

# MA Creative and Life Writing

## Programme Specification

**Awarding Institution:**

University of London (Interim Exit Awards made by Goldsmiths' College)

**Teaching Institution:** Goldsmiths, University of London

**Name of Final Award and Programme Title:** MA Creative and Life Writing

**Name of Interim Exit Award(s):** Not applicable

**Duration of Programme:** 1 year full-time or 2 years part-time

**UCAS Code(s):** Not applicable

**HECoS Code(s):** (100046) Creative Writing

**QAA Benchmark Group:** Not applicable

**FHEQ Level of Award:** Level 7

**Programme accredited by:** Not applicable

**Date Programme Specification last updated/approved:** August 2017

**Home Department:** English and Creative Writing

**Department(s) which will also be involved in teaching part of the programme:**

Not applicable

## Programme overview

This programme is designed to meet the needs of committed writers who are interested in exploring and exploiting their own possibilities as writers, and in critically examining their own writing. It is unique in combining creative and life writing in a stimulating and enriching programme.

We examine relevant literary and cultural theory as well as the politics and practicalities of language and writing from the point of view of the writer.

Practitioner-led, the programme offers you the opportunity to work with a range of published writers who visit the College to give readings and lead workshops.

Visiting writers have included Daljit Nagra, Jackie Kay and Ali Smith. Poetry Masterclasses have been led by Sharon Olds, Les Murray, Patience Agbabi and Paul Muldoon. We also expect to draw fully upon London's rich tradition as a converging point for culturally diverse literary practices.

## Programme entry requirements

The standard requirement is an Upper Second-Class BA or equivalent degree in English or a related humanities/arts subject (e.g. Drama, Philosophy) together with submission of a portfolio of the student's creative writing. Other qualifications of equivalent level to a degree are considered; as are degree results below the upper second class where there are indications of particular strength in this specialism. A high level of competence in written and spoken English is also required. Students without BA- equivalent qualifications who have substantial work experience (e.g. in literary journalism, creative writing, publishing etc.) which may be considered as equivalent to formal qualifications, may be admitted.

## Aims of the programme

The programme specification is informed by: Goldsmiths' declared focus on 'the study of creative, cultural and social processes'; the English Subject Benchmark Statement; the UK Quality Code; the National Qualifications Framework; the English and Creative Writing and the Goldsmiths Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategies.

The main purpose of the programme is to offer ways to develop your own writing skills within a challenging, flexible and advanced scheme of study invigorated by current research. The programme aims to extend students' specialist knowledge and critical/contextual understanding of the study and practice of Creative and Life Writing. The programme aspires to:

- develop your particular writing skills and interests
- enhance independent critical and evaluative skills
- expand your knowledge and understanding of cultural, historical and intellectual contexts of modern literature
- develop an understanding of diverse literary trends, movements and schools
- promote your analytical engagement with the complexities of modern literary discourse
- encourage students' development into professionally organised and interactive individuals by practising skills of selection, assimilation and communication in both written and oral domains
- facilitate a learning environment that offers an appropriate foundation for further literary development or scholarly research in literary studies

## What you will be expected to achieve

By the end of the programme you should have gained:

1. development of writing skills (prose fiction, poetry, life-writing) enabling you to be in a stronger position to gain publication
2. knowledge and understanding of the critical, cultural and historical context of contemporary writing and an enhanced awareness of contemporary literary or cultural debates
3. awareness of the range of literary and cultural forms available and progress in exploring which forms are most rewarding in their own work
4. an ability to analyse your aims as a writer and how, in practice, you might fulfil them
5. an ability to examine your own work critically and with rigour

## Knowledge and understanding

Code	Learning outcome	Taught by the following module(s)
A1	development of writing skills (prose fiction, poetry, life- writing) enabling you to be in a stronger position to gain publication	All modules, but particularly the Portfolio
A2	knowledge and understanding of the critical, cultural and historical context of contemporary writing and an enhanced awareness of contemporary literary styles or cultural debates	Contemporary Contexts for Creative & Life Writing
A3	awareness of the range of literary and cultural forms available and progress in exploring which forms are most rewarding in their own work	All modules
A4	an ability to analyse your aims as a writer and how, in practice, you might fulfil them	All modules
A5	an ability to examine your own work critically and with rigour	All modules

## Cognitive and thinking skills

Code	Learning outcome	Taught by the following module(s)
B1	develop strong writing skills	All modules, but particularly the Portfolio

<b>Code</b>	<b>Learning outcome</b>	<b>Taught by the following module(s)</b>
B2	develop skills of critical analysis in relation to your own creative work	All modules
B3	conduct textual analysis informed by appropriate contextual knowledge	Contemporary Contexts for Creative & Life Writing
B4	draw together diverse, but relevant, contexts and perspectives	All modules
B5	assimilate and critically evaluate literary techniques used to construct texts in your chosen area or genre	All modules
B6	formulate coherent and persuasive interpretations and arguments informed by standards of scholarly accuracy	Contemporary Contexts for Creative & Life Writing

## Subject specific skills and professional behaviours and attitudes

<b>Code</b>	<b>Learning outcome</b>	<b>Taught by the following module(s)</b>
C1	plan and execute independent pieces of creative writing	All modules
C2	gain an awareness of the literary and cultural forms available to you as a writer	All modules
C3	use close reading to produce critically informed independent interpretations of challengingly innovative literary texts	Contemporary Contexts for Creative & Life Writing
C4	use a range of critical commentary discriminatingly and apply critical commentary to your own creative work	All modules
C5	produce own written work to scholarly standards in organisation, relevance, expression, referencing, and bibliography	All modules
C6	perceive and account for interactions between cultural contexts and literary forms in the creation and reception of textual meanings	Contemporary Contexts for Creative & Life Writing
C7	prepare, contribute to, and on occasion lead workshop discussion on complex texts and contextual issues	All modules except the Portfolio

## Transferable skills

Code	Learning outcome	Taught by the following module(s)
D1	the development of strong writing skills	All modules
D2	enhanced communication and discussion skills, in written and oral contexts	All modules
D3	capacity to handle ideas in rational, critical and evaluative ways	All modules
D4	open-mindedness and capacity for independent judgement	All modules
D5	management of own learning, including working effectively to deadlines	All modules
D6	application of skills of close analysis to a variety of texts and contexts	Contemporary Contexts for Creative & Life Writing
D7	power to organise information, and to assimilate and evaluate competing arguments	All modules
D8	ability to make positive contributions to groups, and perception of group dynamics	All modules except the Portfolio

## How you will learn

Teaching and learning methods and strategies linked to knowledge and Understanding:

The Department is committed to the centrality of the workshop and tutorial in the teaching and learning process. The programme provides a weekly 2 1/2-hr workshop in the winter and spring term for every participant. The workshop focuses specifically on the development of writing skills and the advancement of critical debate about contemporary writing.

Knowledge gained through reading, presentations and debate is reinforced through individually supervised tutorials, 4x1-hr sessions per term for full-time students, (2x1-hr sessions each term, for 2 years, for part-time students) where close attention is paid to each student's work-in-progress. These courses support and develop all of programme outcomes (A1-5).

Outcomes (A2-3), in particular, are further sustained by the seminar series. In the winter term a series of weekly 2-hr seminars in Contemporary Contexts amplifies and complements the debate taking place in the workshops. This structure provides contextual and theoretical perspectives and enables you to enhance and develop your understanding.

Outcomes (A1-5) are further supported by the specialist option modules taken in the second term; these are taught by a two- and-a-half-hour specialist workshop in either prose fiction or life writing or poetry or writing for children and young adults. Alternatively, students may choose to take an option of a literary-critical or linguistic nature and underpinned by up-to-date staff research specialisms.

Teaching is augmented by the inclusion of a number of visiting writers who contribute guest seminars, tutorials and workshops throughout the year.

Teaching and learning methods and strategies linked to intellectual skills:

These skills are cultivated across the programme's syllabuses. Through workshops students are continuously exposed to—and encouraged to evolve—fresh perceptions and evaluations of literary forms and techniques; and through self-managed learning to apply some of these techniques and perceptions to their own work. Through seminars you further assimilate a range of contextual approaches to and analyses of them. Finally, through one-to-one tutorials you are able to discuss in detail your own literary practice.

Teaching and learning methods and strategies linked to subject-specific skills:

These skills are cultivated across the curriculum, though with varying emphases according to the course. In addition, the Programme Handbook provides initial advice on aspects of (C5). Suitable bibliographical information is normative for each module and its efficacy tested in student evaluation. The workshop modules provide a grounding in (C1-4) and (C7), and the option courses build further on that grounding, particularly in relation to (C1-2). (C6) is particularly addressed through the seminar course in Contemporary Contexts.

Teaching and learning methods and strategies linked to transferable skills:

Powers of expression and discussion, and the handling of ideas, are developed everywhere in the course, since all courses require production of written work that communicates and argues well, and all courses use seminar and workshop discussion as part of the learning process, thus supporting (D6-7) in particular. Staff give course-specific help with (D1-2). (D3-4) should be demonstrated to students by staff and peer example. (D5) is a crucial skill fostered in a timetabled curriculum.

## **How you will be assessed**

Assessment allows students to demonstrate a range of appropriate skills: (i) by 2 submissions of written work (each 5,000 words or equivalent) which include a mixture of the students own creative work and a critical commentary on it, for the workshop course; (ii) by 5,000-word essays for the Contemporary Contexts seminar module and for the chosen

option module; or by a further submission of 5,000 words of creative writing and critical commentary for the specialist workshop module; (iii) by 20,000- word, or equivalent, portfolio of creative writing and critical commentary. This portfolio represents the equivalent of a dissertation.

Assessment of intellectual skills:

These skills are assessed via creative writing submissions, essays and dissertation.

Assessment of subject-specific skills:

The skills in (C1-5 and C7) are tested through the assessment methods of the two 5,000-word (or equivalent) creative writing submissions and the 20,000-word portfolio submission. (C6) is tested mainly but not exclusively in the essay submitted in relation to the Contemporary Contexts seminar series.

Assessment of transferable skills:

(D1-7) are repeatedly tested during the programme through the requirement to produce, by specified dates, creative writing accompanied by critical commentary, essays and a portfolio (dissertation equivalent), and through the adoption of workshops and tutorials as the key learning media. Attainment in (D1-7) is measured in three kinds of assessed written work. (D8) is an ubiquitous element of the programme: it is subject to formative tutor assessment by oral feedback.

Your written work is assessed with regard to (a) the department's general assessment criteria, (b) the particular assessment criteria identified for a given course, and (c) the requirements of the specific essay or assignment or examination answer undertaken.

The department's general assessment criteria for written work are as follows and should be borne in mind throughout your work in your degree programme:

1. Relevance of discussion and argument to the topic; ability to discriminate between merely descriptive statements and critical analysis, and to identify pertinent issues with precision.
2. Ability to present, sustain and conclude fluently a discussion, investigation or complex argument based on close and imaginative engagement with the text(s) in question, and to draw reasoned and logical conclusions.
3. Clarity of the work in terms of legibility, spelling, punctuation and grammar; and the professionalism of the presentation.

Assessed work is given a percentage mark. The following explanations will give an idea of how marks are assigned. (But note that marking criteria are flexible. An excellent discussion or narrative may be compromised by poor expression or organisation: an eloquent discussion may be fundamentally irrelevant. Examples of other factors adversely affecting a mark would be repetition, or manifest incompleteness or serious failure to meet the prescribed length.)

## Marking criteria

Mark	Descriptor	Specific Marking Criteria
80-100%	Distinction (Outstanding/ Exceptional)	<p>Creative writing: evidence of an outstanding ambition and execution in the writing, extensive relevant reading and reflective insight. This knowledge will have been reviewed critically with independence of thought and executed professionally. Arguments and the presentation of evidence will demonstrate sophisticated reasoning and be exceptionally clear, well-focused and cogent.</p> <p>Critical writing: evidence of extensive relevant reading and an outstanding grasp of current major issues in the field. This knowledge will have been reviewed critically with insight and independence of thought. Arguments and the presentation of evidence will demonstrate sophisticated reasoning and be exceptionally clear, well-focused and cogent.</p>
70-79%	Distinction	<p>Creative writing: evidence of an excellent ambition and execution in the writing, extensive relevant reading and reflective insight. This knowledge will have been reviewed critically with independence of thought and executed professionally. Arguments and the presentation of evidence will demonstrate sophisticated reasoning and be exceptionally clear, well-focused and cogent.</p> <p>Critical writing: evidence of extensive relevant reading and an excellent grasp of current major issues in the field. This knowledge will have been reviewed critically with insight and independence of thought. Arguments and the presentation of evidence will demonstrate sophisticated reasoning and be exceptionally clear, well-focused and cogent.</p>
60-69%	Merit	Creative writing: consistency and fluency in developing ideas, character, dialogue, form and language. The candidate is able

Mark	Descriptor	Specific Marking Criteria
		<p>to analyse their aims and practice. Candidates will demonstrate an ability to relate their reading to their writing, and will clearly have understood and assimilated the relevant literature.</p> <p>Critical writing: consistency and fluency in discussing and evaluating evidence and theories drawn from a wide range of sources. Candidates will demonstrate an ability to relate this reading to their question/topic, and will clearly have understood and assimilated the relevant literature.</p>
50-59%	Pass	<p>Creative writing: clear evidence of knowledge and understanding but there may be limited development of ideas, character, dialogue, form, language or critical comment. There may be uncertainty in the candidate's ability to shape and control their creative writing or in their ability to analyse their aims and practice. Within these limitations there will be indication that the candidate has grasped adequately fundamental concepts and techniques in the field.</p> <p>Critical writing: clear evidence of knowledge and understanding, but there may be limited development of ideas, critical comment or methodology. There will be reference to relevant reading, though not necessarily critical evaluation. Within these limitations there will be indication that the candidate has grasped fundamental concepts and procedures in the field.</p>
30-49%	Fail	<p>Creative writing: At this level of study, a creative writing submission may show adequate knowledge of the syllabus but fail on grounds of inadequate relevance to the question/topic; it may be relevant and well-informed but incoherent in expression and argument; it may lack a grasp of fundamental concepts and techniques and may lack coherence and conviction.</p> <p>Critical writing: the candidate has not satisfied the examiners that they have read and understood the essential texts of the module; there is inadequate organisation of the work. Research involved in the question/topic may be poorly organised and inadequately discussed. There may be confusion and incoherence and unfocused comment on the literature.</p>

Mark	Descriptor	Specific Marking Criteria
10-29%	Bad fail	A submission that shows a significant overall failure to achieve the appropriate learning outcomes. Written work shows no evidence of an attempt to address the question.
1-9%	Very bad fail	A submission that does not even attempt to address the specified learning outcomes.
0%	Non submission or plagiarised	A categorical mark representing either the failure to submit an assessment or a mark assigned for a plagiarised assessment.

## How the programme is structured

The programme is available in full-time (12 months) and part-time (24 months) modes. All students take four taught modules, attend 12 individually supervised tutorials and complete a portfolio (dissertation equivalent). The workshop module, taught across 2 terms, over 20 weeks, is compulsory, and is taken by all students, full or part-time in the first and second terms. The seminar module in Contemporary Contexts is compulsory (taken by part-time students in their second year). In addition, students choose an option either from the list below, or from a choice of 3 specialist-taught creative and life-writing classes in poetry or prose fiction or life writing (taken by part-time students in their second year). The portfolio (dissertation equivalent) is also compulsory, and is submitted at the end of the second year in the case of part-time students. All the department's modules, and especially the optional modules, are informed by the research interests of staff.

### Part-Time Mode - Year 1:

Creative and Life Writing Workshop; attendance at 6 tutorials (2 per term) Progression requirements Year 1 to Year 2 The student must pass both parts of the Workshop module; any failed assessment to be retaken in Year 2.

### Part-Time Mode - Year 2

Contemporary Contexts Seminar module; one Option Course (see list below); attendance at 6 tutorials (2 per term); portfolio (dissertation equivalent).

The list below indicates the department's approved option module provision. In any given year certain option modules may be temporarily suspended owing to staffing changes: there is usually an opportunity for part-time students to take such courses in the following year.

### Examples of option modules:

- Twentieth-Century American Poetry
- Caribbean Women: Writing & Representation Documenting America: The Photo-Text 1910-1960 English in a Multilingual World
- European Decadence and the Visual Arts Literature and Philosophy
- Postcolonial Fiction: Theory and Practice Postmodernist Fiction
- Re-writing Sexualities
- The European Avant-Garde

Progression Requirement: Part-time students must normally have passed modules taken in the first year before proceeding to the final year.

Module Title	Module Code	Credits	Level	Module Status	Term
Workshop in Creative and Life Writing	EN71033A	60	7	Compulsory	1-2
Contemporary Contexts for Creative and Life Writing	EN71034A	30	7	Compulsory	1
Portfolio of Work	EN71036A	60	7	Compulsory	1-3
EITHER: One module chosen from an approved list of options offered within the ECW Department.	Various	30	7	Optional	2
OR: Specialist Workshop	EN71035A	30	7	Optional	2

## Academic support

Support for learning and wellbeing is provided in a number of ways by departments and College support services who work collaboratively to ensure students get the right help to reach their best potential both academically and personally.

All students are allocated a Personal Tutor (one in each department for joint programmes) who has overall responsibility for their individual progress and welfare. Personal Tutors meet with their student at least twice a year either face-to-face, as part of a group and/or electronically. The first meeting normally takes place within the first few weeks of the autumn term. Personal Tutors are also available to students throughout the year of study. These meetings aim to discuss progress on modules, discussion of the academic discipline and reports from previous years if available (for continuing students). This provides an opportunity for progress, attendance and assessment marks to be reviewed and an informed discussion to take place about how to strengthen individual learning and success.

All students are also allocated a Senior Tutor to enable them to speak to an experienced academic member of staff about any issues which are negatively impacting their academic

study and which are beyond the normal scope of issues handled by Programme Convenors and Personal Tutors.

Students are provided with information about learning resources, the [Library](#) and information available on [Learn.gold \(VLE\)](#) so that they have access to department/programme handbooks, programme information and support related information and guidance.

Taught sessions and lectures provide overviews of themes, which students are encouraged to complement with intensive reading for presentation and discussion with peers at seminars. Assessments build on lectures and seminars so students are expected to attend all taught sessions to build knowledge and their own understanding of their chosen discipline.

All assessed work is accompanied by some form of feedback to ensure that students' work is on the right track. It may come in a variety of forms ranging from written comments on a marked essay to oral and written feedback on developing projects and practice as they attend workshops.

Students may be referred to specialist student services by department staff or they may access support services independently. Information about support services is provided on the [Goldsmiths website](#) and for new students through new starter information and induction/Welcome Week. Any support recommendations that are made are agreed with the student and communicated to the department so that adjustments to learning and teaching are able to be implemented at a department level and students can be reassured that arrangements are in place. Opportunities are provided for students to review their support arrangements should their circumstances change. The [Disability](#) and [Wellbeing](#) Services maintain caseloads of students and provide on-going support.

The [Careers Service](#) provides central support for skills enhancement, running [The Gold Award](#) scheme and other co-curricular activities that are accredited via the Higher Education Achievement Report ([HEAR](#)).

The [Academic Skills Centre](#) works with academic departments offering bespoke academic literacy sessions. It also provides a programme of academic skills workshops and one-to-one provision for students throughout the year.

## **Links with employers, placement opportunities and career prospects**

Graduates of this programme include Tom Lee, Lucy Caldwell, Ross Raisin, Amy Sackville, Rohan Kriwaczek, Evie Wyld, Sara Grant, Naomi Foyle, Bronia Kita, Lijia Zhang, Ashley Dartnell and Suzanne Joinson and the poets Emily Berry, Andy Spragg, Kate Potts, Jack Underwood, Abigail Parry, Anthony Joseph, Katrina Naomi and Matthew Gregory.

Among them they've won or been shortlisted for awards including the Sunday Times/EFG Private Bank Short Story Award 2012, the Rooney Prize for Literature 2011, the 2008 and 2011 Dylan Thomas Prize, several Eric Gregory Awards, the Sunday Times Young Writer of the Year Award 2009, the John Llewellyn Rhys Prize 2009 and 2010, the Guardian First Book Award, the New Writing Ventures Prize, and several Betty Trask Awards.

Other graduates have gone on to work in publishing (for example, as senior commissioning editors), journalism, public relations, teaching, advertising, the civil service, business, industry, and the media.

Skills: The MA will enable you to develop transferable skills, including: enhanced communication and discussion skills in written and oral contexts; the ability to analyse and evaluate different textual materials; the ability to organise information, and to assimilate and evaluate competing arguments.

## **The requirements of a Goldsmiths degree**

All taught postgraduate degrees have a minimum total value of 180 credits and involve one calendar year of full-time study. Some programmes may extend over more than one calendar year and, when this is the case, they have a higher total credit value. Programmes are composed of individual modules, each of which has its own credit value. Part-time students normally take modules to the value of 90 credits each year. If a programme has a part-time pathway, the structure will be set out in the section "How the programme is structured" above. Normally, all modules are at level 7 of the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications.

More detailed information about the structure and requirements of a Goldsmiths degree is provided in the [Goldsmiths Qualifications and Credit Framework](#).

## **Modules**

Modules are defined as:

- “Optional” – which can be chosen from a group of modules
- “Compulsory” – which must be taken as part of the degree

## **Progression**

Some programmes may require students to pass specific modules prior to completion of the dissertation/major project (or equivalent). Additionally, where a programme of study extends beyond one calendar year, students may be required to pass specific modules in their first year of study before progressing to the second year. Where this is the case, these requirements will be set out in this Programme Specification.

## **Award of the degree**

In order to graduate, students must successfully complete all modules specified for the programme, as set out within the section “How the programme is structured” above.

## **Classification**

Final degree classification is calculated on the basis of a student’s mean average mark (based on credit value) across all modules on the programme.

Masters degrees are awarded with the following classifications:

- Distinction – 70%+
- Merit – 60-69%
- Pass – 50-59%

More detail on the [calculation of the final classification](#) is on our website.

## **Interim exit awards**

Some programmes incorporate interim exit points of Postgraduate Certificate and/or Postgraduate Diploma, which may be awarded on the successful completion of modules to the minimum value of 60 credits or 120 credits respectively. The awards are made without classification.

When these awards are incorporated within the programme, the relevant learning outcomes and module requirements will be set out within the “What you will be expected to achieve” section above.

The above information is intended as a guide, with more detailed information available in the [Goldsmiths Academic Manual](#).

## **Programme-specific rules and facts**

### **General programme costs**

In addition to your tuition fees, you will be responsible for meeting standard costs associated with your study. Find out more information at [gold.ac.uk/programme-costs](http://gold.ac.uk/programme-costs).

### **Specific programme costs**

Not applicable.

## **How teaching quality will be monitored**

Goldsmiths employs a number of methods to ensure and enhance the quality of learning and teaching on its programmes.

Programmes and modules are formally approved against national standards and are monitored throughout the year, such as in departmental committees, a variety of student feedback mechanisms and through the completion of module evaluation questionnaires. Every programme has at least one External Examiner who reviews comments annually on the standards of awards and student achievement. External Examiner(s) attend Boards of Examiners meetings and submit an annual written report.

Modules, programmes and/or departments are also subject to annual and periodic review internally, as well as periodic external scrutiny.

Quality assurance processes aim to ensure Goldsmiths' academic provision remains current, that the procedures to maintain the standards of the awards are working effectively and the quality of the learning opportunities and information provided to students and applicants is appropriate.

Detailed information on all these procedures are published on the [Quality Office web pages](#).