)
- [Frameworks for Higher Education Qualifications](#)

Date written / revised: 17/01/2018

Programme originally approved: 25/04/18