Course Specification

MA
CREATIVE WRITING (ONLINE)



Arts University Bournemouth

About the Course Handbook

This Handbook provides you with basic information about your course. Through the approved course specification, it provides you with the aims and outcomes of your course and outlines the content and how this will be delivered.

The course is subject to a rigorous process of quality assurance and enhancement. This may result in changes to individual units as the course develops, to ensure that the relevance and quality of the course is upheld. You will be consulted by a member of the course team before any changes are made.

Information in this Handbook should be used in conjunction with the HE Assessment Regulations. It is your responsibility to ensure that you are aware of the regulations that apply to your course and you should refer to the regulations throughout your studies. If you have any questions, you should speak to your Course Leader, or member of the course team. The Assessment Regulations can be located on the Induction section of Canvas, or https://aub.ac.uk/regulations

Important information about key policies which apply to your academic studies is available on the Induction section of Canvas. Please view this material on the Induction section of Canvas.

If you would like a copy of this Handbook in an alternative format, please contact equalities@aub.ac.uk.

ARTS UNIVERSITY BOURNEMOUTH

COURSE SPECIFICATION

The Course Specification provides a summary of the main features of the **MA Creative Writing (Online)** course and the learning outcomes that a 'typical' student might reasonably be expected to achieve and demonstrate if they pass the course.

Further detailed information on the learning outcomes, content and teaching and learning methods of each unit may be found in the unit descriptors, which forms part of the Course Handbook.

Key Course Information	
Final Award	Master of Arts
Course Title	Creative Writing (Online)
Award Title	MA Creative Writing
Awarding Institution	Arts University Bournemouth
Professional accreditation	None
Length of course / mode of study	2 years part-time
Level of final award (in FHEQ)	Level 7
Subject benchmark statement	QAA Masters' degree characteristics
Language of study	English
Date of Validation	July 2023
Date of most recent review	Not applicable
Date course specification written/revised	March 2024

Course Description

This two-year part-time course is designed to offer a valuable focused period of study within a supportive, critical environment in which students will be encourage to become self-reflexive writers interrogating their own methodology as both creative and critical practitioners, experiment in a range of forms informed by the latest innovations in the field, and, with professional support develop and craft a final major project to industry-standard: one informed by detailed market research, and one that can be pitched for commission.

By being situated within Arts University Bournemouth, with its lively buzz of Creative Industries-focused courses, interdisciplinary cross-fertilisation, resources, and industry-links, students on the MA will benefit from the opportunities available and the culture of practice-based *research, creativity, innovation,* and *collaboration*. Students will have a chance to co-create a course anthology featuring their own work; co-organise a research symposium; and attend the optional on-campus Summer School, with a chance to find inspiration on a range of field trips around Dorset and along the UNESCO World Heritage Jurassic Coast. These experiences will complement weekly online seminars and tutorials, which will ensure plenty of opportunity to interact, study, and create with fellow students and the programme team; while the pre-recorded lectures, self-directed activities, and asynchronous discussion fora will provide maximum flexibility for part-time study. Underpinning the whole course is the principle of *connection* – with the cohort, lecturers, other courses, postgraduate researchers, and the wider ecosystem of the creative industries.

Distinctive features of the course

Course Industry Patron Scheme: All courses at AUB are connected formally with an industry Patron, an industry practitioner or business that acts as a critical friend to the course and course team. Many courses work with several industry partners, but the more formal Industry Patron connection offers the opportunity to collaborate and maintain close relations with industry / business. This is a unique concept that ensures AUB courses are industry relevant and maintain current practices while providing further opportunities for students to engage with industry practitioners. MA Creative Writing's Industry Patron is California-based agent and producer Michelle Zeitlin, 'The Hollywood Insider', who will be working closely with the course to share insights into the industry and fantastic opportunities and access to major media platforms, publishers and production companies: https://www.morezap.com/

Interdisciplinary Approach: This course uniquely combines multi-modal creative practice with a systems thinking approach ('Future Ecologies'), aligned with the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals.

Ethical and Environmental Research Emphasis: Unlike other Creative Writing courses, this programme places significant focus on ethical and environmental aspects of creative-critical practice including positionality, representation, gender equality and justice, voices of the marginalised, the climate crisis and other challenges of the Anthropocene.

Industry Focus: The course fosters goal setting, project management, and collaboration, preparing students for the professional world. Hands-on learning, portfolio creation, and public-facing projects ensure students gain practical, real-world experience.

AUB Strategic vision

MA Creative Writing fits with the university's strategic vision in several ways:

***Innovation**:* The course embeds innovative thinking at every level – in ideas generation to the design and delivery of creative projects drawing upon emerging technologies and cutting-edge research. Critical thinking and systems thinking will encourage rigorous analysis of existing practices and generate new approaches.

***Collaboration**:* The course facilitates collaboration both within the cohort via the group anthology project, and across different courses and schools via the sharing of resources such as guest talks, and the on-campus summer school where there will be an opportunity to work closely with other students on co-organising and running an interdisciplinary research symposium where postgraduate research can be shared (encouraging cross-fertilisation of methodologies and practice, and the forging of research allies) and real-time collaborative projects created and showcased over the week and, where possible, developed beyond.

***Internationalisation**:* Global-facing, and internationalist in perspective, the course instils Spivak's concept of 'planetarity' in its curriculum, learning materials, and ethos. These elements will be regularly decolonised with the active participation of the students.

Course Aims

The course aims to:

1. Provide a creative and intellectual environment that allows students to develop their practice through critical debate and inter-disciplinary exchange.

2. Enable students to identify and develop the artistic, research, technical and entrepreneurial skills needed to accomplish project work with a high level of professionalism.

3. Encourage students to critically reflect on achievements and evaluate them in ways that meaningfully extend their practice, or progress toward PhD study.

4. Enable students to develop professional maturity and to understand and discuss their work in the context of their discipline, as well as the social, political and cultural spheres in which the work will be situated.

5. Develop a rich cultural community that actively engages creative practice in issues of ethics and sustainability.

6. Create robust, industry-ready postgraduate researchers and creative-critical practitioners who have a range of subject-specific and transferable skills who are resilient, flexible, pioneering, pro-active, and future-thinking.

Course Outcomes

1. Produce a high level of individual and collaborative work that acknowledges and potentially challenges current orthodoxies within Creative Writing practice and the disciplines and communities associated with it.

2. Demonstrate advanced ability through Creative Writing theory and self-reflexive practice to research, investigate, describe, and critique techniques, genres, forms, and themes thereby providing original insights into the contemporary discipline.

3. Demonstrate and apply highly developed and advanced practical and conceptual understanding of Creative Writing techniques and processes and to raise questions for further study or professional development.

4. Show acquisition of appropriate skills and acumen in communication, presentation, and autonomous learning, in relation to career aspirations – in particular gaining valuable experience in the production of a course anthology, contribution to a research symposium, conducting in-depth research, developing an artistic ethos and public-facing initiative, and participating in other professional opportunities.

5. Develop your work with respect to relevant issues of sustainability, ethics and the cultural and political environment in which practice is situated.

6. Develop and complete a major Creative Writing project to professional, publishable standard.

Reference Points

UK Quality Code for higher education, including:

- Subject Benchmark Statement: QAA *Creative Writing 2019*
- Framework for Higher Education Qualifications (FHEQ)
- AUB Learning Teaching and Assessment Framework (LTAF)
- AUB Postgraduate Taught Assessment Regulations
- AUB Graduate Attributes

Learning, Teaching, and Assessment Strategies

A range of teaching and learning methods are used, based around a repeating cycle of acquisition, inquiry, practice, production, discussion, and collaboration. Both synchronous and asynchronous delivery are co-ordinated through Canvas; the VLE utilised by the University. Key methods are outlined below:

Lectures
Lectures are pre-recorded videos integrated with the unit content providing acquisition of knowledge around key issues, ideas, and contexts. In addition, each unit may have up to two guest lectures provided by a relevant non-AUB speaker from industry or academia to provide additional insights into the unit topics.

Seminar Activities
These are optional, online, weekly events that provide more opportunities for live discussion and interaction with tutors or fellow students. They are led by the Unit Tutor and provide an opportunity for you to share your perspective and seek guidance or clarity on course content and assessments. Seminars do not take place in the final unit when they are replaced by individual tutorials.

Tutorials
These are one to one tutorials that take place in the final unit during which students can discuss the development and progress of their projects. These tutorials are used to air specific issues raised through the work, provide critical observation, and recommend new directions and research strategies.

Written Artefacts
Throughout the programme, writing is the focus. Each unit will have practical components – writing activities to ground the theoretical in practice: some will be purely about process; while others will help students develop work for assessment. This might result in a novel, short story collection, poetry collection, screenplay, stage play, radio play, podcast, spoken word performance, or hybrid, experimental, piece depending on your area of specialization. Short practical exercises are designed to support creative growth and skills acquisition, leading to the resolution of a substantial major project within the final unit of the course.

Process Work
The notebook is the writer's most important resource. Notebooks will be used to capture ideas, character sketches, plots, story titles, quotes, poems, dialogue, etc.
A safe space for artistic experimentation and creative/critical enquiry, students will use these notebooks to explore different creative approaches and connect their practice to wider theories or ideas as presented in a culminating portfolio. Similarly, they will collect documentation and evaluate work toward their thesis project in a larger notebook for the final unit of the course.

Presentations – Group & Pitch
During the preparation and delivery of presentations, students will learn to synthesise research findings, communicate complex ideas, and connect with tutors or fellow students in a professional manor. Presentations will be submitted online and may be live or recorded in advance depending on the unit aims.

Essays
During analysis and exploration of Creative Writing, students will develop ideas and critical arguments communicated in essay form (mainly in the form of Reflective Commentaries). In The Writer as Researcher unit, this will culminate in a research paper presented to peers exploring theoretical concepts in relation to your practice. Students will receive feedback on their ideas (the abstract) during a formative proposal stage part-way through the unit.

Reflective Journal
At the outset of the course, students will begin to write in a journal that allows reflection and critical evaluation of their work and personal development as a postgraduate researcher and creative-critical practitioner. Students will be encouraged to contribute to this regularly and some units will also require reflection on practical experiences as an element of assessment. The journal will be an integral way of reflecting on the learning journey throughout the whole course.

Discussion Fora
These are asynchronous spaces where students can post messages, ask questions, and discuss ideas with tutors or fellow students. Students are also encouraged to engage in critical debate, share ideas or progress with the wider cohort.

Online Learning Resources
These include recorded videos, podcasts, interactive content (H5Ps), quotes, diagrams, and images as well as reading lists and links to other online material.

Readings & Critiques
Throughout the course students will be exposed to a wide range of readings – which will vary from essential to optional. Drawing from a wide range of creative and critical sources available in electronic form through the AUB library, some of which will be in the form of audio or video recordings, students will critically evaluate and discuss these in the online seminars. The readings will primarily be used to ground the theoretical aspects of each unit in excellent, diverse examples of practice, and critical reflection. These can then be analysed and used within the critical components of each assessment.

Student Engagement

Student engagement is intrinsic to the success of the course – the entire cohort benefit from this because lively fora and online seminars create a healthy cross-section of perspectives, feedback, ideas, and criticality. Sensitively facilitated by the unit tutors, these spaces will be where the students share not only their learning experience, but also skills, knowledge, and enthusiasms, empowering and benefiting all. Collectively the cohort creates a microcosm of the wider, reading public, providing test audiences and beta readers for one another – valuable sounding boards and research allies engaged in the same endeavour, and together creating a ‘buzz’ of creative-critical activity.

Assessment

Each unit is assessed separately, and the assessment forms part of the unit. Assessment both provides a measure of student achievement, and also provides students with regular feedback on how their learning is developing.

For every unit of a course, we will inform students of what they are expected to learn; what they need to submit; how their work will be assessed; and the deadline for presenting work for assessment.

Students will receive a final mark for each unit in the form of a percentage, which will be recorded on a formal record of achievement (transcript). Each component of assessment is graded using a notched marking scale, whereby only certain marks are used within each grade. The only marks available within any ten-point band are *2, *5 and *8 (e.g. 62, 65, 68). These marks correspond to a low, mid, and high level of achievement within each grade band.

All learning outcomes must be passed to successfully complete the unit.

On successful completion of a Masters' Degree (MA), a Merit or Distinction may be awarded. Only units at Level 7 contribute towards the determination of a Merit of Distinction.

For further information on assessment, progression, awards, and classifications, please visit https://aub.ac.uk/regulations

Students are assessed, broadly speaking in two ways: formatively and summatively.

Formative assessment provides feedback that will help students to develop their learning. It should be seen as 'ongoing' assessment in the sense that it enables students to pinpoint strengths and weaknesses and address them appropriately. Formative assessment may take place in tutorials, seminars, critiques and other discussions.

Summative assessment generally takes place at the end of a unit of study. It is an overall evaluation of the acquisition of the skills and knowledge developed in that part of the course.

There will be specific tutorials and formative assessment events once per term to make students fully aware of their own progress on the course and monitor development.

Assessment of collaborative work
In the event of collaborative work being produced and submitted for *collaborative* assessment it will generally follow the procedure outlined below.

1. The intention for assessed collaboration should be identified through the individual student's Study Plans and PDPs and must have the prior agreement in principle of the Course Leader/relevant tutor(s).
2. A parity meeting will devise and implement an academically rigorous assessment method/procedure that will be submitted for approval of, and ultimately confirmation by, the Course Leader. Such confirmation will be conveyed to each student involved in the collaborative activity and agreement made with each that the procedure is fully understood.
3. An important component of this procedure will be a requirement for each student to provide a written (qualitative and quantitative) self-evaluation and evaluation of others' role within, and contribution to, the development and outcome of the 'submitted work'*. These evaluations will be used to *inform* the assessment process.
4. Following assessment and the subsequent parity meeting, *individual* marks will be agreed that will create the 'practice' component of the overall unit mark.

**Submitted work* – understood here as a generic term to cover whatever the manner or form in which this may be offered – *presentation / performance / artefacts / et al.*

Course Structure

All students are registered for the award of Master of Arts; however, exit awards are available if a student leaves the course early. If students successfully complete a level of the course, they will automatically be entitled to progress to the next level.

For the award of Postgraduate Certificate (PGCert) students must have achieved a minimum of 60 credits at Level 7; and any specific requirements of the course as outlined in the Course Handbook.

For the award of Postgraduate Diploma (PGDip), students must have achieved a minimum of 120 credits at Level 7; and any specific requirements of the course as outlined in the Course Handbook.

For the award of Master of Arts (MA), a student must have achieved 180 credits, of which a minimum of 120 credits must be at Level 7; and any specific requirements of the course as outlined in the Course Handbook. This qualification will be awarded upon successful completion of the course.

Core Values and Skills

In developing courses, the University aims to create a curriculum that reflects its values and ethos. It should prepare students for the future not only in enabling them to have a successful career, but also empower students with the knowledge, skills and passion to have a positive impact on the world and be an agent for change. AUB has drawn from the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) (https://sdgs.un.org/goals) which have informed our values of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion as well as our Graduate Attributes.

Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI)

"We are better for our diversity. We are enriched by the depth of respect we have for each other and the strength of our relationships with our people, our places and the planet. Through our commitment to working with those who are different to us, or challenge us, we grow stronger together, creating new synergies, global connections and sustainable futures." (AUB Strategy 2030)

As an organisation we have moral, social and legal obligations to fulfil in terms of EDI, and in doing so our commitment is to put EDI at the heart of every area of activity. It is not covered as a separate, stand-alone section, rather it forms an integral part of the curriculum.

Graduate Attributes (GA)

Over recent years, there has been an increasing pace of change, technological, social, environmental. This has been further impacted by the world-wide pandemic effecting significant change in the global economy and the employment market.

In this context, the University has recognised the importance of developing AUB graduates who have the attributes to be able to build their career, adapting to different circumstances and embracing changes. A suite of attributes have been defined that we feel are particularly appropriate to the creative courses that we deliver and to AUB's core values; during the course, both curricular and extra-curricular activities will give students the opportunities to prepare for their working career.

The course will introduce students to topics which are integrated with the curriculum at every stage of learning. This will allow the student to structure their career development journey through the course and consider the following stages: Self Awareness, Opportunities, Awareness, Decision Making and Transitioning into Work. These align to the AUB Career Readiness stages: Explore, Focus, Engage and Achieve.

In practice, this means that each unit of the course will include elements of career development, and these will be shown explicitly in unit descriptors and outline syllabuses. Whilst students engage with these as they go through each unit, they will all come together in the final unit. Such an approach is designed to support students in the next steps they take after graduation, in whatever direction those may be, and is fundamental to degree studies.

Maintaining Health and Wellbeing

Throughout the course students are encouraged to reflect on their own health and wellbeing, and to develop themselves as a healthy creative practitioner. Students will consider how to develop study and work strategies and habits which maintain and promote their own

wellbeing, and to manage their professional activities in a way which safeguards their mental and physical health.

Course staff have designed the course in order that, as far as is reasonably possible, health and wellbeing are promoted. Therefore, it is vital students maintain constructive communication with their colleagues and their staff throughout their time on this course.

Course Content

Students progress through the course in three stages: an introduction designed to orientate them to postgraduate study; a carousel of seven units, each with an attendant short project; and a final major project.

The introductory unit, **The Writer as Researcher**, is designed to orientate students to Postgraduate Study – inculcating high quality research ethics and methodologies, while encouraging students to reframe their practice in a critical context appropriate for this level of study. This will culminate in an online Research Symposium (in the form of pre-recorded Presentations and synchronous Q&A) where students will present a research paper to their peers on an aspect of Creative Writing (e.g. a genre; an issue; an author; a literary movement) that they are passionate about, echoing Joseph Campbell's advice to 'follow your bliss'. This will instil both good practice and essential transferable skills from the outset and help focus study for the rest of the programme.

Then students will join the carousel of developmental units, which offer a non-linear, healthy cross-section of key aspects of the discipline from a MA perspective. Depending on the induction period students will join the (biannual, rotating) carousel at different stages, but will get to study all the units over the 2-year cycle.

Taking a close-up view, **The Craft of the Writer** will focus on core writing practices including motivation and project management; reflective journalling; ideas generation, workshopping, and editing skills, including a deep study of a particular creative writing text (a short story). All 'lore' associated with the writer's craft will be interrogated, including the cult of the writer, myths of inspiration, and so-called 'writer's block'. Close reading, critical analysis, and the elements of a good writing practice will be nurtured within a wider theoretical discourse, but the close focus will be on the narratological aspects of the short story.

The Writer in the World will take a wider view, interrogating every aspect of the writer in a wider cultural context. Students will consider aspects of ethics, intersectionality, positionality, activism, how to navigate current discourse on social media, write blogs, conduct and give interviews, pitch features, etc. Students will be asked to develop a public-facing platform, engagement, or intervention (e.g., Creative or Written Artefacts such as a digital manifesto, website, blog, forum, showcase, reading, residency, commission, etc), which articulates their emerging identity as a situated writer.

During the **Im/Possible Worlds** students will look at the imaginative genres of Science Fiction, Fantasy, Weird, speculative, solarpunk, etc (contained under the umbrella term of 'Fantastika') and how they can challenge hegemonies and shibboleths, provide a space for imagineering, plurality, neuroplasticity, and inclusive representation – encourage future-thinking, problem-solving, and paradigm-shifting. How far a student goes along the mimesis/anti-mimesis spectrum is up to the individual: they could write what appears to be mimetic realism, with only the subtlest hint of the uncanny, supernatural, or speculative; or they could write Secondary World Fantasy, Science Fantasy, or Hard SF – or anything in between.

Drawing upon research into orality and literacy, **Advanced Poetics** delves into the origins of language and the written word. In this unit students will also examine current trends,

emergent forms, and opportunities, but within the contemporary poetry scene. The close reading of texts, and the close editing of work will instil a deep understanding of the nuances and potential of language, which will inform future writing and communication skills in both professional and public spheres.

In **Transmedia Storytelling** students will focus on developing their own IP (intellectual property), and working that into a script for a pilot, one that embeds collaborative elements (e.g., working with actors; filmmakers; illustrators; animators; computer game designers; etc) which could be developed within AUB. Students will create a master plan to show how this can then be expanded into multi-platform storytelling. They will be introduced to the research and development activities of AUB's Innovation Centre, where cutting-edge technology and ground-breaking approaches are being explored. Guest speakers will provide avant-garde perspectives from the frontiers of contemporary practice.

In **Writing in the Anthropocene,** students will explore creative writing which foregrounds environmental issues. They will be introduced to new nature writing and place-writing, Cli-Fi and ecofiction, which will be enriched by the optional Summer School field trips. There will be an option to gain valuable experience, contributing to Writing the Earth (an annual programme of events exploring creative responses to environmental issues in and around Earth Day, April 22nd), where students will have the chance to present, organise, steward, etc, thus providing useful real-world experience through *collaboration* and *connection*. Students will work towards a piece of creative writing that explores environmental issues and engages with the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals, with an option to submit to competitions such as Green Stories.

The **Publishing in the 21st Century** unit will encourage students to look at current trends, emergent forms, and opportunities – examining what makes a 21st Century publication different from what has come before. Innovative approaches sensitive to the market and developments in technology will be encouraged as students co-develop a publishing project: the MA Creative Writing anthology, which will involve *collaboration* in both the conceptualisation, commissioning, editing, design, and launch.

In the thesis proposal unit, **The Proposal**, students will develop a professional oral pitch and written proposal for what will be not only the **Major Project**, but also a real-world submission the industry. Students will research, available markets and emergent publishing trends, which will help identify and focalise their final project, developed through formative feedback in the discussion fora, tutorials, and unit-specific supervision.

To complement the online experience, the optional annual on-campus **Summer School** will provide a rich, stimulating real world in person experience, drawing upon AUB's appealing location as a coastal university, on the doorstep of the UNESCO World Heritage Jurassic Coast, as a base for field trips to inspiring literary and natural locations in the Dorset and Hampshire area. The event will focalise and enhance each aspect of the course with subject-specific lectures, seminars and workshops; as well as forge meaningful connections across disciplines with an interdisciplinary symposium, and opportunities to devise collaborative projects with the other online MA courses.

Underpinning all the units will be the core concept of **Future Ecologies.** Directly aligning to the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (17 criteria which are in response to what the UN Nations called 'the defining crisis of our time', and which AUB has committed to). The concept of 'Future Ecologies' is deliberately open to a range of interpretations, but is intended to include:

- The predicted models of Climate Change impact, and the attendant threats to biodiversity, habitat loss, acidification of the oceans, etc.
- Utopias, dystopias, ustopias, possitopias, thrutopias – using imaginative writing to model different scenarios and engage readers/audiences.

- The state of nature from the ground level – micro mapping, deep mapping, creative cartography – showing incremental seasonal changes and disparities.
- Ecologies of language, e.g., how languages assimilate, mutate, evolve.
- Ecologies of community, e.g., indigenous peoples, marginalised communities.
- Creative ecosystems – support networks and co-operative models of mutual empowerment that offer alternatives to the hegemonic discourse of competitiveness and unsustainable progress based on infinite resources.
- The wider cultural ecosystem – regional, national, international – that students, as emerging creative-critical practitioners, must situate themselves within, developing professional contacts; joining organisations and other communities of intent; attending conferences, conventions, and festivals; contributing to journals and edited works; undertaking commissions and collaboration; and stepping into the role of leadership where appropriate, initiating new projects by drawing down funding and forging partnerships.

Grounding this in industry-focused and transferrable skills (and thereby increasing employability), Future Ecologies will encourage inter- and trans-disciplinarity and train multimodal writers (Barnard, 2019) who have the resilience and capability to flourish in today's volatile and challenging economic 'climate' – adaptable, pro-active, imagineers, change-makers and leaders.

Course Units

STAGE 1: Introduction

CRD700 The Writer as Researcher (15 credits)

STAGE 2: Carousel Units

CRD701 The Craft of the Writer (15 credits)
CRD702 The Writer in the World (15 credits)
CRD703 Im/Possible Worlds (15 credits)
CRD704 Advanced Poetics (15 credits)
CRD705 Transmedia Storytelling (15 credits)
CRD706 Writing in the Anthropocene (15 credits)
CRD707 Publishing in the 21st Century (15 credits)

STAGE 3: Final Project

CRD708 The Proposal (15 credits)
CRD709 The Major Project (45 credits)

Course Model

The workload is balanced across a number of consecutive units which all run independently. There are three stages of study and two progression points in the course where students move from the introductory unit to the seven carousel units, and from the carousel stage to the final two project units. There is no progression within the carousel units which are designed to be taken in any order as determined by the students' intake time of year. All units are a core part of the course and there are no options to select or deselect units.

