

PROGRAMME SPECIFICATION

Name, title and level of final qualification(s)	MA Creative Writing and Contemporary Studies (Level 7)
Name and title of any exit qualification(s)	PG Dip Creative Writing and Contemporary Studies PG Cert Creative Writing and Contemporary Studies
Awarding Body	University of London
Teaching Institution(s)	Birkbeck, University of London
Home school/other teaching departments	Creative Arts, Culture and Communication
Location of delivery	Central London
Language of delivery and assessment	English
Mode of study, length of study and normal start month	Full-time (1 year) Part-time (2 years) September, January (part-time only)
Professional, statutory or regulatory body	N/A
QAA subject benchmark group(s) Higher Education Credit Framework for England	N/A
Birkbeck Course Code	TMACWCOS_C TMACWCOJ_C (January start, part-time)
HECoS Code	100046
Start date of programme	Autumn 2018
Date of programme approval	Summer 2018
Date of last programme amendment approval	November 2022
Valid for academic entry year	2024-25
Date of last revision to document	20/10/2022

Admissions requirements

A second-class honours degree (2:2 or above). This requirement may be waived if a candidate can demonstrate exceptional talent.

Candidates will be asked to submit a portfolio consisting of 1,500 words of creative writing (this can be a piece of fiction, a collection of poetry, or a script) and 1,500 words of critical writing (about a literary text), a personal statement (to be submitted with the application form which outlines why they would like to study for this course) and two academic/professional references.

Students are selected on the basis of their portfolio, statement, references, an interview (selected candidates only) and their degree.

International Students Entry Requirements:

If English is not their first language or they have not previously studied in English, the requirement for this programme is the equivalent of an International English Language Testing System (IELTS Academic Test) score of 7.0, with not less than 6.5 in each of the sub-tests.

Course aims

The MA in Creative Writing and Contemporary Studies at Birkbeck is taught by one of the most vibrant departments in London. For 17 years we have been enabling dynamic groups of students to improve their creative work and develop as writers. We have a growing list of published and prizewinning authors whose work started life in our seminars. If you have been writing creatively for a while and feel the need for professional support and feedback and the guidance of published authors and a cohort of like-minded people, then this course is for you.

The MA Creative Writing and Contemporary Studies aims to:

- develop to a professional level the craft of writing in various genres.
- develop student confidence, sensitivity and discernment in their analysis of their own and their fellow students' work.
- provide students with experience blended learning in the interconnected fields of creative writing and critical thinking
- combine both practice-based learning with specialism in contemporary literature, culture, and criticism, as well as the development of student's own creative writing projects.
- explore critical methods and debates on experimental literature, media, popular culture, technology, and cultural development.
- give students the opportunity to develop both their critical thinking skills as well as fiction and non-fiction writing skills.
- develop a greater critical understanding of contemporary literary developments.
- place student's writing in the context of developments in contemporary poetry, screenwriting, fiction and creative non-fiction.
- develop to professional level skill in editing of both students' own and fellow students' creative work.
- cultivate a greater practical knowledge and understanding of the markets for poetry, fiction, screenwriting and non-fiction.
- allow students the opportunity to produce a dissertation of high literary quality.

MA Creative Writing and Contemporary Studies Course structure

Level	Module Code	Module Title	Credit	Comp Core/ Option	Likely teaching term(s)
Full-time – 1 year					
7	AREN095S7	'Theorising the Contemporary, Contemporary Theorising'	30	Compulsory	T1
7	ENHU002S7	Creative Non-Fiction	30	Compulsory	T1
7	ENHU039S7	The Writing Workshop	30	Compulsory	T2
7	AREN238S7	Writing The Self	30	Compulsory	T2
7	ENHU002D7	Dissertation	60	Core	T3
Part-time – 2 years					
Year 1					
7	ENHU002S7,	Creative Non-Fiction	30	Compulsory	T1
7	AREN238S7	Writing The Self	30	Compulsory	T2
7		Dissertation – students audit training sessions and summer lectures in Y1, T3 and start dissertation preparation, but are not assessed until Y2			T3
Year 2					
7	AREN095S7	'Theorising the Contemporary, Contemporary Theorising'	30	Compulsory	T1
7	ENHU039S7	The Writing Workshop	30	Compulsory	T2
7	ENHU002D7	Dissertation	60	Core	T3

****NOTE:** Part-time students sit in on training sessions for the dissertation module in yr 1, but formally enrol on the module in yr 2.

MA Creative Writing and Contemporary Studies course pathway structure: January Start (Part-time only)

Note: the modules taken on the January start vary slightly from the October start with Writing the Planet taken in place of Creative Non-Fiction on the January start.

Level	Module Code	Module Title	Credit	Comp Core/ Option	Likely teaching term(s)
Part-time – 2 years					
Year 1					
7	AREN238S7	Writing The Self	30	Compulsory	Spring
7	AREN292S7	Writing the Planet	30	Compulsory	Summer
7		Dissertation - part time students audit training sessions and summer lectures for the dissertation in Y1 T3, but are not assessed			Summer
7	AREN095S7	'Theorising the Contemporary, Contemporary Theorising'	30	Compulsory	Autumn
Year 2					
7	ENHU039S7	The Writing Workshop	30	Compulsory	Spring
7	ENHU002D7	Dissertation	60	Core	Summer & Autumn (Jan submission)

Core:	Module must be taken and passed by student
Compulsory:	Module must be taken but can be considered for compensated credit (see CAS regulations paragraph 24)
Option:	Student can choose to take this module

How you will learn

Your learning and teaching is organised to help you meet the learning outcomes (below) of the course. As a student, we expect you to be an active learner and to take responsibility for your learning, engaging with all of the material and sessions arranged for you.

Each course is divided into modules. You will find information on the virtual learning site (Moodle, see Academic Support below) about each of your modules, what to expect, the work you need to prepare, links to reading lists, information about how and when you will be assessed.

Your learning for this course will be organised around the activities outlined below.

Teaching on the programme is varied. Modules at Levels 7 are typically taught by lectures, seminars, and workshops, as well as through individual supervision sessions for the Dissertation. Some modules include one-to-one tutorials by arrangement (for example to discuss essay feedback or feedback on your creative writing).

Lectures are designed to provide you with an outline or overview of the topic, to engage you with the material and direct you to other resources. They are a springboard for your own learning. Seminars are group sessions where you will be asked to contribute to discussion or group work around the topic, with material set in advance for which you need to prepare. Workshops based on more hands-on exercises that allow you practice skills such as close reading and critical analysis.

Other important modes of learning include: note-taking, textual analysis, private study, library and archival research, use of internet sources, as well completion of the assessed work.

How we will assess you

Assessment methods used on critical modules on the MA Creative and Critical Writing includes commentaries, essays as well as a wide range of exercises designed to evaluate different abilities and prepare students to the range of genres, lengths, and writing skills required in the twenty-first-century workplace. Assessment for Creative Writing modules is 100% coursework. Teaching is varied and interactive, and takes the form of lecturer-led sessions on elements of craft, workshopping of students' creative work, class and home exercises, student readings, individual and group work. It also includes:

- Plenary lectures to year groups to allow for general exposition of craft elements and instruction therein, as well as to disseminate course-related information and to foster a sense of community amongst students.
- Branch-off workshops following lectures, encouraging student participation in general discussion and the use of weekly student presentations. This encourages development of communication skills in small groups and promotes exploration of material presented in the lecture.

A Dissertation combining creative and critical writing is a compulsory requirement of the MA Creative Writing and Contemporary Studies.

Learning outcomes (what you can expect to achieve)

'Learning outcomes' indicate what you should be able to know or do at the end of your course. Providing them helps you to understand what your teachers will expect and also the learning requirements upon which you will be assessed.

At the end of this course, you should be able to:

1. Demonstrate control of elements of the writer's craft to a high degree in their own work.
2. Use language confidently, precisely, and imaginatively.
3. Discuss and evaluate the work of fellow students and established writers in relation to elements of craft to a professional level
4. Utilise critical skills in the close reading and analysis of creative texts to a proficient level.
5. Articulate their knowledge and understanding of the various forms and genres of creative writing and the different techniques and processes they employ.
6. Display confidence and fluency in their own writing.
7. Employ skills in researching relevant fields of knowledge and developing drafts of their work to an impressive level.
8. Use knowledge and understanding of contemporary writers and writing in new creative work.
9. Share a portfolio of creative and critical work (with which the student can pursue publication or entrance onto higher-level programmes, such as a Practice-based PhD at Birkbeck.
10. Employ research skills, including the ability to gather, sift, and organise material independently and critically, and to present it in the form of an essay, report, dissertation, presentation or written creative piece.
11. Use relevant IT skills; the use of libraries and electronic sources of information, online discussion groups, web-based research, to further their creative and critical writing to a high level.
12. act as a reflective, self-directed learner, recognizing and employing a range of strategies to support independent learning, including a sophisticated and nuanced awareness of strengths/weaknesses.
13. respond more effectively to the work of others; to participate in workshop or small group discussion by listening and contributing ideas in a sensitive and informed manner.
14. accept and evaluate constructive criticism on your own work; effectively participate in workshop or small group discussion by listening to feedback of fellow students and lecturers.
15. communicate in public and in working groups with clarity and sophistication.
16. Produce a viable, original extended creative-critical writing project in consultation with a supervisor.

Careers and further study

You will find MA Creative Writing and Contemporary Studies graduates in the following kinds of roles:

Publishing, agenting, writing, teaching, performing arts, advertising, public relations, game design, education, law, the civil service and business roles.

Birkbeck's MA Creative Writing and Contemporary Studies graduates will complete with a set of valuable attributes, for example:

- A deepened awareness of literary forms and a practical understanding of the writer's craft
- The ability to use language more confidently, precisely, and imaginatively
- Skills in evaluating and assessing creative and critical writing across a range of forms
- Skills in the planning and time-management of independent creative and critical writing
- High-level oral and written communication skills in English
- Research skills
- Skills in evaluating and assessing various types of information
- The ability to convey your ideas and build an argument
- The ability to analyse and process complex ideas
- Independent research skills

Birkbeck offers a range of careers support to its students. You can find out more on [the careers pages of our website](#).

Academic regulations and course management

Birkbeck's academic regulations are contained in its [Common Award Scheme Regulations](#) and Policies published by year of application on the Birkbeck website.

You will have access to a course handbook on Moodle and this will outline how your course is managed, including who to contact if you have any questions about your module or course.

Support for your study

Your learning at Birkbeck is supported by your teaching team and other resources and people in the College there to help you with your study. Birkbeck uses a virtual learning environment called Moodle and each course has a dedicated Moodle page and there are further Moodle sites for each of your modules. This will include your course handbook.

Birkbeck will introduce you to the Library and IT support, how to access materials online, including using Moodle, and provide you with an orientation which includes an online Moodle module to guide you through all of the support available. You will also be allocated a personal tutor and provided with information about learning support offered within your School and by the College.

[Please check our website for more information about student support services](#). This covers the whole of your time as a student with us including learning support and support for your wellbeing.

Quality and standards at Birkbeck

Birkbeck's courses are subject to our quality assurance procedures. This means that new courses must follow our design principles and meet the requirements of our academic regulations. Each new course or module is subject to a course approval process where the proposal is scrutinised by subject specialists, quality professionals and external representatives to ensure that it will offer an excellent student experience and meet the expectation of regulatory and other professional bodies.

You will be invited to participate in an online survey for each module you take. We take these surveys seriously and they are considered by the course team to develop both modules and the overall courses. Please take the time to complete any surveys you are sent as a student.

We conduct an annual process of reviewing our portfolio of courses which analyses student achievement, equality data and includes an action plan for each department to identify ongoing enhancements to our education, including changes made as a result of student feedback.

Our periodic review process is a regular check (usually every four years) on the courses by department with a specialist team including students.

Each course will have an external examiner associated with it who produces an annual report and any recommendations. Students can read the most recent external examiner reports on the course Moodle pages. Our courses are all subject to Birkbeck Baseline Standards for our Moodle module information. This supports the accessibility of our education including expectations of what information is provided online for students.

The information in this programme specification has been approved by the College's Academic Board and every effort has been made to ensure the accuracy of the information it contains.

Programme specifications are reviewed periodically. If any changes are made to courses, including core and/or compulsory modules, the relevant department is required to provide a revised programme specification. Students will be notified of any changes via Moodle.

Further information about specifications and an archive of programme specifications for the College's courses is [available online](#).

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