



Open
College
of the Arts



UNIVERSITY FOR THE CREATIVE ARTS

PROGRAMME SPECIFICATION FOR:

BA (HONS) CREATIVE WRITING

PROGRAMME SPECIFICATION [ACADEMIC YEAR 2017/18]

This Programme Specification is designed for prospective students, current students, academic staff and potential employers. It provides a concise summary of the main features of the programme and the intended learning outcomes that a typical student might reasonably be expected to achieve and demonstrate if he/she takes full advantage of the learning opportunities that are provided. More detailed information on the teaching, learning and assessment methods, learning outcomes and content of each unit can be found in the Unit Descriptors.

Section A – Material Course Information

Validating Body	University for the Creative Arts ¹	
Teaching Body	OCA – OPEN COLLEGE OF THE ARTS	
Final Award Title and Type	BA (Hons)	
Course Title	Creative Writing	
Course Location and Length	Campus: OCA/Open and Flexible Learning	Length: Maximum time allowed to complete the programme is 12 years
Period of Validation	2015/16 to 2019/20	
Name of Professional, Statutory or Regulatory Body	Not Applicable	
Type of Accreditation	Not Applicable	
<p>Entry criteria and requirements²</p> <p>Level 4 courses are open access, so no prior qualifications are required. In order to progress to Level 5, students must have gained 120 credits at Level 4, or be able to demonstrate a comparable level of achievement in work done elsewhere through Accreditation of Prior Learning (APL). Entry to level 6 through APL is not permitted.</p> <p><i>UCAS entry profile</i> n/a</p> <p>For all students engaging on OCA undergraduate courses there are the following general requirements:</p> <p><i>Internet access and IT skills*</i></p> <p>OCA’s creative writing courses rely heavily on email for communication between students and tutors. Students also need to be able to access the range of online resources flagged up in the course materials (and research other sources independently). It is therefore essential that all students have internet access and basic IT skills.</p> <p>It is important that all students must have readily available internet access and the</p>		

¹ Regulated by the Higher Education Funding Council for England

² This should be the standard University Criteria unless otherwise approved by the Academic Board and include UCAS entry profile for undergraduate courses.

basic IT skills listed below:

- the ability to access, read and write emails, reply to emails and forward emails.
- upload and download attachments
- search for information on the internet and complete and submit web-based forms
- save web pages and download files from the web
- click on links on a webpage and navigate to another page
- copy web content, including images, into a document and know how to print it out
- use standard word processing software.

Students must also be aware of network etiquette and security considerations when using email and the internet. There is a section in OCA's Student Regulations about online etiquette (point 17). In addition there is a Data Protection and Confidentiality Policy appended to the Student Regulations. OCA takes these issues seriously. Data protection rules forms part of OCA's Conditions of Enrolment. In addition to the information located in our student documentation OCA is developing short videos to explain netiquette and online security.

*This requirement may be waived, on rare occasions, by the Head of Learner Support if negotiated prior to the start of the course. Typically, exemptions are only given to students with specific disabilities or to those studying in prison.

Minimum English language requirements:

All students need to have an appropriate standard of English to complete their chosen course of study, which will include a substantial written element. International or EU students will need to provide evidence of their ability, which could be i) prior education in the medium of English, ii) long term residency in an English speaking country or iii) one of the following international qualifications :

IELTS (International English Language Testing Service): A minimum score of 6*
TOEFL (Test of English as a Foreign Language): Minimum score of 550 (Paper PBT), 213 (Computer CBT), 80 (Internet IBT)
Other equivalent exams will be considered.

Specific requirements

In addition to meeting the admission requirements for all courses, students should ensure they understand the nature of the challenges and requirements of the course they are enrolling on, as outlined on the OCA website.

Disabled students

Applications from students with disabilities are considered using the same criteria and principles as all other applicants. All students with a disability are encouraged to indicate this on their application form in order that advice can be offered on the facilities and services available. Prospective students with a disability will be

encouraged to discuss their requirements with the Head of Learner Support.				
<i>Maximum period of registration</i>				
The maximum period of registration for the course is 12 years. Students may take up to 2 years to complete a single unit. However, they must complete the entire course within the 12-year period.				
Students typically complete their studies within a much shorter timeframe. However, given OCA's concern to widen access and make creative writing available to a wide range of students, having a lengthy maximum period for completion seems appropriate. This helps ensure that the course is kept sufficiently flexible to accommodate those whose family, work, and other commitments mean that they cannot follow the model of a traditional 3-year undergraduate course.				
Overall methods of assessment ³	Written exams:	Practical exams:	Coursework:	
Stage 1	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%	
Stage 2	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%	
Stage 3	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%	
Overall Learning & Teaching hours ⁴	Scheduled:	Independent:	Placement:	
Stage 1	12.5%	87.5%	0.0%	
Stage 2	8.3%	91.7%	0.0%	
Stage 3	8.3%	91.7%	0.0%	
General level of staff delivering the course ⁵	The OCA's current policy is to recruit tutors who have at least an MA level professional practice in a relevant discipline or field and HE level teaching experience. All tutors are encouraged to work towards professional Recognition by the Higher Education Academy. This is a requirement for Programme Leaders and Unit Leaders. All tutors are expected to be professionally active, and engaged with contemporary developments in their field.			
Mode of Study	Full-time		Part-time	✓
Language of Study	English			

³ As generated by the unit descriptors and calculated for the overall course stage data.

⁴ As generated by the unit descriptors and calculated for the overall course stage data. Expressed as a percentage of total learning hours per stage.

⁵ Include general information about the experience or status of the staff involved in delivering the course, for example Professor, Course Leader, Senior Lecturer

Subject/Qualification Benchmark Statement NAWE
Framework for Higher Education Qualifications (FHEQ)

The course structure

The structure of all OCA undergraduate awards awarded by the University complies with OCA's Academic Regulatory Framework which has been validated by the University. All students are registered for a particular award. Exit awards are available to students in line with 5.6 of the OCA Academic Regulatory Framework.

Unit codes and titles	Level	Credit value	Elective/ Core	Most popular student choice of optional elective units or elective options in core units?
Year 1				
CW4WGS - Writing 1: Writing Skills (OCRW4121)	4	40	Core	
CA4CAT - Visual Studies 1: Creative Arts Today (OCRW4103)	4	40	Elective	No
CW4AOP - Writing 1: The Art of Poetry (OCRW4119)	4	40	Elective	Yes
CW4SCW - Writing 1: Scriptwriting (OCRW4120)	4	40	Elective	Yes
Year 2				
CW5WFC - Writing 2: Writing for Children (OCRW5121)	5	60	Elective	Yes
CW5WSF - Writing 2: Writing Short Fiction (OCRW5120)	5	60	Elective	Yes
CW5PFE - Writing 2: Poetry – Form and Experience (OCRW5119)	5	60	Elective	No
CW5LFW - Writing 2: Life Writing (OCRW5116)	5	60	Elective	No
CW5SCW - Writing 2: Moving on with Scriptwriting (OCRW5135)	5	60	Elective	No
Year 3				
CW6RAP – Writing 3: Retrospect and Prospect (OCRW6130)	6	60	Core	
CW6IDP – Writing 3: Independent Project (OCRW6129)	6	60	Core	

Section B - Course Overview

This degree programme encourages students to:

- Read widely and deeply in the different genres covered by the degree's constituent courses. (Stressing the importance of such reading is a recurring theme embedded in the course literature.)
- Undertake a series of exercises designed to develop their writing skills across a range of literary forms.
- Critically explore key texts/writers whose work is illustrative of particular types of writing.
- Understand the processes of writing that lie behind work met with on the published page.
- Grasp some of the practicalities involved in preparing and placing work for publication.
- Widen their knowledge and understanding of the art/craft of writing.
- Become confident, critical and well informed readers.
- Fulfil their own creative potential as writers.

Each of the constituent courses is assessed by five or six assignments. Students are also encouraged to keep self-reflective learning logs by means of which they can monitor their own learning process and keep their work under critical review. Students are supported throughout by one-to-one contact with tutors, who provide detailed feedback on an individual basis.

OCA's creative writing courses provide students with the opportunity to gain and/or develop a suite of intellectual and practical skills that are necessary for effective writing – but that are also readily transferable to other contexts where good communication, clear expression, coherent thinking, the ability to read critically etc are valued.

This innovative distance-learning degree programme has been designed to be flexible, enabling students in any location to work at a pace that fits in with their particular situation and commitments. The course materials have been written by published writers with experience both of working at an appropriate level of professional excellence in the literary genre concerned, and of teaching students about it. The course tutors are likewise selected on the basis of having practical experience as writers and pedagogical experience as teachers. The number of tutors involved on OCA's creative writing degree programme means that students have access to a wide range and diversity of literary expertise, rather than being reliant on only a handful of teachers. Further tutors are likely to be recruited within the validation period.

The degree programme is sensitive to the fact that students will be enrolling at different levels of writing expertise. Some will be novices for whom this is a first serious foray into creative writing; others may already have a portfolio of published work behind them. Whatever they bring with them to their degree, studying through OCA will provide a structured and supportive context within which they may foster their formation as writers and gain educational validation for their work.

The Level 6 units have been designed to afford an opportunity to focus on a large-scale creative project. Moving towards its production is facilitated by a mentoring model of tutor-student relationship (and students are able to choose their tutor at this level, selecting the individual whose specialist expertise most closely matches the nature of the work envisaged).

Potential Student Profile

This degree is targeted at students of all ages and backgrounds, who wish to study for a degree in creative writing through open learning, including:

- ✦ those who, because of disability or location, are unable to attend traditional institutions of learning (support from the bursary scheme can often help here);
- ✦ younger people wishing to study creative writing (leading to a related career or to further study at masters level) but who cannot afford the fees and living costs associated with study at a conventional university;
- ✦ professional writers who wish to gain a qualification to further their careers (this group often makes use of OCA's provision for APEL);
- ✦ leisure learners who have been motivated by positive experience in OCA Level 4 units to carry on and gain an accredited degree
- ✦ students from overseas who wish to study a UK validated creative writing degree through distance learning;

Student comments

'Working towards the Creative Writing degree with the OCA has been and continues to be a very valuable experience for me in many different ways. I don't think it matters how experienced you are as a writer when you enrol, because being a writer is about learning all the time. The course itself has given me a much needed framework in which I can think more deeply about my process and what I want to do as a writer, and what I want to achieve. It certainly isn't just about getting a degree though I think having that goal in mind does power me forward at times when I think perhaps that I am struggling with a new form like poetry or script-writing.'

'Motivation and being alone is not a problem for me, I have tutor feedback and advice, a person to touch base with to keep you going, plus the student forums, the excitement of the assessment results, the feeling that you are part of a

community and the sharing of problems and triumphs - being a student with the OCA is a great change from being a writer struggling to get her novel out into the world. I am still doing that as well, my other writing life carries on in parallel with being a student and I am loving it. Thanks, OCA!”

“Overall I found the course and the amount of personal feedback most helpful. One of the main advantages to this sort of course is the access to one to one guidance/tuition.”

“I love both the quality and flexibility of your courses - it has meant I can obtain a qualification whilst dealing with work, family, settling in a foreign country. I have always had excellent tutors and a friendly and efficient response from OCA staff.”

“The course tutor was so encouraging and my work improved so substantially that a sample of that work has been accepted by three universities and I have been accepted to study an MA in Creative Writing.”

“You are all doing a wonderful service in enabling people to realise their potential. I think the world of OCA.”

“I found the OCA course to be respectful of me as a person and artist. The literature is inviting and doesn't talk down to me. It is accessible and easy to enrol, the focus is on the work and not on personality, the standard of the course materials and tutors extremely high.”

“Just to say that I really enjoyed studying with the OCA. I found the courses at all levels challenging - the tutors very helpful. I've now completed all the units for the Creative Writing degree. I will always recommend the OCA to friends and anyone wishing to study the arts.”

Section C - Course Aims

The main aims of the BA (Hons) Creative Writing are to:

- Widen access to education in creative writing at undergraduate level through Open and Flexible Learning.
- Ensure students gain an experience of writing in a variety of literary forms and genres as a craft and as a tool for exploring our environment and experience.
- Provide an intellectually stimulating programme based on high quality study materials and supported by interaction with tutors – all of whom, as well as being experienced and well qualified teachers, are themselves actively engaged in writing.

- Develop students' creative capacities and their ability in interpretation and application.
- Develop students' understanding of a range of key issues in creative writing and foster their insight into the way in which social, historical and cultural factors impact on writers and writing. Encourage students to appreciate the intimate interrelationship between reading and writing, and to read widely and deeply – particularly in those genres in which they are writing.
- Provide an environment which challenges students to think about their own and others' writing, and in so doing opens up the possibility of changing their creative practice.
- Develop effective writing practitioners who display self-awareness, analytical and communicative skills, and a high degree of reflection.
- To develop autonomous learners capable of applying intellectual and practical skills in a chosen area of written communications appropriate to employment, further study, or life-long learning.

Section D - Course Outcomes

Upon successful completion of the course students are able to:

Knowledge and Understanding

- 1 Demonstrate proficiency in a range of writing styles and literary genres.
- 2 Discriminate between good and bad writing, reading with increased confidence and critical awareness about a range of issues in creative writing.
- 3 Show an informed and critical awareness of different writing strategies, methods of organising materials and planning realistic schedules.
- 4 Critically and objectively evaluate own work (and that of others).

Application

- 1 Demonstrate a breadth of inventiveness, ideas-generation and techniques in the creation of written works and proficiency in a range of writing styles and literary genres including handling complex literary material with confidence.
- 2 Communicate information and present written work convincingly to specialist and non-specialist audiences.
- 3 Demonstrate the development of a personal language as a writer.
- 4 Plan and structure an extended body of work to a high professional and aesthetic standard
- 5 Engage in appropriate professional practices such as marketing, self-presentation and negotiation skills.
- 6 Operate in professional contexts that are relevant to own practice,

requiring the application of specific interpersonal, professional and business skills within an ethical framework.

Section E - Learning, Teaching and Assessment

Learning and Teaching Strategy

The Open College of the Arts offers all students the same quality of learning experience. There are also added value aspects to study which all students are entitled to access, but are not part of the core offer. The core offer consists of

- learning materials
- one to one feedback and support from a named tutor
- support materials (such as guides on aspects of study)
- access to dialogue with peers via the OCA student website
- learner support for any difficulties with the practicalities of studying
- online resources
- In addition to the core aspects of study, students may access the following on an ad hoc basis:
 - study visits in different parts of the country
 - current creative arts reviews and discussion via the OCA blog

PDP

Personal and professional development has been linked to all levels of the course through the learning log to help support students to plan, integrate and take responsibility for their personal, career and academic development.

The reflective commentary is used as a tool for self-reflection to document and reflect on progress, and to reflect on tutor feedback. In dialogue with tutors through formative feedback, students are encouraged to identify strengths and learning needs, and establish learning goals that might improve perceived weaknesses and enhance strengths.

The OCA is committed, over the next two years, to developing and incorporating further professional practice sections in our units at Levels 2 and 3 (HE Levels 5 and 6).

Independent Learning

Through the OCA model of distance learning units, providing projects and research activities, students learn to study independently, while backed up by tutor support and learn to work with others by interacting with them, providing and receiving support and exchanging ideas on the OCA forum.

Communications

Communication between OCA, tutors and students is predominantly via email. In a small minority of cases, where students do not have internet access, communication is by post and telephone. We are encouraging the use of video for tutorials, as this can enliven the interaction between tutor and student. Peer

communication takes place in the student forums, or via comments on the WeareOCA blog or other student blogs.

Delivery

Open tuition: Students work from the course materials and send regular assignments to their tutor, normally by email. Tutors then review each assignment and provide written feedback. There are typically 5 assignments for each course, supplemented by projects. Students agree the length of time they will take over each section of the course with their tutor, and agree an approximate time when they will submit their assignment. This varies from student to student, but typically the timing of delivery of assignments is between 8 and 12 weeks. Students are also able to contact tutors informally between assignments (subject to reasonable limits). In addition to the formative feedback received from the tutor, students can submit their work for formal (summative) assessment at OCA at one of three assessment events that take place each year, and are required to complete their course within two years.

Tutor reports are copied to the OCA head office and subject to periodic review to ensure standards are being maintained. These reviews are conducted on a rolling programme, with tutor reports reviewed by course leaders and The Director of Teaching and Learning Quality. All new tutors have their reports monitored by both staff for the first six months, and mentoring is provided. Subsequently reports are looked at during each formal assessment event, in conjunction with student work and feedback is given to tutors, where necessary. If any cause for concern about a tutor's reports is raised, the tutor is closely monitored and mentored for a period.

Course materials: The written course materials have been specifically produced for distance learning delivery and are designed for individual self-study. They consist of subject-specific learning content and a series of learning projects each culminating in an assignment, the results of which are discussed with the tutor. The course materials contain a balance of practical exercises and large scale projects and research points.

Study Skills Guides: There is a creative writing study guide for all CW students plus other guides on Harvard Referencing, study skills, and keeping blogs, among other things. All of these are sent to the students at the beginning of the programme and are also available as downloads from the OCA website. In addition there is a freely available online course which is an introduction to studying at HE, available to all students.

Reading Lists: Reading is an integral part of the BA in Creative Writing. Students are urged to read widely and deeply. There is a bibliography for each course which is periodically updated. In addition to these bibliographies and suggestions made along the way in the course materials, tutors may recommend further reading relevant to the particular needs and interests of individual students. At Level 6, where students focus on their own writing projects and a mentoring model is followed, reading lists are a matter for individual negotiation and discussion between tutor and student.

Costs for additional materials/resources

As a general rule of thumb, students pay for their work to be sent to OCA, and OCA pay for it to be returned (as applicable). Current (inland) postage at the cheapest rate is £11 (up to 5kg) and if a courier is required about £40 for a similar weight. Costs will vary according to the size and nature of the student work, and how much can actually be done electronically. Rates for overseas students will be higher.

Approximate additional materials/resources costs for Creative Writing are:

Level 1: Approximate cost of reading/viewing materials £150 (assuming the student buys around a third of the recommended books and DVDs new). This could be substantially reduced by buying used materials, using libraries and online resources.

Level 2: Approximate cost of reading/viewing materials £150 (assuming the student buys around a third of the recommended books and DVDs new). This could be substantially reduced by buying used materials, using libraries and online resources.

Level 3: Approximate cost of reading materials £80.

Most work will be submitted electronically. However, those students using post should expect to pay no more than £45 at Level 1, £36 at Level 2 and £36 at Level 3 (based on first class postage for five assignments per module at Level 1 and six assignments per module at Levels 2 and 3)

Reflective commentaries: As part of the coursework students are required to keep a reflective commentary. This is an important tool in developing their creative practice and recording and reflecting on their growing understanding of the subject.

The Reflective Commentary is a record of the student's subjective response to the unit. They use it to review what they've done and learnt and reflect on what went well, what didn't go well and what could be/could have been approached differently. They also record their response to tutor feedback and their plans for the future.

Web forums: OCA has a dedicated website for students with the following features: online resources, discussion forums and portfolios for individual student's work.

The student forums represent the main method of communication between students and their peers. Concepts are discussed and knowledge developed through debates that are informally moderated by OCA tutors. Critiques of work, both in development and completed, are sought from peers through the forum. Students are encouraged to keep learning blogs if they have access to the internet, so that they can share their reflections and learning online with other students, and discuss these with others on the OCA forum.

Online learning: Each unit has a number of web-based resources designed to broaden students' appreciation of the range of practice and contemporary debate on the discipline. OCA is also piloting the use of Google hangouts for students to

collaborate and exchange views online.

Formative and diagnostic feedback: Ongoing guidance and formative feedback on assignments is given by the student's tutor and offers clear guidance with regard to future development. A copy of each tutor feedback report given to the student is logged with OCA in order that OCA can monitor tutor quality and performance.

Employability

The OCA is fully aware of the importance of degrees having a relevance to the world of work. However, the context for an employability audit is different for the OCA than it is for a traditional campus based HE provider, with a very broad range of ages of students, motivations to study, and varying personal circumstances. OCA's aim is to instil in its students a creative ethos and the ability to structure creative practice and the motivation to continue their practice. For many students this will mean that they continue to exhibit and publish their work for others it will mean progression to post-graduate study in the field.

Assessment

Assessment methods: There are no examinations. Assessment for this course is principally through a series of assignments that reflect the type of writing being studied in any given course, accompanied by reflective commentaries and a creative reading commentary. Assessment tasks are linked to the objectives of each unit. As the student progresses through the unit the assessment increasingly encourages autonomous learning and self-evaluation. Tutors provide feedback during the unit, with constructive criticism, and assessment takes place once the student has completed a unit in full. Students are assumed to be planning to enter for assessment unless it is identified at the beginning of the unit that the student does not have this aspiration. The personal tutor works with the student to advise them on the assessment process. The student uses OCA guidelines to prepare a portfolio complete with sketchbooks and learning logs (or blog) to send to OCA for assessment. This submission includes the summative assignments of each section of the unit. Assessment takes place three times per year.

Assessment criteria

Assignments for Creative Writing are assessed against the set of criteria explained below/

Presentation and technical correctness

Grammatical accuracy, punctuation, layout, spelling, awareness of literary conventions, and the ability (where appropriate) to play with these conventions and fit them to the student's needs.

Level 4: 23% Level 5: 15% Level 6: 10%

Language

Its appropriateness to genre, subject matter, and characters. Avoidance of cliché, employment of a wide vocabulary, awareness of the rhythmic powers of language, and an ability to make appropriate use of imagery. Above level 4, we are looking for the development of an individual voice.

Level 4: 20% Level 5: 20% Level 6: 22%

Creativity

Imagination, experimentation, inventive exploration of subject matter, originality, and empathy.

Level 4: 20% Level 5: 20% Level 6: 23%

Contextual knowledge

Evidence of reading, research, critical thinking and reflection. Engagement with contemporary thinking and practice in the specific genre (e.g. Poetry).

Level 4: 22% Level 5: 22% Level 6: 22%

Craft of writing

Technical competence in the student's chosen genre (e.g. in prose, in areas such as narrative, plotting, setting, voice, tense, characterisation, etc; in poetry, in areas such as phrasing, idiom and rhythm.)

Level 4: 15% Level 5: 23% Level 6: 23%

Section F - Enhancing the Quality of Learning and Teaching

The course is subject to the University's rigorous quality assurance procedures which involve subject specialist and internal peer review of the course at periodic intervals, normally of 5 years. This process ensures that the course engages with the NAWE Subject Benchmarks and references the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications.

All courses are monitored on an annual basis where consideration is given to:

- External Examiner's Reports
- Key statistics including data on retention and achievement
- Results of the Student Satisfaction Surveys
- Feedback from Student Course Representatives

Enhancing staff development

OCA is committed to enhancing staff development. Subject specific tutor training workshops are held annually at the OCA HQ in Barnsley, which focus on team building, updating tutors on new developments, and training – including sessions on improving the quality of feedback, and practical exercises in evaluating student work. Communications with tutors is via a monthly Tutor Newsletter and a dedicated Tutor area on the student website.

Improving the effectiveness of student learning

We are committed to developing courses, improving existing courses, introducing technologies for enhanced interaction (such as Google +) and improving the effectiveness of student learning. We also regularly monitor

tutors' reports to students and offer guidance and mentoring (the Director of Teaching and Learning is responsible for this) if the reports need improvement.

OCA has a Head of Criticality. This role is lead, monitor, facilitate, prime and mentor discussions in the OCA online forums.

In addition, OCA contracts with subject specialists to provide support within the forum in each subject area. The imbalance in contributions is reflected by the level of interest and engagement by student groups. Photography students, for instance, are significantly more likely to participate online than other groups.

OCA have been trailing online tutor-led structured discussions via Google hangouts and using other technologies at HE Level 6, and plan to mainstream this activity in the forthcoming academic year.

Learning log: As part of the coursework on OCA programmes, students are required to keep a learning log. This is an important tool in developing their creative practice, recording their growing understanding of the subject, and provides a platform for ongoing reflection. For degree, diploma, and certificate students, the log is considered as part of the assessment process and contributes towards the final mark.

The exact content of the log depends on the unit. Typically they are used to record ideas, drawings, sketches, notes, influences, discoveries, thoughts, research findings and observations prompted by the projects, assignments and broader research. Students are encouraged to reflect on tutor feedback and identify key priorities as part of their learning log.

Many students choose to keep logs as online blogs. Their public status allows opinions to be expressed by fellow students, or the general public if desired, on the work being produced. Being accessible to other students, they offer a wide range of interpretations of unit projects to be seen, read and commented upon by others, allowing learning to take place through social activity centred around a programme of study.