CREATIVE WRITING DEGREE
REQUIREMENTS
Revised: April 2010; June 7, 2010; June 16, 2011; August 31, 2018
Graduate Council Approval: March 19, 2019

M.F.A. PROGRAM

1) Admissions requirements

Applicants for admission must meet the University of California minimum requirements for
admission in the Graduate Studies Policy on the Implementation of Admission Requirements and
Exceptions (GS 2014-04). Admission requires a B.A. or B.A. equivalent from an institution of
acceptable standing, usually in a field related to the study of literature or creative writing. It is
expected that the applicant will have a background in the study and practice of creative writing.
Applicants will be expected to have GPA and test scores commensurate with both Master’s level
study and teaching responsibilities in an English Department. In exceptional cases, a request may
be made to Graduate Studies by the Chair of the Admissions Committee to grant an exception to
the campus requirements regarding the minimum GPA or English language exam score. Only the
Dean of Graduate Studies has the authority to grant an exception and offer admission to a student
who does not meet the university’s minimum admission criteria.

Applicants must submit the following:

* A completed Office of Graduate Studies application
* Three letters of recommendation
* TOEFL or IELTS scores, if applicable as indicated by the UC Davis Graduate Studies
* Transcripts for all institutions attended
* A substantial writing sample of creative writing in applicable genre/s.
  a) Prerequisites: none
  b) Deficiencies: not applicable

2) M.F.A. Degree Plan 1

Students must complete 48 units of required graduate coursework. They must also produce a
literary arts manuscript (the “thesis”), that includes a critical statement (what we call the
aesthetic statement”). At least 32 of the required units are graduate work in the major field,
Creative Writing – these units include workshops and seminars. The remaining units come from
Special Study or Individual Study towards the thesis project (ENL 299), credit applied for
Teaching Assistantship or Teacher Training (ENL 396), and other electives. Most students end
up taking more than 48 units because successful completion of the thesis typically requires two
years (6 quarters, or 72 units total) of full-time residence in the program, except in extraordinary
circumstances.
3) Course Requirements

a) Core Courses (32 units)

Core courses consist of four workshop courses (the ENL 290 series) and four graduate level literature courses, for a total of 32 units.

Students are required to take 4 graduate workshops. At least one workshop has to be outside the student’s primary genre. Each year the program will offer six workshops, at least two in fiction and two in poetry, respectively. The remaining two workshops will focus on nonfiction, hybrid forms, or specialized approaches to genre or literary practice as determined by student and faculty interest. The eligible courses are:

ENL 290F: Creative Writing: Fiction (4 units) ENL 290P: Creative Writing: Poetry (4 units) ENL 290 NF: Creative Writing: Non-Fiction (4 units) ENL 290: Creative Writing: Special Topic (4 units)

In addition, students are required to take four graduate level courses in the English Department or, with approval of the Creative Writing Director, another University of California graduate program in fields deemed relevant to literary study. At least one course must be a Seminar for Writers course related to the student’s primary genre or manuscript project.

Typically, four Seminars for Writers courses will be offered every two-year cycle. The seminars offered will focus on a range of genres. In any given two year cycle, at least one seminar will focus on each of the primary genres of poetry and prose fiction. A full list of English Department graduate literary seminars appears in the course catalog, but examples include:

ENL 237: Seminar For Writers (Special Topic: Poetics) (4 units) ENL 237: Seminar For Writers (Special Topic: Longer Prose Forms) (4 units) ENL 232: Topics in British Literature (4 units) ENL 262: American Literature after 1914 ENL 244: Shakespeare (4 units) ENL 270: Studies in Contemporary World Literature (4 units)

With approval from the Creative Writing Program Director and at the discretion of the instructor, students may count one 4-unit 100-level upper division undergraduate course as one of their four literature courses.

b) Elective Courses (16 units)

In addition to core workshop and literature courses, students are required to take a minimum of 16 units of elective courses chosen in consultation with the Program Director and the other Graduate Advisers. This includes a minimum of 4 units devoted to thesis preparation (ENL299). Units satisfying the Elective Course requirement are also earned for teaching duties (ENL 396), the Creative Writing pedagogy course (ENL 391, 2 units), and/or additional workshops or seminars.

Typically, students are employed as TAs for literature courses during their first year. In some cases, students are employed as TAs or Readers in other departments. During their first year,
they take the teacher-training course, Teaching Creative Writing (ENL 391) and then, under supervision, teach sections of ENL5F: Introduction to Creative Writing, Fiction; ENL5P Introduction to Creative Writing, Poetry; or ENL5NF Introduction to Creative Writing, Non-Fiction during their second year. Students receive credit towards the Elective Course unit requirement by enrolling in ENL 396 concurrent with TA appointments in the English department. Units received for ENL 391 may be applied to the Elective Course unit requirement.

Full-time students must enroll for 12 units per quarter including research, academic and seminar units. Elective courses, as described above, bring a student’s total number of units up to this full-time requirement.

c) English Language Requirement

Students who have not obtained an undergraduate or graduate degree at an approved English-medium institution, or who have not demonstrated strong English language proficiency through the TOEFL or IELTS exam, are required to take appropriate English language courses, as described in Graduate Student Course Requirements – English as Second Language (GC-2018-02). Courses taken in satisfaction of this requirement do not count towards the 48 units required for graduation.

d) Summary: Full-time students must enroll for 12 units per quarter including research, academic and seminar units. In addition to core course (32 units) and elective course (16 units) requirements, students take classes as needed, although the 12 units per quarter are generally fulfilled with Individual Study units or Special Study units (ENL299 or ENL 299D respectively), Teaching Creative Writing (ENL 391), teaching units (ENL 396) or additional workshops or seminars. While a total of 48 units are required for graduation, to successfully complete the required coursework and thesis generally requires a total of 6 quarters (72 units) of study.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Creative Writing Workshops</th>
<th>16 units</th>
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<tr>
<td>Graduate-Level courses</td>
<td>16 units</td>
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<tr>
<td>(Seminars for Writers or Literature Seminars)</td>
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<tr>
<td>At least 4 Special Study units</td>
<td>4 units</td>
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<tr>
<td>Additional Individual Study units (ENL299 or ENL299D) elective courses, or credits for teaching and teacher training (ENL 391 and ENL 396)</td>
<td>12 units</td>
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<td><strong>Total:</strong></td>
<td><strong>48 units</strong></td>
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Courses that fulfill any of the program course requirements may not be taken S/U unless the course is normally graded S/U. All courses not normally graded S/U must be taken for a letter grade.

Per UC regulations students cannot enroll in more than 12 units of graduate level courses (200) or more than 16 units of combined undergraduate and graduate level (100, 200, 300) courses per quarter.

4) Special requirements: N/A
5) Committees:

**Admission Committee:** Once the completed application, all supporting material, and the application fee have been received, the application will be submitted to the Admissions Committee. The Admissions Committee consists of all members of the graduate Creative Writing faculty. Based on a review of the entire application, a recommendation is made to accept or decline an applicant’s request for admission. That recommendation is forwarded to the Dean of Graduate Studies for admission. Notification of admissions decisions will be sent by Graduate Studies. Applications must be submitted by the stated deadlines.

**Course Guidance or Advising Committee** Students develop a coursework plan in consultation with the Director of Creative Writing in their first year of study and are matched with a Thesis Committee Chair (Major Professor) at the end of the third quarter of study. This faculty member serves as the student’s primary advising resource in their second year, although the student may also continue to consult the Director. The student is expected to attend advising meetings called by the Director and to consult their advisors additionally as needed. The student is required to meet with the Director or Thesis Committee Chair each year in order to fill out and submit the Student Progress Assessment form.

**Thesis Committee** Students are encouraged to consult with Creative Writing Faculty as they think about their preferences for the composition of their committee. The student, in consultation with the Director of Creative Writing, nominates 3 (occasionally 4) faculty to serve on their Thesis Committee. These nominations are submitted to Graduate Studies for formal appointment in accordance with Graduate Council policy.

6. Advising Structure and Mentoring:

Within the English Department, the Director of Creative Writing oversees the Master of Fine Arts Program and advises all students within it. The Director of Creative Writing, who is appointed by the Chair of the Department and (pending approval from Graduate Studies) serves as the Graduate Advisor for the Creative Writing Program, is a resource for information on academic requirements, policies and procedures, and registration information until the Thesis Committee is formed. Other faculty members in the Creative Writing Program may also serve as Graduate Advisors for the Creative Writing Program and assist with advising in the first year. Questions on coursework and other subjects may also be directed towards the Graduate Director in English, who has primary responsibility for the Ph.D. program in Literature, and oversees aspects of the program that also affect Creative Writing.

The Thesis Committee Chair is the faculty member who serves as the student’s Major Professor in the second year and supervises the student’s writing and thesis. Students select their Committee Chair in consultation with the Director of Creative Writing at the end of their first year.

The Graduate Program Coordinator and Graduate Advisor(s) are also available to advise students throughout their course of study, particularly regarding financial aid, employment, and general university policies.

Descriptions of these roles and mentoring and advising relationships are contained in the Creative Writing Student Handbook, which is located on the English Department Box site.
7) **Advancement to Candidacy:** Every student must file an official application for Candidacy for the Degree of Master of Fine Arts in Creative Writing and pay the Candidacy Fee after completing one-half of their course requirements and at least one quarter before completing all degree requirements; this is typically the 5th quarter. The Candidacy for the Degree of Master form can be found online at: [http://www.gradstudies.ucdavis.edu/forms/](http://www.gradstudies.ucdavis.edu/forms/). A completed form includes a list of courses the student will take to complete degree requirements. If changes must be made to the student’s course plan after s/he has advanced to candidacy, the Graduate Advisor must recommend these changes to Graduate Studies. Students must have their Graduate Advisor and Thesis Committee Chair sign the candidacy form before it can be submitted to Graduate Studies. If the candidacy is approved, Graduate Studies will send a copy to the appropriate Graduate Program Coordinator and the student. The Thesis Committee Chair will also receive a copy, if applicable. If Graduate Studies determines that a student is not eligible for advancement to candidacy, the student will be told the reasons for the application’s deferral. Some reasons for deferring an application include: grade point average below 3.0, outstanding “I” grades in required courses, or insufficient units.

8) **Thesis Requirements:**

The final project (“thesis”) will be a literary arts manuscript. Research is to be carried out under the supervision of a faculty member in the program and must represent an original contribution to knowledge in the field. Research for and drafting of the manuscript must be conducted while the student is enrolled in the program.

The Thesis Committee Chair will be in consistent contact with the student through the second year via regular e-mail and meetings, will read and respond to project drafts at least once a quarter, but typically, more often. The second and third readers will read portions of the project, though less frequently than the chair.

The manuscript can be a novel, book of short stories, collection of poems, or book-length work of creative non-fiction. A “mixed genre,” “hybrid,” “multi- or inter-genre,” or other work of literary art, including, for example, a project that includes digital, performance, book-object or other aspects is also acceptable but subject to advance approval by the Committee Chair. The great majority of the manuscript should be written during the student’s tenure in the Creative Writing Program. Similarly, translations may appear in collections, but should not stand in lieu of original work.

Length specifications vary, but students and committees may use the following as minimal working guidelines:

- **Collections of poetry:** at least 35 single-spaced pages
- **Collections of short stories or nonfiction pieces:** about 125 double-spaced pages
- **Novel or other single sustained narrative:** about 150 double-spaced pages
- **Multi- or inter-genre work:** 80-150 pages, depending on contents and subject to approval of the Committee Chair.

Given the character of creative work, these guidelines cannot be expected to cover all cases and are not intended to exclude or discourage innovative or experimental work. They merely provide, as suggested above, minimal lengths for typical thesis manuscripts in the Creative Writing Program.

Students are also required to submit an "aesthetic statement," a critical essay accompanying the
A manuscript that discusses the student’s poetics or aesthetics of fiction or non-fiction. In this discussion, such matters as history of influences (literary and extra-literary), sense of artistic growth, and questions about one’s art and practice may be covered. This aesthetic statement should be three pages at minimum; statements are often longer.

While the timeline for manuscript preparation is somewhat flexible, it will follow this basic course assuming the student is on a normative schedule: a near complete draft of work will be submitted to the full committee around March of the second year. It is expected that the Thesis Chair will have seen drafts of the thesis throughout the 2nd year in preparation for this submission and that the student will take Special Study or Individual Study units in advance of submitting the draft during the 2nd year. This submitted draft will be returned for suggested revisions, which will be completed comfortably in advance of the May filing deadline for Graduate Studies. All committee members must approve the manuscript and sign the title page before the manuscript is submitted to Graduate Studies for final approval. Should the committee determine that the manuscript is unacceptable, even with substantial revisions, the program may recommend the student for disqualification from the program by contacting the Dean of Graduate Studies.

The manuscript must be filed in a quarter in which the student is registered or on filing fee. Instructions on preparation of the manuscript and a schedule of dates for filing the manuscript in final form are available from Graduate Studies; the dates are also printed in the UC Davis General Catalog and in the Class Schedule and Registration Guide issued each quarter. A student must have a cumulative GPA of 3.0 for the M.F.A. degree to be awarded.

After both manuscript and aesthetic statement have been approved and submitted by the May deadline, there is an exit interview (or “defense”)—a two-hour meeting open to the public. This includes a presentation of the manuscript in sample, followed by questions from the committee and, time allowing, other attendees.

9) Normative Time to Degree:
The normative time to degree is six quarters (two years). Except in extremely rare circumstances and with the approval of the Director of Creative Writing, these quarters will be spent in residence.

10) Typical Time Line and Sequence of Events:
The table below details a sample program of coursework for an M.F.A. candidate over two years, listing the courses to be taken in sequence and their unit totals where those totals are fixed. The example below includes workshop courses, seminars in literary study, ENL 391, and possible Special Study units. An M.F.A. candidate will also receive credit for teaching (ENL 396). In the table below, there is some flexibility about how an individual candidate will reach a total of 12 units a quarter for full time enrollment. The schedules of individual candidates will organize their unit total in different ways, adding elective courses, Individual Study units, and teaching (ENL 396) where appropriate. The table below makes clear when specific courses could be taken and describes the typical advancement of the candidate towards the degree.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fall</th>
<th>Winter</th>
<th>Spring</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Workshop 1 (4 units)</td>
<td>Workshop 2 (2nd genre) (4 units)</td>
<td>Workshop 3 (4 units)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Seminar for Writers 1 (4 units)</td>
<td>Seminar for Writers or Lit Course 2 (4 units)</td>
<td>Seminar for Writers or Lit Course 3 (4 units)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Electives to total 4 units</td>
<td>ENL 391 Teaching Creative Writing (2 units)</td>
<td>Electives to total 4 units</td>
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<td>Electives to total 2 units</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fall</th>
<th>Winter</th>
<th>Spring</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Workshop 4 (4 units)</td>
<td>File Advancement to Candidacy Form</td>
<td>Individual Study Units (up to 12 units)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seminar for Writers or Lit Course 4 (4 units)</td>
<td>Individual Study Units (up to 12 units)</td>
<td>Submit Manuscript</td>
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<td>Electives to total 4 units</td>
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11) **Sources of funding** We offer funding in the form of T.A. positions in English to several students for their first year of study. Nonresident Tuition Fellowships for out-of-state and international students are available for several students. Funding in the second year typically comes in the form of teaching in the ENL 5 series of introductory creative writing workshop courses. Students who teach in the series must successfully complete ENL391 in preparation, and perform satisfactorily in their courses and in previous university employment to qualify to teach English 5. Creative Writing students who are not offered TA positions in English may apply for TA, Reader, and GSR positions as they become available across campus.

12) **PELP, In Absentia and Filing Fee status.** Information about PELP (Planned Educational Leave), In Absentia (reduced fees when researching out of state), and Filing Fee status can be found in the Graduate Student Guide: [http://www.gradstudies.ucdavis.edu/publications/](http://www.gradstudies.ucdavis.edu/publications/)