



Open  
College  
of the Arts



**UNIVERSITY FOR THE CREATIVE ARTS**

**PROGRAMME SPECIFICATION FOR:**

**BA (HONS) CREATIVE WRITING**

**PROGRAMME SPECIFICATION [ACADEMIC YEAR 2021/22]**

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 <sup>1</sup> |   |   |
| Teaching Body  | OCA – Open College of the Arts                |   |   |
| Final Award Title and Type   | BA (Hons)                                     |   |   |
| Course Title   | Creative Writing                              |   |   |
| Course Location and Length   | Campus:<br>OCA/Open and Flexible Learning     | Length:<br>Maximum time allowed to complete the programme is 12 years |   |
| Mode of Study  | Full-time                                     |   | Part-time <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| Period of Validation   | 2021/22 – 2025/26                             |   |   |
| Name of Professional, Statutory or Regulatory Body   | Not Applicable                                |   |   |
| Type of Accreditation  | Not Applicable                                |   |   |
| Accreditation due for renewal  | Not Applicable                                |   |   |
| Entry criteria and requirements <sup>2</sup>   |   |   |   |
| <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, through study or by Accreditation of Prior Learning.</p> <p>In addition to prior qualifications and learning accreditation, OCA specifies three general requirements for students to be admitted to its degree programmes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• English language competency;</li> <li>• access to a desktop computer or laptop with internet access*;</li> <li>• the ability to easily manage a range of basic functions through ICT (information and communications technology)</li> </ul> <p>Full details on each of these requirements can be found in the OCA Student Regulations in the section Admission Requirements.</p> <p>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. In addition there is a Data Protection and Confidentiality Policy appended to the Student Regulations. OCA takes these issues seriously. Data protection rules form 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.</p> <p>An unaccredited OCA Foundation Certificate is available for students who need to develop their technical and visual awareness skills before embarking on degree study.</p> <p><i>*This requirement may 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.</i></p> <p><b>Specific requirements</b></p> <p>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.</p> <p><b>Disabled students</b></p> <p>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</p> |   |   |   |

<sup>1</sup> Regulated by the Office for Students

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

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.

*Maximum period of registration*

The maximum period of registration for the course is 12 years.

UCAS entry profile:

n/a

|   |   |                  |             |
|---|---|------------------|-------------|
| Overall methods of assessment <sup>3</sup>                            | Written exams:  | Practical exams: | Coursework: |
| Stage 1   | 0.0%  | 0.0%             | 100%        |
| Stage 2   | 0.0%  | 0.0%             | 100%        |
| Stage 3   | 0.0%  | 0.0%             | 100%        |
| Overall Learning & Teaching hours <sup>4</sup>                        | Scheduled:  | Independent:     | Placement:  |
| Stage 1   | 17.5%   | 82.5%            | 0.0%        |
|   | 210 hours   | 990 hours        | 0 hours     |
| Stage 2   | 15.0%   | 85.0%            | 0.0%        |
|   | 180 hours   | 1020 hours       | 0 hours     |
| Stage 3   | 12.5%   | 87.5%            | 0.0%        |
|   | 150 hours   | 1050 hours       | 0 hours     |
| General level of staff delivering the course <sup>5</sup>             | OCA requires Tutors and Programme Leaders (PLs) to have knowledge of their subject area, proven communication skills, experience of delivering learning and teaching, and a first degree or postgraduate or equivalent, and/or substantial professional experience to support their roles. Tutors and PLs are encouraged to obtain professional recognition by the Higher Education Academy at an appropriate level. All Tutors engage with an induction process, an annual 'Tutor Team Meeting' and 1-2-1s, and are provided with guidance on Formative Feedback, Group Work, and Summative Assessment |                  |             |
| Language of Study   | English   |                  |             |
| Subject/Qualification Benchmark Statement:<br>Creative Writing (2016) |   |                  |             |
| Framework for Higher Education Qualifications (FHEQ)                  |   |                  |             |

The course structure

The structure of all OCA undergraduate awards awarded by the University complies with the [Academic Regulatory Framework](#). The Academic Regulatory Framework includes information about the:

- Rules for progression between the stages of a course;
- Consequences of failure for reassessment and exit awards;
- Calculation and classification of awards;

| Unit codes and titles | Level | Credit value | Elective/ Core | Most popular student choice of optional elective units or elective options in core units? | Order of units |
|-----------------------|-------|--------------|----------------|---|----------------|
| Stage 1               |       |              |                |   |                |

<sup>3</sup> As generated by the most popular unit descriptors and calculated for the overall course stage data.

<sup>4</sup> As generated by the most popular unit descriptors and calculated for the overall course stage data.

<sup>5</sup> Include general information about the experience or status of the staff involved in delivering the course, for example Professor, Programme Director, Senior Lecturer

|  |   |    |      |     |   |
|--|---|----|------|-----|---|
| CW4EWS - Creative Writing 1.1: Essential Writing Skills (OCRW4159)       | 4 | 40 | Core | N/A | 1 |
| CW4FWS - Creative Writing 1.2: Further Writing Skills (OCRW4160)         | 4 | 40 | Core | N/A | 2 |
| CW4DWS - Creative Writing 1.3: Developing Your Writing Skills (OCRW4161) | 4 | 40 | Core | N/A | 3 |
| <b>Stage 2</b>   |   |    |      |     |   |
| CW5IAE - Creative Writing 2.1: Investigation and Experiment (OCRW5152)   | 5 | 40 | Core | N/A | 4 |
| CW5SAP - Creative Writing 2.2: Skill and Proficiency (OCRW5153)          | 5 | 40 | Core | N/A | 5 |
| CW5IAC - Creative Writing 2.3: Innovation and Challenge (OCRW5154)       | 5 | 40 | Core | N/A | 6 |
| <b>Stage 3</b>   |   |    |      |     |   |
| CW6PAR - Creative Writing 3.1: Practice and Research (OCRW6160)          | 6 | 40 | Core | N/A | 7 |
| CW6YWP - Creative Writing 3.2: Your Work in Progress (OCRW6161)          | 6 | 40 | Core | N/A | 8 |
| CW6PTP - Creative Writing 3.3: Pathways to Publication (OCRW6162)        | 6 | 40 | Core | N/A | 9 |

## Section B - Course Overview

This is the only entirely distance learning BA Hons Creative Writing degree in the UK. It aims to equip students with skills, confidence, motivation and ambition, through a learning design programme that starts from fundamental writing skills through to the contemporary professional practice in a form or genre of the student's choice. This programme begins at stage 1 by equipping students with some fundamental writing techniques applicable to all genres, before allowing students to sample poetry, screenwriting or prose writing. At stage 2 students will either pursue the poetry or scriptwriting forms at a more advanced level and/or will have the option to try more niche forms of writing, to enable them to gain further skills and expertise. At stage 3, students will complete a final writing project of their choice and investigate ways to bring it to publication. The programme draws on creative writing pedagogy by utilising the group or workshop activity as well as the individual assignment and close study of others' work, but accommodates OCA's distinctive demographic and the desires of lone writers by enabling some to create alternative submissions in the form of traditional writing portfolios.

### Stage 1

Units at this stage introduce students to distance learning and undergraduate study. Students are introduced to the basic skills and techniques of creative writing in the initial unit, Essential Writing Skills 1.1. In their second unit, Further Writing Skills, students will choose two options from a choice of three pathways: they can either try basic poetry or screenwriting or the prose option. These choices remain with them for their third unit at stage 1, Developing Your Writing Skills. By the end of stage 1, students will have the skills and knowledge needed to deepen their poetry, prose or scriptwriting craft at stage 2. At the end of each unit, they will produce a small portfolio of creative and reflective writing in their chosen form. Students will begin to consider the outward-facing potential of their work, within the understanding that it does not benefit writers to submit work too soon.

### Stage 2

Students are supported in the transition from novice undergraduate to knowledgeable and independent learners, putting into practice skills acquired at stage 1 and developing a personal approach to their writing practice. The units at this stage allow students to develop skills from stage 1 in poetry or screenwriting or else to try something new and more specialised, such as writing narrative non-fiction, writing for children or teens or writing short fiction. This range of options is one of the ways in which OCA's programme has a distinctive offer to students, allowing those who wish to perfect their poetry or screenwriting to do so, as most creative writing courses would, but also allowing students to hone their craft in specialised areas of prose writing, such as for children or in short form, all tutored by current expert practitioners. This enables students by the end of stage 2 to have the skills and confidence to experiment and innovate. The range also enables the course to appeal to leisure learners who may wish to select one or two units (e.g., Writing Short Fiction; Writing for Teens and YA) without committing to the whole degree pathway. They will produce a portfolio or creative work within their chosen forms and genres, alongside a critical study of other writers in order to inform and contextualise their own work. Students will begin to understand the iterative and skills-building requirements of creative writing. Students will actively consider how their work may become outward-facing. Peer sessions with other writers will inform their writing and raise critiquing skills, with an understanding that in some cases alternative methods are more appropriate.

### Stage 3

This level of study equips students with knowledge, understanding and skills for continuing personal development and professional writing practice. The units provide a framework for the learners to generate projects based on the personal vision and ambition gained throughout stage 1 and stage 2. The aim is to strengthen each individual's writing practice and inform their creative development through rigorous intellectual enquiry, resulting in a distinctive body of creative work. The structure of stage 3 means that students begin this level with a substantial unit focusing on research, so that for the remaining stage 3 units students can fully allow this research to impact on their creative practice. The second unit requires students to work on the major creative project of their choice. The final unit, Pathways to Publication, allows the student to explore ways of putting their best work out into a competitive industry.

### Section C - Course Aims

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

1. Widen access to education in creative writing at undergraduate level through Open and Flexible Learning.
2. 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.
3. Provide an intellectually stimulating programme based on high quality study materials and supported by interaction with peers and with tutors – all of whom, as well as being experienced and well qualified teachers, are themselves actively engaged in writing.
4. Develop students' creative capacities and their ability in interpretation and application.
5. 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.
6. Ensure students understand how writing craft is a process built gradually, in which one skill or technique leads to another, and how they can adhere to, develop and disrupt these processes as they gain knowledge and confidence.
7. 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.
8. Develop effective writing practitioners who display self-awareness, analytical and communicative skills, and a high degree of reflection.
9. 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

- LO1 Demonstrate proficiency in a range of writing styles and literary genres.
- LO2 Discriminate between good and bad writing, reading with increased confidence and critical awareness about a range of issues in creative writing.
- LO3 Use the views of others (tutors, peers and beta-readers) when developing own practice.
- LO4 Be aware of changes and trends in the writing, literary performance and publishing industries.

#### Understanding

- LO5 Critically and objectively evaluate own work (and that of others).
- LO6 Show an informed and critical awareness of different writing strategies, methods of organising materials and planning realistic schedules.
- LO7 Read as a writer, being able to analyse texts in any media.

### Application

- LO8 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.
- LO9 Communicate information and present written work convincingly to specialist and non-specialist audiences.
- LO10 Demonstrate the development of a personal language as a writer.
- LO11 Plan and structure an extended body of work to a high professional and aesthetic standard.
- LO12 Edit own work and that of peers using rigorous and critical scrutiny.
- LO13 Engage in appropriate professional practices such as marketing, self-presentation and negotiation skills.
- LO14 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 (OCA) strategic vision is “to be at the forefront of student-led creative arts education through open, enhanced, & supported distance learning, for an evolving society”. OCA is a non-profit educational charity, whose purpose is to widen participation in arts education through open flexible distance and online learning.

OCA uses a learning design process to consider the content, activities, and support needed to deliver course aims. This flexible approach recognises and supports a diverse range of student experiences, ambitions, and needs. In line with OCA’s core values, it also considers how to encourage more open, empowering, engaging, social, sustainable and evolving approaches to learning, teaching, and assessment.

As distance learners, students will need to work independently and to develop appropriate research and study skills. An induction programme and ‘Getting Started’ introductions are in place to support students to do this, and to help establish relationships with peers and tutors. Ongoing study skills support is available through #weareoca, OCA’s blog content, and other cross-curriculum study skills resources.

OCA’s virtual learning environment, OCA Learn, provides a platform for content, activities, and support for each unit. A dedicated Degree Space is in place to foster course wide dialogue and peer support through forum activities and shared resources. OCA has a responsibility to ensure all learning environments, content, and communication are as accessible as possible for individuals who have sensory, cognitive, neurological, physical, or other disabilities, and to provide an inclusive learning environment that acknowledges the diversity of our students’ experiences. OCA’s Student Engagement Strategy places a key focus on accessibility, with provision for designing learning materials with enhanced operability for mobile devices, which conform to all appropriate accessibility standards.

Course content is delivered through a range of learning materials, including written, video, and interactive media. These materials provide introductions and framing of subject related content, technical guidance, case studies, and other appropriate information. Materials are primarily accessed through OCA Learn, as well as #weareoca, which provides opportunities for current tutor and student-led content and debate.

Accompanying activities, such as exercises, research tasks, and assignments, encourage students to work independently and flexibly by selecting, testing, and interpreting relevant research, and applying understanding of critical thinking and creativity. Through these activities, students will begin to identify, develop and manage their own projects and document their progress through a learning log, or similar format. Learning logs are provided through OCA Spaces.

Students are expected to have a basic grasp of any software required for their course and to learn more complex usage as necessary as they progress. OCA provides students with G Drive online storage which includes word processing, presentation, drawing, and mind mapping tools. While OCA does not provide a help desk service to students for software, learning activities provide structured context for software learning at staged points throughout the course, and forums provide opportunities for peer support.

Learning is supported by tutors who provide timely, well-grounded and constructive formative feedback that aims to stretch and challenge learners at staged points within the unit. In parallel, tutor and student-led learning takes place through online group work. Group work offers opportunities to discuss and shape ideas, and share and support approaches to learning within video, webinar, study events, and/or forum activities and support. Critically reflecting on work through self-evaluation provides a valuable way for students to observe and learn from peers, to develop

increasingly professional personal and graduate skills, and to develop a deepening recognition of subject boundaries. Students are encouraged to do this through their learning log, reflective assessment presentations, and by reflecting on formative feedback.

Student Services provide study planning and pastoral support for any student who requests it. This is available personally via telephone, online, or within student forums, or more generally through additional resources, signposted through OCA Learn and/or #weareoca.

Students will engage with a range of academic literature throughout the course, supported through library access and seminars. Essential and recommended reading lists have been selected for their academic currency, and from authors and practitioners across a range of viewpoints, ethnicities, identities, and cultures. All reading lists can be accessed through the digital library services and eBooks. Additional online texts and journals are also available via UCA's online library. Students are supported through OCA's Link Librarian via OCA Learn and #weareoca content and debate.

As students progress, their research will become more self-directed. Independent research and projects will be undertaken alongside a consideration of any ethical issues. Guidance, resources, and support for any external and/or collaborative projects are available through the Enterprise Hub and in discussion with tutors.

In addition to OCA's core support, OCA's Student Association (OCASA) provides opportunities for students to physically engage with cross-curriculum Study Events, asynchronous Virtual Study Events, or to become involved in wider student discussions or other events.

### Assessment Strategy

OCA's assessment strategy is based on an assessment for learning model which emphasises assessment *for* learning rather than assessment *of* learning. Therefore, assessment is seen as an integrated and meaningful part of the learning journey. Assessment outcomes encourage learners to critically reflect on their progress and to articulate ideas and outcomes effectively through appropriate presentation formats.

Assessment criteria focus on the extent to which knowledge of relevant concepts, practices, theories, and contexts are demonstrated, the level of understanding demonstrated through the testing and application of knowledge, and the degree to which knowledge and understanding are demonstrated through the application of technical, communication, personal, transferable, and graduate skills. To help articulate these, assessment criteria are presented at each level through a set of range statements.

Summative assessment can take place online or at a physical assessment event. Students will submit work in line with course assessment guidelines, and will be assessed through group marking overseen by the Programme Leader. Quality assurance is provided through moderation of marks, internal verification of the assessment process, parity checks to ensure grades are consistent across OCA, plagiarism checks, and scrutiny by External Examiners. Students will be provided with summative marks and feedback at the end of each unit.

### Costs of additional materials/resources

#### Software and digital equipment

As part of some units, students are required to use specialist applications. Students are responsible for sourcing and, where necessary, purchasing any additional software specified. Where possible, open or freeware equivalents will be discussed alongside industry standard options. Students are eligible for any student discounts on computer equipment and software.

#### Materials and resources

Students are responsible for sourcing and purchasing the materials, resources, and any additional equipment used in the production of their work. These costs will differ from student to student, depending on each student's area of focus.

#### Transportation of work

Students are responsible for any postage costs of work to/from tutors or OCA for formative feedback and/or assessment. OCA will charge students for any excess postage payable on work submitted for formal assessment which exceeds the maximum permitted weight. Alternatively, students can submit work digitally for free.

#### Learner Support Scheme

In line with OCA's Access and Participation Plan, the College continues to invest in schemes to improve engagement into creative arts from those from low socio-economic backgrounds through a bursary fund.

For further details on your specific course costs, please visit [www.oca.ac.uk](http://www.oca.ac.uk)

## Section F - Employability

OCA recognises that its current student body holds a broad range of employment and enterprise aspirations. Many students have established careers, see their studies as a change in direction, and for an increasing number of younger students, as a first step into a creative career. As distance learners, OCA students are located across the UK and internationally and consequently have differing levels of resources and opportunity. In order to provide meaningful and consistent educational experiences and outcomes for all of these students, OCA encourages students to interpret the concept of 'enterprise' in ways that are personally relevant to their particular aspirations, social contexts, and locations.

As a charity, OCA supports a curriculum that has a positive impact upon people's lives and society as a whole, and encourages engagement with enterprise that has a clear societal impact. This means undertaking external projects that can have a wider social benefit, and developing practices that are socially aware and environmentally sustainable.

To encourage this, learning materials and activities provides a framework for students to begin to define, establish and sustain their practices at a variety of scales and ambitions, and encourage students to think about freelance, employment, social enterprises, or entrepreneurship outcomes. A focus on research and ethics helps to frame these activities within wider social contexts. Students are also encouraged to undertake collaborative projects with other students, and to work on competition briefs or other external opportunities.

A key benefit of distance learning is in allowing self-sustaining ways of developing a creative practice to build over time, and by balancing study/work/life commitments. Students can establish studio spaces and build resources throughout their studies, to feel prepared and equipped at the end of their course. Therefore, enterprise related themes are embedded through the course to encourage this sustainable approach.

An Enterprise Hub will provide a central online resource to support self-directed student activities. The Hub will provide guidance and resources on key enterprise themes, such as establishing and undertaking external projects/work-related learning, working collaboratively, establishing business or enterprise opportunities such as external exhibitions, business plans, or social enterprises, and connecting to appropriate professional networks.

OCA will use the Enterprise Hub to help establish relationships with other organisations, businesses, and funding opportunities. These in turn will provide the potential for business incubators, mentoring options, internship opportunities and enable access to seed-funding for students.

## Section G - 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 applicable national 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