Writing: Imaginative Practice by distance learning

Final award	MA
Intermediate awards available	Postgraduate Diploma; Postgraduate Certificate
UCAS code	N/A
Details of professional body accreditation	N/A
Relevant QAA Benchmark statements	NAWE (The National Association of Writers in Education) has produced a Creative Writing subject benchmark statement which the MA will use as its guide. It is available to read online at: www.nawe.co.uk/public/CW%20Benchmarks.pdf
Date specification last up-dated	November 2011

Profile

The summary - programme advertising leaflet

Programme content

This MA offers an exciting, mixed-genre approach to writing, allowing students to hone their writing through critical creative practice. The MA combines the strengths of many programmes (Theatre Studies, Film, Creative Writing), allowing students fertile ground for experimentation and the possibility to break out of old forms and traditional restrictions. The programme is delivered by distance learning, using a virtual classroom environment and virtual learning environment that facilitates live and pre-recorded presentations, discussions, collaborative chat sessions, as well as facilities for reflective writing. There is also a large repository of online resources and formative exercises.

MA in Writing: Imaginative Practice at UEL

The MA in Writing: Imaginative Practice develops creativity, creative writing skills and creative experience in a supportive and challenging environment.

- Taught online, via distance learning methods by a team of renowned writers with international experience.
- Focus on new writing: expand personal frontiers; create hybrid forms.
- Practice as research approach.

- Emphasis on producing work for publication/performance/production that expresses contemporary writing and the cosmopolitan and international flavour of our university.
- Interdisciplinary workshops in drama, music, new media, film, fiction, and new poetic forms.
- Students are encouraged to explore the areas of Realisms, Genre, and Adaptation, leading to preparation for a practice-based dissertation.
- Instruction on dissemination of outputs, including an examination of the issues surrounding access to distribution channels, agents, publishing, performance contexts, and alternatives to traditional avenues, including the Internet and the future of publishing.

Admission requirements

We require a first degree (2.1 or above), in addition to an interview and submission of a portfolio of creative writing. Applicants with a degree or equivalent experience, who may not meet the entrance criteria above, but who can demonstrate their potential as writers and a strong desire to participate in the programme, are encouraged to apply.

Programme structure

The programme comprises of four 30-credit modules entitled 'Experience', 'Adaption', 'Genre' and 'Research Methods in Creative Practice', and a 60-credit module entitled 'Practiced Based Dissertation'.
We expect distance learning students to study the programme over two years or more on a part-time basis. To complete the programme over two years students would study as follows:

Year 1:

Semester A : *Experience: Encounters with the Real*

Semester B: *Adaptation: Transformation and Form*

Year 2:

Semester A: *Genre: Explorations of Expression*

Semester B: *Research Methods in Creative Practice*

Semester C (Summer): Practice-based Dissertation

Subject to student numbers we may offer the programme for study over one year on a full time basis as follows:

Semester A: *Experience*; *Genre*

Semester B: *Adaptation*; *Research Methods in Creative Practice*

Semester C (Summer): *Practice-based Dissertation*

Learning environment

The core of the programme is the development of students' writing through online workshops, webinars, contribution to reflective blogs, and supervision towards a practice‑based dissertation. Each module is divided into a writing segment where students present and discuss their writing in a virtual classroom, and a critical segment in which essential works are given close textural readings, and elements of craft are explored through exercises and online presentations. As a result, students engage in both writing and literature – the creative and critical aspects of the MA.

Assessment

Both **formative** and **summative** assessment takes place as part of each module as follows:

- through contributions to online discussions and a reflective blog
- the portfolio – the place where the critical and creative thinking is developed and demonstrated. This is shown through a variety of tasks and outputs, ranging from, for example, weekly writing assignments responding to specific briefs, to peer feedback and reflection on feedback, and to critical engagement with readings
- students are required to submit drafts of their creative writing and to receive feedback on this writing. This constitutes formative assessment in the sense that they must submit these drafts in order to demonstrate progress towards their final pieces. Such final pieces are then summatively assessed on the basis of evidence of the development from initial drafts
- it is likely that multiple drafts of creative pieces will be produced by students, and may be read and given feedback by both students and tutors
- emphasis on self-editing – evidence of several levels of revision
- demonstration of engagement with research, observation, structuring, development of voice and refinement of style
- critical analysis should contextualise students' work within the genre as well as in relation to contemporary authors and published work, including theory
- evidence of collaboration or interaction in research or development of dissertation project with supervisor and other sources of feedback, including students/sectors in the school (performance art, media, journalism, music)
- evidence of use forms and structures in different contexts
- critical reading and analysis of published work
- self-reflective critique: evaluation should discuss formative elements over the course of the degree.

Final pieces completed for summative assessment may be in forms other than the traditional written form (e.g. reflective blog or performance of a poem).

Relevance to work/profession

Many of the skills students will acquire during their degree course will be highly valued in the workplace: clarity of expression and accuracy in written work, for example, and the ability to critically examine, analyse and reflect. In addition, during the course of the degree students will develop skills that are essential to any profession: self management, organisation and planning, the ability to work collaboratively, and to attend to both the smaller details and the larger picture.

Thesis/Dissertation/project work

The dissertation is an opportunity for the student to develop and produce a substantial piece of work that has probably, but not necessarily, arisen from writing produced in the core modules. The dissertation may focus on one style/form of writing or allow for differing creative forms to be integrated into the final body of work. For example, the student might mix poetic forms and fiction, or visual treatments and another form. Research as practice methodology will provide students with a deeper understanding of writing as well as their own creative process. A critical reflection on practice, theory, and the context of the student's final work, which may be in the form of a reflective blog or traditional written piece will also be an important part of the dissertation.

Added value

By offering a multi-disciplinary, thematic approach, and by focussing student attention on new forms, new technologies and 'Writing for the 21st Century', the MA in Writing will not only appeal to students from a wide background of interests, it will provide them with the diverse expertise of the participating faculty, allowing potentially unique creative output.

Your future career

While the programme will provide the groundwork for future novelists and writers working in poetic forms (whether that be in the printed word, music, or art installation), there will also be, among the graduates, emerging dramaturges, with skills in script development and an engagement in critical approaches to performance writing. These skills can lead to careers in both the performing arts and the film and television industry as script readers and editors, as well as providing a firm foundation for those interested in becoming future theatre directors, playwrights, and screenwriters.

How we support you

- Support from a personal tutor, dissertation supervisor and specialist distance learning student advisor
- Individual feedback on your writing, through email and online chat
- Individual online tutorials from module leaders and tutors
- Research as practice training, skills support, including IT and learning resources
- University-wide support network, student finance advice, careers advice, and help from the student support office
- Access to Royal Literary Fund Fellow in Writing Centre.

Bonus factors

- Guest webinars from professional writers, agents, producers, directors, publishers
- Annual Literary Festival
- Writing Centre for activities, support and international exchanges
- E-zine of Students' Writing
- Performance space for workshopping writing
- Tutors are practising professionals in their field
- Small student cohort; individual attention
- Innovative use of multimedia and elearning in an online platform.

Outcomes

Programme aims and learning outcomes

What is this programme designed to achieve?

This programme is designed to give you the opportunity to:

- develop your writing in a unique, mixed-genre approach, allowing you fertile ground for experimentation and the possibility to break out of old forms and traditional restrictions
- work towards a substantial piece of work in your chosen area
- develop self-reflection and critical analysis, allowing you to situate your writing within key critical perspectives and debates surrounding writing

What will you learn?

Knowledge

- Ability to critically appraise writing in different genres, in terms of both formal and structural aspects.
- Experiential knowledge of a range of approaches to the practise of writing.
- Experiential knowledge of the imaginative possibilities of language.
- Substantial knowledge of a wide range of texts.
- Experiential knowledge of forms and techniques.
- Experience in collaborative work.

Thinking skills

- Critical analysis of texts and of the process, production and effects of writing.
- Contextualisation, both historical and generic.
- Critical reflection on own work in relation to more general aesthetic, cultural and interdisciplinary issues.
- Using an informed, critical vocabulary.
- Critical application to produce, rewrite and edit own work.

Subject-based practical skills

- Integrate theory and practice in an approach to a creative project.
- Develop and refine stylistic, thematic, and structural approaches to a creative project.
- Write creatively.
- Research skills necessary for production of creative works.

Skills for life and work (general skills)

- Self-motivation to produce a significant piece of writing, using discipline, self-reflection and the ability to receive feedback and constructive criticism.
- Confidence through producing, reading/performing work.
- Proficiency in group dynamics, feedback and workshop methods.

- Presentation and communication of ideas.
- Working with complex ideas.

Structure

The programme structure

Introduction

At the University of East London all programmes are credit rated to help you to understand the amount and level of study that is needed.

One credit is equal to 10 hours of directed study time (this includes everything you do, e.g. lecture, seminar and private study).

Credits are assigned to one of five levels:

- 0   equivalent in standard to GCE 'A' level and is intended to prepare students for year one of an undergraduate degree programme
- 1   equivalent in standard to the first year of a full-time undergraduate degree programme
- 2   equivalent in standard to the second year of a full-time undergraduate degree programme
- 3   equivalent in standard to the third year of a full-time undergraduate degree programme
- M   equivalent in standard to a master's degree

Credit rating

The overall credit rating of this programme is *180 Credits*.

Typical duration

We expect distance learning students to study the programme on a part-time basis over two years or more, up to a six year limit. Subject to student numbers we may offer the distance learning programme for study over a one year period.

How the teaching year is divided

The teaching year is divided into three semesters, beginning in September and ending the following September. Semester A and B are each 12 weeks, and Semester C runs from May until September. A typical distance learning student will study two 30-credit modules in the first year and the final three modules in the second year.

What you will study when

PART-TIME and FULL-TIME PROGRAMME STRUCTURE

	Full-time students ~ SEM A	Full-time students SEM B	Full-time students ~ SEM C
Part-time students ~ year 1	Experience: *Encounters with the Real*	Adaptation: *Transformation and Form*	
Part-time students ~ year 2	Genre: *Explorations of Expression*	Research Methods *in Creative Practice*	Practice-Based Dissertation

Year	Module title	Credit status	
1	Experience: Encounters with the Real	30	Core
1	Genre: Explorations of Expression	30	Core
1	Adaptation: Transformation and Form	30	Core
1	Research Methods in Creative Practice	30	Core
1 Sem.C Practice-based Dissertation		60	Core

Requirements for gaining an award

In order to gain a Postgraduate Certificate, you will need to obtain 60 credits at Level M.

In order to gain a Postgraduate Diploma, you will need to obtain 120 credits at Level M

In order to obtain a Master's, you will need to obtain 180 credits at Level M. These credits will include a 60-credit level M core module of advanced independent research.

Masters Award Classification

Where a student is eligible for a Master's award then the award classification is determined by calculating the arithmetic mean of all marks and applying the mark obtained as a percentage, with all decimals points rounded up to the nearest whole number, to the following classification

70% - 100%	Distinction
60% - 69%	Merit
50% - 59%	Pass
0% - 49%	Not Passed

Assessment

Teaching, learning and assessment

Teaching and learning

Knowledge is developed through:

- exploring creative possibilities through writing
- exploring different modes and forms of writing
- engaging with the conventions and styles of different genres

- developing a critical literary vocabulary.

Thinking skills are developed through:

- drafting and editing processes
- reflecting on and evaluating one's own work
- analysing and commenting on a wide variety of texts
- exploring the imaginative possibilities of language
- encouraging individual thinking.

Practical skills are developed through:

- improved language and stylistic skills
- independent research, reading and writing
- drafting and editing processes
- production work
- collaborative research and communication skills
- encouraging individual practice.

Skills for life and work (general skills) are developed through:

- planning, execution and delivery of substantial work
- research into creative and professional writing industries
- being self-motivated and working independently
- working online in groups, discussing and carrying out projects with others.

Assessment

Knowledge is assessed by:

- essays, commentaries and critical reflections
- textual analysis
- online presentations.

Thinking skills are assessed by:

- essays, commentaries and critical reflections
- imaginative writing
- online presentations
- textual analysis.

Practical skills are assessed by:

- creative and critical writing
- production work
- online presentations
- online group work.

Skills for life and work (general skills) are assessed by:

- online group work
- online presentations
- written work.

Quality

How we assure the quality of this programme

Before this programme started

Before this programme started the University checked that:

- there would be enough qualified staff to teach the programme
- adequate resources would be in place
- the online environment was supported
- the overall aims and objectives were appropriate
- the content of the programme met national benchmark requirements
- the programme met any professional/statutory body requirements
- the proposal met other internal quality criteria covering a range of issues such as admissions policy, teaching, learning and assessment strategy and student support mechanisms.

This is done through a process of programme approval which involves consulting academic experts including some subject specialists from other institutions.

How we monitor the quality of this programme

The quality of this programme is monitored each year through evaluating:

- external examiner reports (considering quality and standards)
- statistical information (considering issues such as the pass rate)
- student feedback.

Drawing on this and other information, programme teams undertake the annual Review and Enhancement Process which is coordinated at School level and includes student participation. The process is monitored by the University's Quality Standing Committee.
Once every six years the University undertakes an in-depth review of the whole field. This is undertaken by a panel that includes at least two external subject specialists. The panel considers documents, looks at student work, speaks to current and former students and speaks to staff before drawing its conclusions. The result is a report highlighting good practice and identifying areas where action is needed.

The role of the programme committee

This programme has a programme committee comprising all relevant teaching staff, student representatives and others who make a contribution towards the effective operation of the programme (e.g. library/technician staff). Students not able to attend in person will be able to participate using a virtual meeting facility. The committee has responsibilities for the quality

of the programme. It provides input into the operation of the Review and Enhancement Process and proposes changes to improve quality.

The programme committee plays a critical role in the University's quality assurance procedures.

The role of external examiners

The standard of this programme is monitored by at least one external examiner. External examiners have two primary responsibilities:

- to ensure the standard of the programme
- to ensure that justice is done to individual students.

External examiners fulfil these responsibilities in a variety of ways including:

- approving exam papers/assignments
- attending assessment boards
- reviewing samples of student work and moderating marks
- ensuring that regulations are followed
- providing feedback to the University through an annual report that enables us to make improvements for the future.

Listening to the views of students

The following methods for gaining student feedback are used on this programme:

- module evaluations
- student representation on programme committees (meeting twice a year)
- student/staff consultative committee (meeting three times a year).

Students are notified of the action taken through:

- circulating the minutes of the programme committee
- VLE contact and regular updates throughout year
- providing details on the programme notice board.

Listening to the views of others

The following methods are used for gaining the views of other interested parties:

- questionnaires to former students
- annual student satisfaction questionnaire.

Further Information

Where you can find further information

Further information about this programme is available from:

- The UEL web site (http://www.uel.ac.uk)
- The student handbook
- Module study guides
- UEL Manual of General Regulations and Policies http://www.uel.ac.uk/qa/
- UEL Quality Manual http://www.uel.ac.uk/qa/
- Regulations for the Academic Framework http://www.uel.ac.uk/academicframework/
- School web page(http://uel.ac.uk/ hss/)
- UELconnect Distance Learning Web page http://www.uel.ac.uk/uelconnect/distance_learning/programmes.htm