

UNIVERSITY OF
Southampton

MA CREATIVE
WRITING
HANDBOOK

2012-13

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1.

WELCOME to Creative writing at Southampton

Our aim is to provide you with a supportive academic context in which to learn, grow and develop your writing skills. Our programme offers the chance to specialize in what interests you, to work in a friendly academic environment with other student writers, and to benefit from expert tuition and a dynamic schedule of visiting speakers which includes established writers, editors, publishers and agents. You will also choose from a variety of stimulating MA modules offered by the Faculty of Humanities which will help you to think critically and in depth about what you do.

You may be surprised by what you find out about yourself during this course. Experience has shown that students often come to us thinking they want to write prose and end up writing poetry, or vice versa, or discover a gift for scriptwriting or children's literature they never thought they had. This course will certainly challenge your preconceptions about yourself, so you should come prepared with an open mind. We don't promise to get you published outside of our own end-of-year anthology, but we do anticipate that by the end of the course you will have learned enough to make informed decisions about the directions your writing career might take next.

2.

About the course

The Creative Writing MA course at Southampton currently focuses on four exciting areas of contemporary writing:

- **the art and craft of fiction** for those who want to develop their fiction writing in relation to the full international range of novels and short stories in English across the globe
- **scriptwriting** for those who write - or want to write - for the stage, radio, TV and/or film
- **writing for children and young people** for those who want to write fiction and drama for a younger readership.
- **poetry and poetics** for those who want to explore poetry; workshop sessions and guest masterclasses will give students the necessary tools to find and refine their poetic voice,

This programme is suitable for students who wish to develop their skills as a creative writer either for their own satisfaction or in order to pursue a career that involves writing, and also for those who wish to progress to doctorate-level creative writing. It is based around a core workshop and places special emphasis on learning from international writing and the new literatures in English, and on new developments in writing in the areas of performance and poetics.

We will encourage students to learn to develop a high level of critical self-awareness, to work collaboratively where appropriate, and to attain the knowledge and skills to be able to draw widely from literature, theory and cultural history as contexts for their writing.

The Centre for Contemporary Writing

We have strong connections to the Centre for Contemporary Writing, based in English in the Faculty of Humanities, and run by **Peter Middleton** (one of your workshop tutors). The Centre brings together academics, writers, and postgraduate students. Its particular areas of expertise include modernist and late modernist writing, postcolonial writing, and critical and creative thought.

Staff researchers in the group have published on science and memory in contemporary American poetry, on the history and theory of poetry performance, on gender and democracy in American women's poetry, on secularism and nationalism in South Asian fiction, on terrorism, and on multiculturalism.

The Centre holds regular conferences and seminars which bring together the research interests of staff, postgraduates and visiting academics. This year we celebrated the work of F.T. Prince, a poet who was one of our professors back in the 1950s. Over the past few years we have held events on Writing and the Metropolis, the Politics of Experimentalism, Poetics and Globalisation, the Sacred and the Secular, Local Cosmopolitanisms, and Word and Music Collaborations. We also offer writing events as part of Black History Month each October.

The Centre is also an important venue for writers and poets. Recent writers-in-residence have included Ruth Padel, Peter Guttridge, Nick Stafford, Robyn Bolam, Diran Abedayo (an Arts Council International Writing Fellow), Nii Parkes (an Arts Council International Writing Fellow) and the poet Caroline Bergvall and Maggie Harris. Recent visiting writers have included Amitav Ghosh, Pauline Melville, Jena Osman, Joan Rae Armantrout and Rachel Blau Du Plessis.

In addition, Philip Hoare and Lavinia Greenlaw are both visiting fellows in the department and will give readings and workshops during the year. We will also be appointing three new fellows to work on specific creative writing projects on campus.

To learn more about The Centre for Contemporary Writing visit:
http://www.soton.ac.uk/english/research/centre_for_contemporary_writing.page

2.1 Course structure

All our courses carry a specified number of credit points; you need 180 credit points to graduate with an MA in Creative Writing, of which 60 must be the Creative Project. Please make sure you have taken the necessary number and range of modules: **it is your responsibility to do so**, though staff in the Student Services Office will always be happy to offer advice.

The programme consists of a core compulsory Creative Skills Workshop (40 credits, taught over both semesters), plus two option modules in each semester for full-time students. Part-timers must do a minimum of one CW module in each year in addition to the Creative Skills Workshop. Four of the options are usually specialist creative writing units; full-timers can choose all these modules, or substitute one with a module from MA English and/or MA film programmes.

The largest single piece of assessment is your dissertation equivalent, the Creative Project (not to be confused with the Creative Skills Workshop which prepares you for it!). Please see Section 3 (Unit Descriptions) on p. 4, Section 4 (Supervision Arrangements) on p. 11 and Section 6.2 (Format and submission of the Creative Project) on p. 13 for full details of what the Creative Project entails and how to submit it.

2.2 Extra-curricular activities

Outside the classroom, you can expect to get involved in a range of exciting writing-based activities. We invite several **visiting speakers** throughout the year, many of whom are willing to listen to and discuss student work; we encourage students to put together, edit and publish an **anthology** of their own writing every year, and at the end of the year in September we usually hold a festival organised by staff and students, which acts as a showcase for presenting your work to publishers and agents, and provides a forum where you can meet and socialise with invited guest writers. Your tutors will keep you informed about all these events and opportunities; they may change year on year as staff go on leave, but you will always have access to exciting visiting speakers.

We hope you will enjoy the course. You are invited to discuss any aspect of it at any time during your studies with the Course Convener Dr Will May. His contact details can be found on page 22.

3.

Unit descriptions

Compulsory modules

ENGL6071 THE CREATIVE SKILLS WORKSHOP (40 CREDITS): SEMESTERS 1 AND 2. Course conveners: Alison Fell and Peter Middleton

This is a two-semester module that runs weekly. Students will be taught in two small groups, switching tutors in the second semester. All students taking the MA Creative Writing will join this workshop, which provides the central spine for the entire programme. In practical terms the workshop will explore the many aspects of craft required by a writer, from sound and image in poetry to 'voice', characterisation, point of view, pace, structure, and narrative strategies in short and long fiction. The workshop provides a forum for the presentation and discussion of work-in-progress by all students, and will be led by creative writing tutors but focused around your own work and development. You will be encouraged to develop skills in critical reading and listening to the work of your peers, as well as to discuss your own writing in terms of its achievement of its declared aims, progress beyond earlier drafts, and awareness of literary and historical context. The workshop will also incorporate a series of masterclasses from visiting writers.

Reading

There will be no set reading for this unit, yet the reading suggestions prompted by these workshops will perhaps be the most important reading you do for your MA. Unlike many other taught MA modules, the workshop environment necessarily adapts to the needs of individual groups and students. You may find the following books on creative writing useful, and are also encouraged to follow up on the reading suggestions that tutors will make throughout the workshops.

Indicative background reading

Margaret Atwood *Negotiating with the Dead* (London: Virago, 2003)

Peter Elbow *Writing with Power* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998)

Anne Lamott *Bird by Bird: Some Instructions on Writing and Life* (New York: Anchor Books, 1995)

Noah Lukeman, *The First Five Pages: A Writer's Guide to Staying Out of the Rejection Pile* (London: Robert Hale, 2000)

Richard Rhodes, *How to Write: Advice and Reflections* (New York: William Morrow, 1995)

Philip Roth, *Shop Talk* (London: Cape, 2001)

Susan Sellers ed. *Taking Reality by Surprise: Writing for Pleasure and Publication* (London: Women's Press, 1991)

Rainer Maria Rilke, *Letters to a Young Poet*, trans. by Joan M. Burnham
(Novato, Calif: New World Library, 2000)
Annie Dillard, *The Writing Life* (London: Picador, 1990)

Assessment

A portfolio of creative work of at least 8,000 words or an equivalent appropriate to specific genres of a length agreed with the course tutor (75%). This portfolio will be accompanied by 2,000-word critical commentary (25%) reflecting on the creative work, a short proposal of no more than 300 words outlining aims and plans for the Creative Project, and a bibliography.

This is due in on March 11 2013.

ENGL6072 THE CREATIVE PROJECT (60 CREDITS): DISSERTATION EQUIVALENT. Course convener: Will May

This unit is the equivalent of the MA dissertation, and constitutes the culmination of the MA Creative Writing. It gives you the opportunity to carry out a sustained piece of writing independently, and bring to bear the ideas, skills, and insights that have been learned on the programme. You will do this under the guidance of a supervisor who will meet with you up to three times while you are writing, and read a draft of the final work in time for a period of revision. Email supervision may take the place of face-to-face meetings depending on staff and student availability. You will hand in your proposals for your project along with your Creative Skills Workshops submission in March. The final submission will be accompanied by a supporting commentary providing a context and an account of the aims of the work.

Assessment

A major piece of creative work of around 15,000 words or the equivalent in poetry or script (75%), together with a supporting critical commentary of 3-4,000 words and a bibliography (25%).

Module choice

Full-time students should choose 2 options for both semester 1 and 2. One of these options may be from the Humanities MA options.

Part-time students should choose 1 option for both semester 1 and 2.

Semester 1

ENGL6083 THE ART AND CRAFT OF FICTION 1 (20 CREDITS) Course convener: Carole Smith

This unit offers advanced training in the writing of fiction, and does so in a wider international context than the usual selection of UK and possibly US texts allows. Instead of basing our examples of good practice only in British and American fiction, a distinctive feature of this unit is that literary texts and examples studied will also be drawn from international sources. Fiction from Europe, Canada, South Asia and the Caribbean, as well as other parts of the world, will provide a wide ranging perspective and offer many new paths for development of your work. Taught by a combination of lectures and seminars, the unit will explore both the practical techniques used by professional writers of fiction and the literary theory behind them, but there will be opportunities to discuss your own work in a workshop atmosphere as well as to reflect on published texts. It is not necessary to have a special background to take this course. The practical element here is to learn to apply these technical elements to one's own fiction, without resorting to pastiche or parody.

Fiction (any editions of these texts are fine):

- Margaret Atwood, *The Handmaid's Tale* (New York: Anchor Books, 1986)
 Angela Carter, *The Bloody Chamber* (London: Penguin, 1993)
 John Fowles, *The French Lieutenant's Woman* (New York: Vintage Classics, 2005)
 Kazuo Ishiguro, *An Artist of the Floating World* (New York: Vintage, 1989)
 Ian McEwan, *Atonement* (London: Cape, 2001)
 Vladimir Nabokov, *Invitation of a Beheading* (1932; London: Penguin Classics, 2001)
 Jean Rhys, *Wide Sargasso Sea* (New York: Norton, 1982)
 Marilynne Robinson, *Housekeeping* (London: Macmillan, 2004)
 Arundhati Roy, *The God of Small Things* (New York: Random House, 1997)

Suggested Background Reading: Writing Narrative Fiction

- Madison Smartt Bell *Narrative Design* (New York: Norton, 2000)
 Gardner, John. *The Art of Fiction: Notes on Craft for Young Writers* (New York: Vintage, 1991)
 Hansen, Ron and Jim Shepard. *You've Got to Read This: Contemporary American Writers Introduce Stories that Held them in Awe* (New York: Libri, 1994)
 David Michael Kaplan, *Rewriting: A creative approach to writing fiction* (London: A&C Black, 1998)
 May, Charles E.. *The Short Story: The Rules of Artifice* (New York: Routledge, 2002)
 Nyberg, Ben. *One Great Way to Write Short Stories* (Cincinnati, Ohio: Writers Digest, 1988)

Stein, Sol. *Stein on Writing* (New York: St Martins Press, 1995)
 Jerome Stern *Making Shapely Fiction* (New York: Norton, 1991)
 Zipes, Jack. *The Trials and Tribulations of Little Red Riding Hood* (London: Routledge, 1993)

Assessment

A piece of fiction of 6000 words (75%) informed by the methods and themes that inspire contemporary international fiction, plus a critical commentary of 1000 words (25%) and a bibliography.

ENGL6082 WRITING FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE (20 CREDITS). Course convener: Rebecca Smith

This unit offers a practical introduction to writing fiction and drama for children and young people. It will give you insight into the world of publishing for this sector, and an understanding of the marketplace from a writer's point of view. We will look at a range of texts from picture books to novels for teenagers. The course will cover the essential elements of writing quality fiction and drama for children and young people, including understanding audiences and age ranges, writing openings and endings, character development, plot, language and style. Visits by experts and practitioners in the field will enhance your understanding of this exciting field of literature and publishing.

Books on Writing / The Sector

Louise Jordan, *How To Write for Children And Get Published* (Piatkus Books, 2007)
 Michael Morpurgo, *Singing For Mrs. Pettigrew - A Story-Maker's Journey* (Walker Books, 2006.)
 Francis Spufford, *The Child That Books Built* (Faber and Faber, 2002)
The Children's Writers' and Artists' Yearbook 2013 (A & C Black, 2012)

Novels

Malorie Blackman, *Noughts and Crosses* (Doubleday, 2001)
 Frank Cottrell Boyce, *Millions* (Macmillan, 2004)
 Suzanne Collins, *The Hunger Games* (Scholastic, 2009)
 Jenny Downham, *Before I Die* (David Fickling Books, 2010)
 Mark Haddon, *The Curious Incident of The Dog In The Night-Time* (David Fickling Books 2003)
 Charlie Higson, *Silverfin* (Puffin, 2005)
 Patrick Ness and Siobhan Dowd *A Monster Calls* (Walker, 2012) (the illustrated edition is best)
 Rick Riordan *Percy Jackson and the Lightning Thief* (Puffin, 2006)
 Meg Rosoff, *How I Live Now* (Puffin, 2004)
 Louis Sachar, *Holes* (Bloomsbury, 2000)
 Jenny Valentine, *Finding Violet Park* (HarperCollins Children's Books, 2007)

Useful Background Reading

Kevin Brooks, *Black Rabbit Summer* (Puffin, 2008)
 Melvin Burgess, *Junk* (Puffin, re-issue edition 1997)
 Anthony Horowitz, *Stormbreaker* (Walker Books, 2000)
 Eva Ibbotson, *The Secret Countess* (Picador, 2007)

Beverley Naidoo, *The Other Side of Truth* (Puffin, 2000)
 Jenny Valentine, *Broken Soup* (HarperCollins Children's Books, reissued 2011)

Assessment

A 6000-word story/script or opening of a novel or script for children or young people (75%), and a 1000-word critical commentary detailing the intentions of and methods used in your submitted work, plus bibliography (25%).

Semester 2

ENGL6075 SCRIPTWRITING (20 CREDITS) Course

Convener: Evan Placey

This course will introduce you to the practice of writing scripts for a variety of dramatic contexts, most particularly the theatre. Through weekly workshop exercises, homework tasks and the analysis of recent and successful plays you will learn how to write sharp and lively dialogue, create believable situations, examine the place of images in the telling of a dramatic story and develop an individual voice. You will also learn how to lay out a script to a professional standard. Throughout the course you will be encouraged to comment on and discuss the work of your peers, and to accept constructive criticism in return.

Assessment

5,000 words (or roughly 15-20 minutes) intended as part of a full-length play (75%) and a critical commentary of 1000-2000 words which may draw on activities undertaken in class which contributed to the finished product (25%).

Reading list

- * Caryl Churchill, *Top Girls*
- * Sarah Kane, *Blasted*
- * Martin McDonogh, *The Beauty Queen of Leenane*
- Laura Wade, *Breathing Corpses*
- Marius von Mayenburg, *The Ugly One*
- Jane Bodie, *A Single Act*
- * Mark Ravenhill, *Shopping and F**king*
- Tony Kushner, *Angels in America* (parts 1 & 2)
- Edward Albee, *The Goat (or Who is Sylvia)*
- David Mamet, *Glengarry Glen Ross*
- David Harrower, *Blackbird*
- Jez Butterworth, *Jerusalem*
- Joan MacLeod, *The Shape of a Girl*
- debbie tucker green, *Random*

Asterisked works are all available in the *The Methuen Book of Modern Drama* (London: Methuen, 2001).

Additional Background Reading:

Robert McKee, *Story*

Dancyger & Rush, *Alternative Scriptwriting*

I'll also provide photocopies of some scripts before or on the first session, which are TBC but likely to be: *Mother of Him* by Evan Placey, one of *Banana Boys* or *Holloway Jones* by Evan Placey (plays for young people), *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind* (screenplay) by Charlie Kaufman, *Dirty Pretty Things* (screenplay) by Steven Knight, and a few television scripts TBC but likely to be *Misfits* by Howard Overman, *Desperate Housewives* by Marc Cherry, *The Hour* by Abi Morgan.

ENGL6084 THE ART AND CRAFT OF FICTION 2 (20 CREDITS). Course convener: Amer Hussein

This unit offers advanced training in the writing of short fiction, concentrating on voice, texture and structure rather than context and subtext. Like The Art and Craft of Fiction 1 [ACF1], it does so in a wider international context than the usual selection of UK and US texts allows. It changes the focus of ACF1, however, to focus on the creation of short fiction and structurally experimental novels. During the semester students will be expected to plan a collection of short stories, or a novel based on a sequence of stories, and produce a synopsis of this in the closing seminar sessions. You will reflect upon and discuss the set texts, and there will also be opportunities to discuss your own work in a workshop atmosphere. You will not be expected to do practical or written exercises in the class, though you are encouraged to bring in your work in progress to share with your group. Though it is not necessary to have taken ACF1 to take this course, students who have done so and wish to focus on the form of the short story may find it particularly useful, as might those who have not taken ACF1 and would like to develop their writing within the framework of other texts. The unit will be taught by an established short story writer with a cultural background in international literature and in the new literatures in English.

Reading

A S Byatt, *Elementals: stories of fire and ice* (London: Random House, 1999)

Rana Dasgupta, *Tokyo Cancelled* (London: Fourth Estate, 2005)

Lydia Davis, *The Collected Stories* (London, Penguin, 2011)

Isak Dinesen, *Winter's Tales* (1942; London: Penguin, 1983)

Amer Hussein, *Insomnia* (London: Telegram, 2007)

Milan Kundera, *The Book of Laughter and Forgetting* (New York: Harper Collins, 1994)

Lorrie Moore, *The Collected Stories* (London: Faber, 2008)

Tennessee Williams, *Collected Stories* (London: Minerva, 1996)

Tobias Wolff, *Our Story Begins* (London, Bloomsbury 2011)

Assessment

A 6000-word project (75%) comprised of two or more short stories towards a collection, plus accompanying 1000-word critical reflection and a bibliography (25%).

Please note: the above unit descriptions are correct at the time of going to press, but all are subject to change due to unforeseen circumstances or availability of tutors.

4.

Supervision arrangements for the Creative Project

4.1 Early stages

You will be thinking about your Creative Project from a fairly early stage in your course with the help of one or more of your unit tutors, and you will submit a plan and working title at the end of Semester 1. Around March/April you will be allocated a supervisor whose expertise, in the opinion of the creative writing team, best fits the type of project you want to work on.

4.2 Supervision entitlement and reading of drafts

You would normally have three supervisions over the course of the project. As some staff and some of you will be working on research projects away from Southampton over the summer, it may be more convenient to send drafts and feedback electronically. Please discuss this with your supervisor, as it may be that some electronic feedback and conversation take the place of face-to-face supervisions.

In consultation with your supervisor, you may decide to submit a full draft of the dissertation at some point in August, or you may prefer to send draft chapters separately. It is fine to do this, but you must discuss this with your supervisor so you both know what to expect. Please note also that it is not reasonable to expect your supervisor to read drafts overnight or during the weekend, and you should not leave submission of the final draft until the last minute.

Please note that your supervisor will normally not be able to comment on more than one draft of your work (whether you submit it as one complete draft or as separate chapter drafts). Please also bear in mind that September is an extraordinarily busy month for academic staff, and they may not be able to give you adequate feedback if you miss the deadlines for the submission of drafts that you have both agreed. See Section 6.2 below for important information about how the Creative Project should be formatted and submitted.

5.

Writing the critical commentary

The critical commentary, whether it forms part of your unit assessments or your Creative Project, is an opportunity to explore the literary, theoretical, and/or philosophical background to your work, but it is also the occasion for a working through of your own intentions in writing. Ultimately, the critical commentary will help us to determine whether or not you have carried out effectively what you set out to do, and will carry a 25% weighting for all your Creative Writing modules.

The form of such a piece of work may vary considerably, and there is nothing stopping this element sharing an equally 'creative' aesthetic with the more formally literary side of the work. Indeed, you should remember that you are writing for writers, sharing your thinking about and experience of the practice of writing, the influences that shaped it, and the context in which you see it situated. Here you are trying to persuade your reader of the value and authenticity of your creative journey and marks will thus be gained for elegant, intelligent prose, appropriate vocabulary, and a persuasive balance of subjective reflection and objective understanding. It is important to bear in mind, however, that this work should be as intellectually accomplished as an academic MA essay, though obviously it will not cover the same ground. For example, instead of using the work of another author to support an argument or as a critical base from which to depart as you might in an academic essay, you are more likely to discuss other authors in terms of the stylistic qualities you have borrowed from them (or rejected), or the parts of their work which have influenced or may be used to illuminate your own aims. In both scenarios, however, you will be demonstrating that you understand and can discuss the critical and creative work of authors confidently and fluently.

In terms of content the Critical Commentary is likely to include (but is not limited to) at least some of the following elements:

- discussions of literary, critical, and (where relevant) socio-historical readings and influences
- a self-reflection on the process of composition as you encounter it throughout your writing
- a consideration of the formal choices you make in your writing, including stylistics, genre type and media
- any other factors that are likely to affect how a reader approaches, or should approach, your work.

The critical commentary is then an essential element of a Creative Writing MA, which in a real way completes and contextualises the creative side. It should not be left to the last moment, but can be thought of as a distillation and contextualisation of the writer's notes you have been making throughout the composition process. It **must** be accompanied by a bibliography set out in MHRA style.

6.

Submission of work

6.1 Format of course work

Writers must learn to adhere very closely to the format requirements stipulated by the publisher or journal to which they are submitting work. You should treat your submission of MA work with similar seriousness and careful adherence to the guidelines laid down by the English department. They are as follows:

- All work (including the Creative Project) must be at least 1½ spaced, word processed, and printed in 12-point font unless your tutor has given you special instructions to the contrary
- Margins should be no wider than 1.2 cm (except for poetry and scriptwriting submissions, which may have different format requirements and should be discussed with your tutor)
- All work must be accompanied by a bibliography of books or other works (including websites and films) consulted, listed in accordance with Modern Humanities Research Association citation style. See the MHRA website (<http://www.mhra.org.uk/Publications/Books/StyleGuide/download.shtml>) for a downloadable copy.

6.2 Format and submission of the Creative Project (dissertation equivalent)

For guidance, you may wish to look at a Creative Project submitted in a previous year, and to seek the prior consent of your supervisor to any marked variation from the standard pattern. Projects by previous MA students are available to borrow from the MA convener.

You will need to submit *two copies* of your project to the Student Services Office. Both copies must be bound in a soft cover so that there is no possibility of pages slipping out; a binding service is available from the Print Centre in Building 44 on the Highfield Campus. You should also submit one additional copy of your title page, 2 copies of the assignment cover sheets and a dissertation cover sheet. You will also be required to fill in a student experience survey at the time of submission. This will allow you to comment on key features of your programme of study.

The deadline for submission is **12th September 2013**.

6.3 Submission of work: logging and procedures

- All assessed work must be submitted by 4.00 pm of the set deadline.
- TWO copies must be submitted, with cover sheets which are available from the Student Services Office. (White and yellow sheet on first copy, blue sheet attached to second copy.)
- Text-based work must be typed or word-processed, Work must be logged by the Student Services Office, room 1103, Avenue Campus
- Submission of coursework by email or fax cannot be accepted under any circumstances.

The cover sheet used for the submission of assessed written work includes:

- A statement of the acceptable range of word-length for that assessment (as specified in the relevant module documentation).
- A declaration of the length of the submitted work, in words, to exclude footnotes and bibliography where present for the student to sign;
- A declaration for the student to sign that the work is the candidate's own, and that all quotation or paraphrase of secondary work in any form has been duly acknowledged.

Both copies of the work should have the student number, course title and unit number, in that order, either at top of first page or in the header. The work must be secured with a staple.

6.4 Submission of work: deadlines

All deadlines for assessed Creative Writing course work are set at **4.00pm** on the Thursday of Week 13 (i.e. the week after teaching/consultation time finishes) in each semester, **except** for the Creative Skills Workshop and the Creative Project, as follows:

There deadline for the Creative Skills Workshop is **4pm on March 11th 2012.**

The Creative Project deadline is **12th September 2013.**

You will need to check with the module convener regarding deadlines for other Humanities modules

6.5 Submission of Work: Late Work and Special Considerations

The following regulations apply to both taught work and the Creative Project (dissertation):

Special Considerations

If you have problems that significantly affect your ability to take or complete an examination, or your ability to submit assessed work by the given deadlines, you should let your MA Convener know as soon as possible, and if at all possible before the deadline.

For illnesses of between 1 and 5 days duration, you may complete a *self-certification form*. You should notify your MA Convener of your illness on the first day if at all possible, and submit the form, together with a *late form* and a copy of the email to your MA Convener, to the Student Services Office as soon as possible. (You do not need to submit any other evidence.)

If the problem means that you will be submitting your work more than 5 days late, you must complete and submit a *Special Circumstances Form* and provide independent evidence (e.g., a medical certificate in a case of illness) to the Student Services Office. You should then submit the work as soon as you feel able to do so after the deadline.

Your Special Circumstances Form and the evidence you have supplied will be considered by a Special Considerations Committee in the Discipline in which your programme is based, and that Committee will make a recommendation to the Faculty Examinations Board concerning whether or not penalties for late submission of work or non-attendance at an exam should be waived.

Please note that in order to have your special circumstances considered by the Special Considerations Committee in your Discipline and taken into account by the Faculty's Examinations Board, you **MUST** have submitted a Special Circumstances Form and provided independent evidence regarding your circumstances to the Student Services Office. It is your responsibility to submit the form and the evidence as soon as possible, and before the end of the semester where work has been affected).

The Self-Certification and Special Circumstances Forms are available online and from the Student Services Office.

There may be other reasons why your work is submitted late, and these may be treated with leniency in the following cases and with the submission of relevant evidence:

Compassionate circumstances: e.g. death or severe illness in the immediate circle.

Computer failure: Provided that the claim is accompanied by a disk with a file in the state before the session in which the failure occurred.

Force majeure: That is, exceptional circumstances which affected the candidate's performance and were entirely beyond his or her control.

This list is not exhaustive; when you are in doubt about the validity of your circumstances, please consult the Programme Convener. Where there are extenuating circumstances in the view of the Faculty Assessment Board, the treatment of late and non-submitted work will be as follows:

Late work will be graded as if it had been submitted on time;

Non-submitted work will be discounted in making up the overall assessment for a unit. Where this would leave no basis for an assessment, the Chair of the Assessment Board may grant permission for work to be submitted by a later deadline to be specified and to be treated as if it had been submitted on time; work submitted after this deadline will be subject to the penalties for late work as above unless there are once again extenuating circumstances.

The Chair of the Assessment Board will determine for each case whether extenuating circumstances apply.

Mark reductions for lateness and any remission of such reductions on the grounds of extenuating circumstances will be explicitly recorded and drawn to the attention of the Assessment Board.

Over length work

Assignments which exceed the specified word limit may be subject to a penalty of 5 marks. The word count excludes appendices and bibliography but **includes** quotations and footnotes. Returning students should note that at MA level there is no '10% leeway' rule – unless specified in the course rubric, limits are not to be exceeded.

Late work

Work submitted late without extenuating circumstances or the necessary evidence in support will be marked according to the normal criteria, but the mark will be reduced by 10% for each working day or part thereof that the work is late.

Non-submitted work, and work submitted more than five working days after the due date, will be given a mark of zero.

If you have any queries regarding the information above, please contact Ali Sinclair in the Student Services Office.

Return of work

Assessed work will normally be marked and returned within two weeks of the submission deadline or four weeks if submitted at the end of a semester. It will normally be returned after internal markers have agreed on a mark, although you must be aware that all marks are provisional until confirmed by the examination board.

Please note that the Postgraduate Team in the Student Services Office will email students when their work is ready for collection.

Furthermore, please be aware that work cannot be sent out to students; it is the responsibility of the student to ensure that he/she has collected their work. Work that has not been collected by the end of the academic year will be disposed of in the confidential waste.

6.6 Grading system and marking criteria

The general MA Marking Scheme works on a four-category system as follows:

| | |
|-------------|--------|
| Distinction | 70-100 |
| Merit | 60-69 |
| Pass | 50-59 |
| Fail | 0-49 |

However, each of the four bands above can be further sub-divided. The following descriptions indicate how your grade for creative writing has been arrived at, where your strengths might lie, and which aspects of your work you might need to improve. These are sub-divided into marks for your creative work and your commentaries, which make up 25% of marks for all your creative writing modules.

Marking Criteria for MA Creative Writing (creative component)

DISTINCTION:

80 and above - Exceptional work surpassing that associated with the 70-79 level in terms of originality, subtlety of interpretation, or mastery of a significant theme or genre. A Creative Project (dissertation equivalent) gaining this mark will unambiguously demonstrate the ability to pursue research at doctoral level and may present possibilities for publication.

70-79 - High quality, consistent work displaying all (rather than merely some) of the attributes of work associated with the 60-69 level, and one or more of the attributes of work associated with the 80 and above level. Work in this range suggests definite potential for pursuing research at doctoral level. It is likely to demonstrate:

- originality, independence of creative thought, with a convincing handling of (for example) character, setting, dialogue, or poetics as appropriate
- a clear handling of themes, narrative threads, and verbal patterns
- a scrupulous adherence to formal requirements (such as layout of dialogue, paragraphs, stanzas, stage directions etc.)
- ability to follow your own creative brief

MERIT:

60-69 - Contains all the qualities of work in the 50-59 range but demonstrates particular merit beyond them, surpassing them in terms of at least one of the following:

- contains proof of having handled the assignment with some originality
- uses dialogue or other stylistic devices well where appropriate
- in the upper ranges, suggests at least some possibility of pursuing research at doctoral level, or developing the work into a longer project
- observes the necessary formal requirements
- creates a coherent structure for the writing

The higher the mark in this band, the more of these attributes it is likely to possess.

PASS:

50-59 – Work in this category is likely to suffer from some weaknesses, though it may contain elements of successful writing as listed in higher categories. Any formal requirements will be largely observed, and the piece will demonstrate adequate presentation with no obvious faults. Qualities may include:

- handles an existing literary formula well
- aims of the piece not entirely obvious, or inadequately carried out
- not quite in control of dramatised story telling or poetic style
- mostly readable and grammatical, though the style may occasionally be simplistic, even sometimes awkward, and still in need of revision

FAIL:

40-49 - Contains most of the basic materials necessary for a satisfactory treatment of the assignment, but fails to marshal them effectively in terms of overall structure or employment of techniques. Weaknesses may include (but are not limited to):

- heavily derivative but not simply imitated
- narrative reliant on explanation and simple exposition
- difficult to follow, verging on ungrammatical in an inappropriate way;
- poor control of style
- structure not clear
- formal requirements not fully observed.
- presentation is marred by easily rectifiable defects (e.g. bibliographical incompleteness or inconsistency).

30-39 - Presents some material relevant to the aims of the task, but is significantly incomplete or unbalanced and is likely to contain the following weaknesses:

- failure to structure the work adequately
- failure to understand or effectively apply structural or critical techniques
- scrappy presentation
- expression may be in part unintelligible

29 and below - Displays minimal knowledge of how to tackle the subject, and will contain most if not all of the following weaknesses:

- contains substantially irrelevant material
- plagiarised (sources not acknowledged, material stolen from other people's work without indication)
- fails to engage adequately with the terms of the assignment
- often incomprehensible or unstructured, and written in very poor English
- shows lack of effort or understanding

Marking Criteria for Creative Writing (commentaries)

DISTINCTION:

80 and above - Exceptional work surpassing that associated with the 70-79 level in terms of originality, depth, or subtlety. Commentaries gaining this mark will suggest the ability to pursue research at doctoral level. They will also be critically aware and show an excellent knowledge of genre, form and/or audience.

70-79 - High quality, consistent work displaying all (rather than merely some) of the attributes of work associated with the 60-69 level, and one or more of the attributes of work associated with the 80 and above level. Work in this range suggests definite potential for pursuing research at doctoral level. It is likely to demonstrate:

- originality, independence of creative thought
- a sophisticated awareness of other literary work in the same genre, or with the critical and /or generic vocabularies suggested by your work
- a scrupulous adherence to formal requirements (such as layout of dialogue, paragraphs, stanzas, stage directions etc.)

MERIT:

60-69 - Contains all the qualities of work in the 50-59 range but demonstrates particular merit beyond them, surpassing them in terms of at least one of the following:

- evidence of handling the assignment with some originality, and the ability to draw upon extensive and appropriate reading
- creates a coherent and sophisticated context for the writing in the critical component (if appropriate)
- provides evidence of having studied and learned from the set texts and discussions of creative writing
- offers a reflective and mature account of your creative process (writing, editing, redrafting, with limitations / restrictions recognised)
- well-selected primary and secondary material incorporated into your commentary and imaginatively analysed
- in the upper ranges, suggests at least some possibility of pursuing research at doctoral level
- observes the necessary formal requirements

The higher the mark in this band, the more of these attributes it is likely to possess.

PASS:

50-59 – Work in this category is likely to suffer from some weaknesses, though it may contain elements of successful writing as listed in higher categories. Any formal requirements will be largely observed, and the piece will demonstrate adequate presentation with no obvious faults. Weaknesses may include (but are not limited to):

- aims of the piece not entirely obvious, or inadequately carried out
- uses some pertinent examples, but they may be close to those presented in class, or suggest a limited frame of literary reference
- mostly readable and grammatical, though the style may occasionally be simplistic, even sometimes awkward, and still in need of revision

FAIL:

40-49 - Contains most of the basic materials necessary for a satisfactory treatment of the assignment, but fails to marshal them effectively in terms of overall structure or employment of techniques. Weaknesses may include (but are not limited to):

- aims sometimes unclear or even absent
- difficult to follow, verging on ungrammatical in an inappropriate way
- structure not clear
- formal requirements not fully observed
- demonstrates some acquaintance of related literature but may misunderstand the context or significance of the examples used

30-39 - Presents some material relevant to the aims of the task, but is significantly incomplete or unbalanced and is likely to contain the following weaknesses:

- failure to structure the work adequately
- failure to understand or effectively apply structural or critical techniques
- scrappy presentation with inadequate citation
- expression may be in part unintelligible
- a lack of overall structure, absence of critical appraisal of material, verging at worst on plagiarism

29 and below - Displays minimal knowledge of how to tackle the subject, and will contain most if not all of the following weaknesses:

- contains substantially irrelevant material
- plagiarised (sources not acknowledged, material stolen from other people's work without indication)

- fails to engage adequately with the terms of the assignment
- often incomprehensible, and written in very poor English
- unstructured
- formal requirements consistently ignored
- shows lack of effort or understanding

6.7 Further information about grades

Students who have completed all assessed work for taught modules and have been awarded a mark of 40 or more in each will, at the discretion of the Board of Examiners, be permitted to submit the Creative Project.

For the award of a distinction:

A pass with Distinction will be awarded if (i) the overall average is 70% or more, or if (ii) the average is 68% or higher and at least half the marks, weighted by the credit value of the unit, are 70% or higher.

For the award of a merit:

A pass with Merit will be awarded if (i) the overall average is 60% or more, or if (ii) the average is 58% or higher and at least half the marks, weighted by the credit value of the unit, are 60% or higher.

A Postgraduate Diploma will be awarded to students who have passed all core taught modules and have been awarded sufficient credit for non-core taught modules (whether by passing or by compensation) to have a total of 120 credit points, and who either do not wish to proceed to the dissertation or fail it.

A Postgraduate Certificate will be awarded to students who have passed all core taught modules and have been awarded sufficient credit for non-core taught modules (whether by passing or by compensation) to have a total of at least 60 credit points, and who either do not wish to proceed further with their studies or fail to accrue sufficient credit for the award of a Postgraduate Diploma.

Viva

(Short for viva voce examination). Sometimes Masters students are interviewed at the time of their examinations. This usually, but not necessarily, means that they are borderline cases (for instances, between pass and distinction). Marks are never lowered at a viva, but if you answer the questions put to you well, they may be raised. In other words, the viva cannot harm you - it can help you. The viva may focus on any part of the course, including both coursework and dissertation or equivalent.

7.

Academic Integrity and Ethics

All students undertaking research in the Faculty of Humanities are expected to complete an ethics checklist, to show that you have taken ethical issues into account in planning your work. You will fill this out online before beginning your Creative Project.

Any case of academic integrity or plagiarism will be dealt with in accordance with the University's Academic Integrity Policy (see University Quality Assurance Handbook) at:

<http://www.calendar.soton.ac.uk/sectionIV/academic-integrity-statement.html>

For full details of this and also regulations about ethics, see the general MA Handbook.

8.

Procedure for complaints and appeals

Students should note that we do everything in our power to make certain that work is graded objectively and fairly. All modules on our Creative Writing MA programme are moderated, and a sample is marked for a third time by an external examiner appointed by the University to help us maintain standards. Your final dissertation is double-marked, usually your supervisor and another tutor on the MA programme. In cases of disagreement over grades, tutors meet to discuss the strengths and weaknesses of the piece, and arrive at an agreed grade which may or may not be a 'split' between the two. In cases of extreme disagreement, the external examiner will be invited to arbitrate, and will make a recommendation. The chances for favouritism, prejudice or any other type of malpractice in marking are therefore very slim indeed. However, occasionally you may feel that despite our rigorous procedures you are not happy with the mark or the feedback you have received. In this case, you should take particular note of the following points of procedure:

- All marks are provisional until they have been confirmed by the relevant boards at the end of the academic year. The agreed mark you get on your work when it is returned to you may therefore not be exactly the same mark you end up with, though in practice changes are rare. Final results will not be known until the exam board has met in the Autumn.

- You cannot appeal against an academic judgement. You can only appeal if you feel preparation for or instructions about an assignment have been inadequate, and this fact may have affected your performance. There may be other circumstances which give you grounds for an appeal, but you should check with Ali Leslie in the Student Services office.
- All courses are moderated internally and externally to ensure fairness of marks in relation to the task set. These procedures are rigorous and thorough and they ensure that no tutor gives marks which are out of line with University standards.
- If you are dissatisfied with a provisional mark you have received for any course you should NOT challenge the tutor concerned. You are welcome, of course, to discuss your performance with your tutor at any time, but tutors are not able to change individual marks once given. You should take your complaint directly to Ali Leslie, and she will advise you on how to proceed.

Students may ask for a review of an Examination Board decision. Requests for a Faculty Review must normally be made, in writing, within 21 days of the student being notified of the Examination Board decision, or within 14 days of the announcement of the results of supplementary/re-sit examinations or re-assessments. Students also have the right to appeal against the decision of the Faculty Review Panel. Appeals must be made in writing within 21 days of the Faculty Review Panel.

The web link for the **Regulations Governing Student Complaints** is:

<http://www.calendar.soton.ac.uk/sectionIV/student-complaints.html>

The web link for **Regulations Governing Appeals by Students** is:

<http://www.calendar.soton.ac.uk/sectionIV/student-appeals.html>

Please note that free, independent, specialist advice is provided by the Students' Union Advice and Information Centre (SUAIC Email: suaic@susu.org Telephone: 023 8059 2085, Web: <http://info.susu.org>).

Staff and their contact details

Alison Fell (tutor)
 Email: A.M.Fell@soton.ac.uk
 Room: 1002

Aamer Hussein (tutor)
 Email: A.Hussein@soton.ac.uk
 Room: 1002

Will May (Programme Convener)
 Email: W.May@soton.ac.uk
 Room: 2023

Peter Middleton (tutor)
 Email: P.Middleton@soton.ac.uk
 Room: 2025

Evan Placey (tutor) [semester 2]
 Email: E.Placey@soton.ac.uk
 Room: 1002

Rebecca Smith (tutor)
 Email: R.Smith@soton.ac.uk
 Room: 1018

Carole Smith (tutor)
 Email: c.j.smith@soton.ac.uk
 Room: 1002

Ali Leslie (Student Services administrator for MAs)
 Email: A.J.Leslie@soton.ac.uk / pghums@soton.ac.uk
 Room: Student Services (1023)

All academic tutors will run weekly office hours where you can speak to them about any aspect of the course.

10.

Useful Information

10.1 Key Dates

Semester 1: Thursday 27 September 2012 - Saturday 26 January 2013
 Semester 2: Monday 28 January 2013 - Saturday 16 June 2013
 Christmas vacation: Sunday 16 December 2012 - Sunday 6 January 2013
 Easter vacation: Sunday 17 March 2013 - Sunday 14 April 2013
 Autumn term: Thursday 27 September 2012 - Saturday 17 December 2013
 Spring term: Monday 9 January 2013 - Saturday 17 March 2013

Summer term: Monday 16 April 2013 - Saturday 16 June 2013

10.2 Location of campus maps

Because of space constraints, not all classes will always be held at Avenue campus. Maps can be located and downloaded from the main University website at the following locations.

Highfield Campus map:

[\(<http://www.soton.ac.uk/about/whereissoton/maps/highfield3d.pdf>\)](http://www.soton.ac.uk/about/whereissoton/maps/highfield3d.pdf)

Avenue Campus map:

[\(\[http://www.soton.ac.uk/about/whereissoton/maps/other_campuses.pdf\]\(http://www.soton.ac.uk/about/whereissoton/maps/other_campuses.pdf\)\)](http://www.soton.ac.uk/about/whereissoton/maps/other_campuses.pdf)

10.3 University Contacts

Student Services Office (Postgraduate Team)

The Postgraduate Team should be your first point of contact for queries. We are based at the Avenue Campus and are open for student enquiries Mondays to Friday, 10.00-4.00.

Accommodation

Student accommodation is handled by the Accommodation Office. This is located in George Thomas Building, Student Services Centre; the phone number is ext. 23994 (from an external line, 023 8059 3994).

Address

It is essential that you keep your addresses up to date (permanent and term time). You can do this by accessing your student record online (from Southampton home page, click on new and current students, then click on your student record and enter your password). If you need help, please ask the postgraduate team in the Student Services Office. Please note that failure to update your records will result in correspondence going to an incorrect address.

Books

Books for most modules are stocked by October Books, 243 Portswood Road, Southampton, SO17 2NG. Tel: 023 8058 1030, Fax: 023 8058 1040, e-mail: info@octoberbooks.org. October Books hold regular book stalls at Avenue Campus.

Alternatively, a selection of set texts may be found at the Waterstones branch on the Highfield Campus.

Careers

Careers advice is available from the Careers Advisory Service, which is located in Building 3, on University Road (the building to the left of the Hartley Library); they organise sessions on writing a curriculum vitae, interview technique, and so on, as well as providing job lists and general careers advice.

Complaints

Occasionally something may go wrong. If you are unhappy about something, it's usually best to try and resolve it with the staff member most directly concerned - that may mean the tutor of a course module or the Convener for your MA programme. If you are uncomfortable approaching your tutors, or don't know who to go to, then you can talk to the postgraduate team who will advise you on the options open to you.

Computers

Please ensure that you have enrolled and subscribed online to use Computing Services public workstations and email. Go to any workstation on campus to register and follow the links on the screen.

Emergencies

The University emergency services telephone number is ext. 999 (on an internal phone dial just 999). See Safety, and also the HELPLINES box at the end of this section.

Evaluation of courses

Student evaluation plays a significant role in course development. Course modules are evaluated every year by means of a questionnaire and the results analysed by the course convener.

The results will be made known to you. Evaluation reports on modules, and on Masters programmes overall, are considered by the Faculty's Learning and Teaching Quality Committee; problems and examples of particularly good practice are included in the Faculty's Annual Statement on Quality Assurance to the University. Sometimes you may be asked to participate in course evaluation by means of group discussion.

Fire

The internal emergency services number is ext. 999 (from an outside line 023 8059 999). For Fire, Police, and Ambulance dial 91999 from a University extension or 999 from an outside.

10.4 Facilities and support

Photocopying and Printing

Photocopying and Printing is available to students via the Konica machines found in Hartley Library and throughout the study areas of Avenue campus.

English for Academic Purposes

The Centre for Language Study (Avenue Campus): If you are a registered student at the University of Southampton and would like help with your English, you can attend the free English language support courses provided throughout the academic year. Please see <http://www.lang.soton.ac.uk/english/support.html> for further details. These courses are aimed at students for whom English is not their first language.

Royal Literary Fellow

Our Royal Literary Fund Writing Fellows **Robyn Bolam** and **James Maconochie** run office hours every week in Room 1061, Avenue Campus from Monday through Wednesday. Students are encouraged to make appointment to see them for consultative sessions about their writing skills in any medium (e.g. essays, creative work, job applications). There is a sign-up sheet on the door.

Financial Support

Specialist advice is available from the Student Union Advice and Information Centre, George Thomas Building, (open 9.00 to 5.00 Monday to Friday, Thursday 10.00 to 5.00 phone number 023 8059 2085). They are based in the George Thomas building opposite the student services counter. See also the previous guide to support for postgraduate students.

Personal problems

Confidential counselling is available from the Counselling Service at 28 University Road. It is open from 10.00 to 3.00 on Mondays to Fridays during term time, and the phone number is 023 8059 3719 or ext. 23719. Out of hours, the Nightline offers help and advice about personal problems on 023 8067 1222 (8 pm to 8 am).

Students' Union

Please see the university website for information on clubs and societies, events and entertainment as well as sources of advice and support.