

# CREATIVE WRITING, MFA

The program in creative writing offers a two-year master of fine arts degree in creative writing in the areas of fiction and poetry. The MFA program is a small program within a large and vibrant writing community. The program typically admits six new students each year.

The MFA program is the only program of its kind to have an "alternating genre" admissions policy. The program admits fiction writers in even-numbered years and poets in odd-numbered years. This alternating admissions schedule allows the program to provide a 2-to-1 student/teacher ratio and lets fiction instructors focus entirely on one group of fiction writers, and poetry instructors on one group of poets for the two-year instructional period.

## ADMISSIONS

### ADMISSIONS

Please consult the table below for key information about this degree program's admissions requirements. The program may have more detailed admissions requirements, which can be found below the table or on the program's website.

Graduate admissions is a two-step process between academic programs and the Graduate School. **Applicants must meet the minimum requirements (<https://grad.wisc.edu/apply/requirements/>) of the Graduate School as well as the program(s).** Once you have researched the graduate program(s) you are interested in, apply online (<https://grad.wisc.edu/apply/>).

Requirements	Detail
Fall Deadline	December 15
Spring Deadline	The program does not admit in the spring.
Summer Deadline	The program does not admit in the summer.
GRE (Graduate Record Examinations)	Not required.
English Proficiency Test	Refer to the Graduate School: Minimum Requirements for Admission policy: <a href="https://policy.wisc.edu/library/UW-1241">https://policy.wisc.edu/library/UW-1241</a> ( <a href="https://policy.wisc.edu/library/UW-1241/">https://policy.wisc.edu/library/UW-1241/</a> ).
Other Test(s) (e.g., GMAT, MCAT)	n/a
Letters of Recommendation Required	3

### ADMISSION PROCESS

Students who have earned a BA or equivalent degree may apply for admission to the MFA program in fiction or in poetry. Our MFA program has an "alternating genre" admissions policy. The program admits fiction writers in even-numbered years and poets in odd-numbered years. This alternating admissions schedule allows the program to provide a 2-to-1 student/teacher ratio and lets fiction instructors focus entirely on one

group of fiction writers, and poetry instructors on one group of poets for the two-year instructional period.

All application materials—including transcripts, letters of recommendation, statement of purpose (reasons for graduate study), a writing sample, a CV, and the application fee—must be submitted online in pdf format by midnight, US Central Time, by deadline.

Further details about the admissions process can be found on the MFA admissions (<https://creativewriting.wisc.edu/gradapply/>) page.

### PROGRAM APPLICATION REQUIREMENTS

- **Statement of Purpose (Reasons for Graduate Study):** A statement of approximately 500 words explaining your reasons for pursuing this graduate degree.
- **A Curriculum Vitae or Resume**
- **Transcripts:** An unofficial copy of undergraduate transcript(s) uploaded in pdf format is required. With the exception of study-abroad transcripts, applicants should provide transcripts from every post-secondary educational institution attended, even if transfer credits from one school appear on the transcripts of another. International academic records must be submitted in the original language and accompanied by an English translation. No official transcripts are required as part of the application. If recommended for admission to MFA in Creative Writing, then the Graduate School will send an instructional email request for official transcripts.
- **Three Letters of Recommendation:** Supply the names and email addresses of three recommenders in application. Recommenders will receive the request for letters from our system, via email.
- **Supplemental Application Writing Sample**
  - **Writing Sample for Poetry submission (odd numbered entry years, Fall 2025, Fall 2027):** A poetry manuscript, ten single-spaced pages in length, in eleven- or twelve-point font, with each poem beginning on a new page (for a maximum of ten poems, but likely fewer). If a cover page listing the poems is included, this will not count toward the ten-page limit. The applicant's name and page number should appear on each page of the writing sample. The program will not review Fiction applications during Poetry applicant review years.
  - **Writing Sample for Fiction submission (even numbered entry years, Fall 2026, Fall 2028):** A fiction manuscript, up to thirty double-spaced pages in length, in eleven- or twelve-point font, consisting of one or two short stories or novel excerpts. The applicant's name and page number should appear on each page of the writing sample. If including a novel excerpt, applicants may provide a brief synopsis of the novel in progress. The program cannot consider more than two stories or excerpts, and cannot read beyond the thirty-page limit. The program will not review Poetry applications during Fiction applicant review years.

## FUNDING

### FUNDING GRADUATE SCHOOL RESOURCES

[The Bursar's Office provides information about tuition and fees associated with being a graduate student. Resources to help you afford graduate study might include assistantships, fellowships, traineeships, and financial aid. Further funding information is available from the Graduate School.](#)

Be sure to check with your program for individual policies and restrictions related to funding.

## CREATIVE WRITING MFA PROGRAM RESOURCES

Prospective students should see the program website (<https://creativewriting.wisc.edu/teachingaid/>) for MFA teaching opportunities and funding information.

## REQUIREMENTS

### MINIMUM GRADUATE SCHOOL REQUIREMENTS

Review the Graduate School minimum degree requirements (<https://guide.wisc.edu/graduate/#requirements>) and policies (<https://guide.wisc.edu/graduate/#policies>), in addition to the program requirements listed below.

### MAJOR REQUIREMENTS

#### MODE OF INSTRUCTION

Face to Face	Evening/ Weekend	Online	Hybrid	Accelerated
Yes	No	No	No	No

#### Mode of Instruction Definitions

**Accelerated:** Accelerated programs are offered at a fast pace that condenses the time to completion. Students typically take enough credits aimed at completing the program in a year or two.

**Evening/Weekend:** Courses meet on the UW–Madison campus only in evenings and/or on weekends to accommodate typical business schedules. Students have the advantages of face-to-face courses with the flexibility to keep work and other life commitments.

**Face-to-Face:** Courses typically meet during weekdays on the UW–Madison Campus.

**Hybrid:** These programs combine face-to-face and online learning formats. Contact the program for more specific information.

**Online:** These programs are offered 100% online. Some programs may require an on-campus orientation or residency experience, but the courses will be facilitated in an online format.

### CURRICULAR REQUIREMENTS

#### Requirement Detail

Minimum Credit Requirement 42 credits

Minimum Residence Credit Requirement 30 credits

Minimum Graduate Coursework Requirement 27 credits must be graduate-level coursework. Refer to the Graduate School: Minimum Graduate Coursework (50%) Requirement policy: <https://policy.wisc.edu/library/UW-1244> (<https://policy.wisc.edu/library/UW-1244/>).

Overall Graduate GPA Requirement 3.00 GPA required. Refer to the Graduate School: Grade Point Average (GPA) Requirement policy: <https://policy.wisc.edu/library/UW-1203> (<https://policy.wisc.edu/library/UW-1203/>).

Other Grade Requirements To be considered a student in good standing in the MFA program in creative writing, a student must maintain a cumulative GPA of at least 3.0 and receive no grade lower than an AB in any creative writing course. If a student does not meet this requirement, or if a student receives an F in any course, the student could no longer be considered to be in good standing. Consequently, a student who is not in good standing could have their teaching assistantship or other financial aid support revoked, and could be asked to leave the program.

Assessments and Examinations MFA candidates must submit a publishable written thesis in the genre in which they were admitted (fiction or poetry).

Language Requirements No language requirements.

### REQUIRED COURSES

Code	Title	Credits
<b>Writing Workshops</b>		
Students take workshops in their primary genre (fiction or poetry) which are held in the first, second, and third semesters. Workshops include:		9
ENGL 781	Graduate Fiction Workshop (Fiction Genre)	
ENGL 782	Graduate Poetry Workshop (Poetry Genre)	
<b>Pedagogy</b>		
Students typically complete the following course during the first semester.		
ENGL 783	Creative Writing Pedagogy Seminar (Both Fiction and Poetry Genres)	3
<b>Thesis</b>		
Students must complete 15 credits of the following course.		15
ENGL 785	MFA Thesis	
<b>Electives</b>		<b>15</b>
<b>Total Credits</b>		<b>42</b>

#### Thesis

Students take 3 credits in each of the first, second and third semesters, then 6 thesis credits in the fourth semester. These are not courses—rather, they're the means by which the University gives MFAs credit for their independent writing.

#### Electives

Students take **15 credits of electives** drawn from appropriate courses across the curriculum. While students are expected to focus on and produce book-length theses by the end of their two years here, they are also encouraged to pursue other intellectual interests via these electives. In the past, MFA students have fulfilled their elective requirements by enrolling in literature courses, studying foreign languages, pursuing other artistic interests such as dance, book-making, and classical guitar, augmenting research for historical novels by taking appropriate history classes. MFA students may also hone their writing skills in other genres by taking intermediate and advanced undergraduate workshops and graduate level workshops in genres outside the one for which they were admitted,

as electives with the permission of the instructor. Students may also take up to 6 elective credits in the form of additional thesis hours in the second and third semesters.

## POLICIES

### GRADUATE SCHOOL POLICIES

The Graduate School's Academic Policies and Procedures (<https://grad.wisc.edu/acadpolicy/>) serve as the official document of record for Graduate School academic and administrative policies and procedures and are updated continuously. Note some policies redirect to entries in the official UW-Madison Policy Library (<https://policy.wisc.edu/>). Programs may set more stringent policies than the Graduate School. Policies set by the academic degree program can be found below.

### MAJOR-SPECIFIC POLICIES

#### PRIOR COURSEWORK

##### Graduate Credits Earned at Other Institutions

With program approval, students are allowed to transfer no more than 12 credits of graduate coursework from other institutions. Coursework earned ten or more years prior to admission to a master's degree is not allowed to satisfy requirements.

##### Undergraduate Credits Earned at Other Institutions or UW-Madison

No credits from a UW-Madison or other institution's undergraduate degree are allowed to transfer.

##### Credits Earned as a Professional Student at UW-Madison (Law, Medicine, Pharmacy, and Veterinary careers)

Refer to the Graduate School: Transfer Credits for Prior Coursework (<https://policy.wisc.edu/library/UW-1216/>) policy.

##### Credits Earned as a University Special Student at UW-Madison

With program approval, students are allowed to transfer no more than 10 credits of coursework numbered 300 or above taken as a UW-Madison University Special student. However, these credits are not allowed to count toward the 50% graduate coursework minimum unless numbered 700 or above or are taken to meet the requirements of a capstone certificate and has the "Grad 50%" attribute. Coursework earned ten or more years prior to admission to a master's degree is not allowed to satisfy requirements.

#### PROBATION

The MFA advisor (sometimes referred to as the MFA program director) will review student academic performance and conduct in all coursework to determine that students are making satisfactory progress toward the degree. If at any time the MFA advisor determines that a student's academic performance and/or conduct has not been satisfactory, the MFA advisor, with the input and concurrence of the voting members of the Creative Writing Steering Committee, may place the student on probation or may dismiss the student from the program. The period of probation will be one semester in duration. Prior to the end of the probationary period the MFA advisor will review the student's performance and conduct and decide, with the input and concurrence of the voting members of the Creative Writing Steering Committee, to reinstate or dismiss the student.

### ADVISOR / COMMITTEE

The current MFA advisor (sometimes referred to as the MFA program director) advises all MFA students during their first two semesters. In the third and fourth semester, the MFA student's thesis director will serve as their advisor.

### CREDITS PER TERM ALLOWED

15 credit maximum. Refer to the Graduate School: Maximum Credit Loads and Overload Requests (<https://policy.wisc.edu/library/UW-1228/>) policy.

### TIME LIMITS

It is expected that the MFA thesis be completed in May of the second year in the program.

Refer to the Graduate School: Time Limits (<https://policy.wisc.edu/library/UW-1221/>) policy.

### GRIEVANCES AND APPEALS

These resources may be helpful in addressing your concerns:

- Bias or Hate Reporting (<https://doso.students.wisc.edu/bias-or-hate-reporting/>)
- Graduate Assistantship Policies and Procedures (<https://hr.wisc.edu/policies/gapp/#grievance-procedure>)
- Hostile and Intimidating Behavior Policies and Procedures (<https://hr.wisc.edu/hib/>)
  - Office of the Provost for Faculty and Staff Affairs (<https://facstaff.provost.wisc.edu/>)
- Employee Assistance (<http://www.eao.wisc.edu/>) (for personal counseling and workplace consultation around communication and conflict involving graduate assistants and other employees, post-doctoral students, faculty and staff)
- Employee Disability Resource Office (<https://employee disabilities.wisc.edu/>) (for qualified employees or applicants with disabilities to have equal employment opportunities)
- Graduate School (<https://grad.wisc.edu/>) (for informal advice at any level of review and for official appeals of program/departmental or school/college grievance decisions)
- Office of Compliance (<https://compliance.wisc.edu/>) (for class harassment and discrimination, including sexual harassment and sexual violence)
- Office Student Assistance and Support (OSAS) (<https://osas.wisc.edu/>) (for all students to seek grievance assistance and support)
- Office of Student Conduct and Community Standards (<https://conduct.students.wisc.edu/>) (for conflicts involving students)
- Ombuds Office for Faculty and Staff (<http://www.ombuds.wisc.edu/>) (for employed graduate students and post-docs, as well as faculty and staff)
- Title IX (<https://compliance.wisc.edu/titleix/>) (for concerns about discrimination)

### L&S POLICY FOR GRADUATE STUDENT ACADEMIC APPEALS

Graduate students have the right to appeal an academic decision related to an L&S graduate program if the student believes that the decision is inconsistent with published policy.

Academic decisions that may be appealed include:

- Dismissal from the graduate program
- Failure to pass a qualifying or preliminary examination
- Failure to achieve satisfactory academic progress
- Academic disciplinary action related to failure to meet professional conduct standards

Issues such as the following cannot be appealed using this process:

- A faculty member declining to serve as a graduate student's advisor.
- Decisions regarding the student's disciplinary knowledge, evaluation of the quality of work, or similar judgements. These are the domain of the department faculty.
- Course grades. These can be appealed instead using the L&S Policy for Grade Appeal (<https://kb.wisc.edu/lis/22258/>).
- Incidents of bias or hate, hostile and intimidating behavior (<https://hr.wisc.edu/hib/>), or discrimination (Title IX (<https://compliance.wisc.edu/titleix/>), Office of Compliance (<https://compliance.wisc.edu/eo-complaint/formal-investigations/>)). Direct these to the linked campus offices appropriate for the incident(s).

### Appeal Process for Graduate Students

A graduate student wishing to appeal an academic decision must follow the process in the order listed below. Note time limits within each step.

1. The student should first seek informal resolution, if possible, by discussing the concern with their academic advisor, the department's Director of Graduate Studies, and/or the department chair.
2. If the program has an appeal policy listed in their graduate program handbook, the student should follow the policy as written, including adhering to any indicated deadlines. In the absence of a specific departmental process, the chair or designee will be the reviewer and decision maker, and the student should submit a written appeal to the chair within 15 business days of the academic decision. The chair or designee will notify the student in writing of their decision.
3. If the departmental process upholds the original decision, the graduate student may next initiate an appeal to L&S. To do so, the student must submit a written appeal to the L&S Assistant Dean for Graduate Student Academic Affairs within 15 business days of notification of the department's decision.
  - a. To the fullest extent possible, the written appeal should include, in a single document: a clear and concise statement of the academic decision being appealed, any relevant background on what led to the decision, the specific policies involved, the relief sought, any relevant documentation related to the departmental appeal, and the names and titles of any individuals contributing to or involved in the decision.
  - b. The Assistant Dean will work with the Academic Associate Dean of the appropriate division to consider the appeal. They may seek additional information and/or meetings related to the case.
  - c. The Assistant Dean and Academic Associate Dean will provide a written decision within 20 business days.
4. If L&S upholds the original decision, the graduate student may appeal to the Graduate School. More information can be found on their website: Grievances and Appeals (<https://grad.wisc.edu/documents/grievances-and-appeals/>) (see: Graduate School Appeal Process).

### OTHER

n/a

## PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

### PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT GRADUATE SCHOOL RESOURCES

Take advantage of the Graduate School's professional development resources (<https://grad.wisc.edu/pd/>) to build skills, thrive academically, and launch your career.

### CREATIVE WRITING MFA RESOURCES

MFA students receive extensive training in the instruction of creative writing through ENGL 783 Creative Writing Pedagogy Seminar. MFA students also receive training and access to extensive professional development resources through an annual "Life After the MFA" seminar. MFA students may pursue further professional development training in the fields of literary citizenship and literary publishing by enrolling in ENGL 411 Creative Writing: Special Topics Workshop: Writers in the World or Literary Publishing, as electives.

## LEARNING OUTCOMES

### LEARNING OUTCOMES

1. Develop the creative and technical skills necessary to conceive, execute, and revise original literary work in a student's chosen genre (fiction or poetry).
2. Demonstrate sensitivity to language and style on both the artistic and technical levels.
3. Develop the critical, analytical, and editing skills necessary to evaluate literary works in progress, both in the student's own work-in-progress, and in that of the student's peers.
4. Develop the ability to read literary works not only for their social, historical, intellectual, formal, and interpretive value, but for their capacity to inspire and generate new work, and to see in a finished work the process of its being made.
5. Develop through study and practice the pedagogical skills necessary to teach creative writing courses to undergraduate students.
6. Demonstrate understanding of professional and pedagogical practices and opportunities within and related to the field of creative writing.
7. Recognize and apply principles of ethical conduct with respect to one's work.
8. Engage with local communities of creative writers.