



THE UNIVERSITY OF  
BRITISH COLUMBIA

**CREATIVE WRITING PROGRAM**

**GUIDELINES  
FOR PROSPECTIVE UNDERGRADUATE CREATIVE  
WRITING MAJORS  
(BFA Program)**

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## Table of Contents

<b>INTRODUCTION .....</b>	<b>3</b>
The UBC Vancouver Creative Writing Major .....	3
Guidelines For Potential Applicants.....	3
<b>ADMISSIONS.....</b>	<b>4</b>
Admission Eligibility Criteria.....	4
1. Third Year Status .....	4
2. CRWR 200 .....	5
3. UBC Status .....	5
Admission To UBC.....	6
Note on Double Majors and Second Degrees.....	7
1. Double Majors .....	7
2. Second Degree.....	7
<b>APPLYING TO THE BFA CREATIVE WRITING MAJOR .....</b>	<b>8</b>
Application Requirements.....	8
Information Required on the Application Form .....	9
Cover Letter and Genre Guidelines.....	10
1. General Notes on Document Length and Formatting .....	10
2. Cover Letter .....	10
3. Genres .....	10
<b>CONTACT INFORMATION .....</b>	<b>12</b>

## INTRODUCTION

### The UBC Vancouver Creative Writing Major

Our BFA Major program is unique within North America. It offers you the chance to grow and develop as a young writer in small, focused writing workshops, learning from and with a committed cohort of early career writers. The workshops are guided by practicing, experienced writers across many genres: fiction, poetry, creative non-fiction, writing for children, translation, stage play, song lyric and libretto, screenwriting, new media, and writing for graphic forms.

As a student in our Major program, you will also learn and grow outside the workshop. We offer a variety of reading series, publications, and performances, such as our annual theatre festival, [Brave New Play Rites](#), or the Creative Writing affiliated literary journal [PRISM](#). Our Majors gather each month for OutWrite – an open-mic evening where you can read your work to an appreciative, supportive audience, and strengthen connections to your own community of literary peers.

You'll also be offered the opportunity to participate in literary events and festivals, both on-campus and in the diverse literary milieu of Vancouver. We bring in a diverse, talented and inspirational series of guest writers every year, who add to our teaching, and who also offer mentoring advice, lectures and seminars in craft, readings, and more. Our own faculty offer a variety of craft-based lectures open to all of our undergraduate and graduate students. Graduating Majors also contribute work to *Fourth Floor*, an anthology produced and edited by students.

Our Creative Writing Students Association (CWSA) arranges professional and social events for our BFA and Master of Fine Arts (MFA) students. A BFA representative works closely with the MFA Chair of the CWSA to bring the whole of our student community together, but who also represents and advocates specifically for BFAs at faculty program meetings and in consultation with the program.

### Guidelines For Potential Applicants

The guidelines contained here give you a detailed guide on the steps to take if you want to apply for the BFA Major in Creative Writing. Please read through the guidelines carefully and take some time to understand the contents before applying, and do seek advice or clarification if needed.

## ADMISSIONS

The BFA Major program in Creative Writing is a full-time two-year studio program usually taken in years three and four of an undergraduate degree.

There are three eligibility requirements you must meet in order to apply for the Major:

1. Third year undergraduate status (minimum) at the start of the Major.
2. Completion of CRWR 200 or equivalent.
3. Current UBC Vancouver student or have applied to become one.

Applications are first screened against these three eligibility criteria before proceeding to faculty review of a written portfolio submitted with the application. Information on preparing and formatting the portfolio are provided later in these guidelines; first however, you should assess whether you meet the eligibility criteria before proceeding with an application.

### Admission Eligibility Criteria

#### 1. Third Year Status

You can only apply for the BFA Major if you have completed or are about to complete a second **full** year of university study. Generally, this equates to **54 credits** of completed undergraduate courses.

No one can begin the BFA Major without formal UBC Vancouver 3<sup>rd</sup> year standing at the start of their program. This is a formal requirement of the University for admission to the BFA Major program.

The application window opens in January and closes in March for the winter session starting the following September. There is only one application cycle per year. So, you should at minimum be in the process of completing a second full year of undergraduate study by mid-May of the same year in which you apply, so that you will have formal 3<sup>rd</sup> year status for September.

You should ensure that you will have the required standing before applying as a Major.

To check this, you can consult the appropriate Faculty Advising office, or Admissions (Enrolment Services), for advice. If you are currently a student in the Faculty of Arts or will transfer to that Faculty on starting this degree, consult [Arts Advising](#). Students who are applying from outside UBC should start with the [resources provided through Admissions](#), but may also wish to connect with Arts Advising.

It is the Faculty you are in or entering that determines your formal standing. Creative Writing is a Fine Arts program within the Faculty of Arts, so most of our Majors are or will be Faculty of Arts students. For potential Double majors whose second Major is in another Faculty, it is important that you also check permissions, your standing and other potential issues with the advising service for that Faculty before

applying for this Major.

We *may* consider your application if you intend to take one or two courses during the summer session (i.e. after May) to meet the credit requirements. If this is you, you must write separately (via email) to the Creative Writing Undergraduate Advisor to let us know you will be doing this for your application to be considered.

For all applicants, even if the Creative Writing Program accepts you based on your portfolio and presumptive standing and makes you an offer of a place, you will not be able to progress in the program if you do not have 3<sup>rd</sup> year standing by the start of the relevant academic year. Our offers are reviewed by Admissions after we make them, and they will make the final determination of eligibility.

## 2. CRWR 200

The only specific course requirement for admission to our program is three credits of CRWR 200, or equivalent. CRWR 200 is the introductory CRWR course we offer at UBC, so we will consider a wide range of alternative options, as long as they are college/university level Creative Writing courses. This is a prerequisite for entering the Program.

For applicants from outside UBC, this means that you must have taken a recognized (for academic credit) introductory creative writing course. We will give special consideration to transfer students whose home institution did not offer any suitable courses – you are given space to indicate this on the application form.

## 3. UBC Status

Only UBC students with active undergraduate degree status may be enrolled in the BFA Major. We are unable to offer seats to unclassified students, or any other category of UBC student not eligible for an undergraduate degree.

If you are an unclassified UBC student, or have another non-undergraduate degree standing, and you want to apply, you should consult with Enrolment Services and your appropriate Faculty Advising office on the steps to take to change your status, and advise us when applying that you are making the necessary change.

You can apply to the BFA Major if you are or have been a student at another college or university recognized by UBC, as long as you have sufficient transferable undergraduate credits for 3<sup>rd</sup> year UBC status. You can also apply as a second-degree student if you have already completed a bachelor's degree in another subject at a recognized institution. For both these categories – external applicants and second degrees students – you **must** have already applied to UBC before submitting your BFA Major application. The note below on *Admissions to UBC* gives you further information.

## Admission To UBC

If you are not currently a UBC student, you **must** first apply for admission to UBC before submitting your BFA Major application.

The admissions deadline for UBC precedes the BFA Major application deadline, so you need to complete and submit your UBC application before applying to Creative Writing. The BFA Major application requires a valid, active UBC student number (issued to applicants) to proceed. The UBC admissions deadline is usually in mid-January.

We will not process any application that does not have a valid associated UBC student/applicant number and account.

To make an application to UBC, to find associated deadlines and other relevant information, start from the [Admissions](#) page. In applying to UBC, you should indicate that your first choice of Major is Creative Writing, and should also list an alternative major. If you are interested in a Double major, or you wish to be admitted to UBC even if you are not successful in being admitted to the BFA Major, seek advice from Admissions on submitting and managing your application.

Transcripts must be sent directly to Admissions by their deadlines. Enrolment Services is the office within Admissions that deals with many of the processes you will encounter, so you may see references to both Admissions and to Enrolment Services – they are part of the same UBC unit.

Enrolment Services may wait to finalize or approve admissions decisions until Creative Writing sends them a list of students to whom the program has offered a place.

The Creative Writing Program cannot assist or advise on admissions to UBC, or enrolment status. Even if we offer you a place in the BFA Major, you will not be permitted to take that place if Enrolment Services determines that you cannot be admitted to UBC or that you do not have the required status. All offers from Creative Writing of a place in the BFA Major program are conditional on final approval from Admissions/ Enrolment Services.

## Note on Double Majors and Second Degrees

These two options, pursued by some BFA Creative Writing Majors each year, can present administrative complexities, some of which are discussed below. If you are accepted into the BFA Major and pursue either of these options, it is a good idea to check in periodically with your faculty and/or program advisors, to ensure that you are on track.

### 1. Double Majors

If you want to graduate with a Double Major (i.e. complete two Major programs), you must qualify, apply, and then meet all requirements for each Major as if it were being completed alone, and should carefully consider the demands this will make on you. It is not unusual for this path to add an extra year or more to your studies.

For Double Major students in Creative Writing whose other Major usually leads to a Bachelor of Arts (BA) degree, you can choose whether to graduate with a BA or a BFA degree. You need to meet the degree requirements for your chosen credential – for example, the BA currently has language, literary and science requirements which the BFA does not, so if you want the BA as your degree on your transcript and academic record, you will need to meet those requirements.

For students double-majoring with another BFA program (Visual Arts e.g.) you will receive a BFA Degree in both.

A small number of students may also be considering a Double Major where the other Major is not administered within the Faculty of Arts, but within another Faculty at UBC. You must seek advice and may require formal permission from the Faculty in question before proceeding with this option.

For external students applying to UBC wanting a Double Major, you will need to ensure you meet the application requirements both of UBC and of each Major program. An offer from one Major – Creative Writing for example – does not mean that you have been accepted for a Double Major. You may receive two offers, each of which has to be separately accepted or declined, for each Major, you may be offered one but turned down for the other, and so on. If you are interested in pursuing this option, you should seek advice from Admissions as well as the programs you are interested in.

### 2. Second Degree

If you have already completed a bachelor's degree in another subject, at an institution recognized by UBC, you can apply to Creative Writing to earn a BFA in Creative Writing as a second degree. You follow exactly the same application process as any other student, ensuring that you apply to UBC separately by the January admissions deadline and then applying to the BFA Creative Writing Major.

Your previous degree must have been in another subject.

If eligible for this option, you will be credited with the equivalent of two years of a four-year program, and

some requirements are waived; you should then be able to complete this second degree within two years.

## APPLYING TO THE BFA CREATIVE WRITING MAJOR

Once we have established your eligibility, checking against the information you provide on an application form, admission as a BFA Major in Creative Writing is determined by review of the manuscript portfolio and cover letter you submit with that form.

Manuscripts are read, discussed and assessed by the Creative Writing faculty, and applications are ranked on the basis of faculty review of literary merit and potential. Decisions on admissions are based on ranked standing, with regard to the number of seats available.

We receive more submissions than we have seats to offer. There is no magic formula, genre or type of submission that will lead to acceptance to the Major; our best advice to you is to provide us with writing that you feel is the strongest and truest representation of who you are as an apprentice writer. We want to hear your unique voice. We can't provide personal advice, review manuscript submissions or offer further explanations to students who are not accepted into the program. The sections below provide detailed information on the specific requirements for your application to be considered. Please read and follow them carefully.

### Application Requirements

There is only one application cycle each year for the BFA Major in Creative Writing. For admission to the BFA Major for the UBC academic year 2019W, applications will be accepted between January 2 and March 15, 2019. The deadline for submission is:

**March 15, 2019**

We will make offers in mid to late May, for places starting the following September. The number of seats in the program is strictly limited, and the program generally receives 5 to 6 times as many applications as there are seats.

If you wish to apply, you must submit by the deadline above a completed BFA Major in Creative Writing online application form, which includes uploading three documents:

- a cover letter
- a manuscript of original writing in one genre
- a second manuscript of original writing in a second genre

You can find the form on the "*Apply for the Major*" page on our website once the application window is open. No email or paper applications are accepted.

A reminder that the application submission is made up of four pieces – an online form, an uploaded



cover letter, and two uploaded writing samples. The following sections detail requirements for each of these pieces.

## Information Required on the Application Form

On the form, you will need:

- To positively affirm that you have read and understood these guidelines.
- To supply your UBC student number and legal name as it appears on UBC records (you will also be able to indicate your preferred name if this differs from your legal name).
- To indicate how many course credits you will have completed by mid-May (54 required) of the application year.
- To answer whether you already have a bachelor's degree and if yes, from which institution and in which subject.
- To affirm that you have completed the pre-requisite 200-level Creative Writing course or equivalent, stating the course number and institution where the course was completed.
- If unable to affirm the above re CRWR 200, to indicate that you are registered or planning to complete this pre-requisite before the program start, and/or (for transferring or second-degree students) that the institution you attended did and does not offer an equivalent.
- To indicate whether you intend to pursue a Double Major, and if yes, in which subject.
- To indicate which two genres have been included in the writing sample and which further genres you intend to study if accepted.

You will also need to upload three documents when you complete the form: the cover letter and two manuscripts. These must be uploaded as Word documents or PDFs **only**. Files in other formats will not be accepted. You are required to:

- Upload three files: one file for the personal cover letter, and one file each for the two genre writing samples submitted.
- Name the files using last name in capitals, then first name lower case, then the genre. For example, George Eliot's application in two genres would contain three documents named as follows:

ELIOT\_george\_LETTER  
 ELIOT\_george\_POETRY  
 ELIOT\_george\_FICTION

Please use your legal name as it appears on your application form to name your files, and follow the given file naming rules; while we make reasonable efforts to accommodate mistakes made in filling out the form and in applications, and will follow up with you if we can to clarify missing or confusing data, the volume of applications received mean that misnamed files and incomplete applications are likely not to progress.

## Cover Letter and Genre Guidelines

### 1. General Notes on Document Length and Formatting

The page length requirement for each genre should be followed as closely as possible without going over. If you have one short story of 15 pages, you could submit it alone, but if you submit only one story of 5 pages, this is not enough. You may send more than one piece in a particular genre, as long as the total page count does not exceed the limit for the genre. You can also send part of a longer piece – e.g. you have a screenplay which is 120 pages in total – submit the first 20 pages to meet our requirements.

It's also fine to submit work you have done for a class previously; in classes, you can't submit work that you have previously submitted for a grade, but for this portfolio, it's okay to use previous assignments. They must however be solely your original work – no collaborative work of any kind will be accepted.

Unless a genre conventionally uses a particular font (eg screenwriting and courier), use a regular body text font (eg Times New Roman, Arial) at 12-point size, on a page with regular margins.

### 2. Cover Letter

In a one-page (single-spaced) cover letter, tell us about yourself and who you are — and want to be — as a writer. Treat your letter like any other piece of writing. Highlight your voice and personality. We want to know about your accomplishments, goals, interests, and experiences. Let us know how your background and experiences have shaped your writing. List publications, awards, and previous experience in writing workshops as applicable.

### 3. Genres

The minimum page requirement for all genres is 10 pages. If a sample for a genre contains multiple works, please include a brief table of contents at the beginning. We will accept submissions in the 8 genres listed below with specific requirements.

We are not currently accepting submissions in Translation or Podcasting, although these genres may be taught within the Major program.

**FICTION:** Maximum 20 pages, double-spaced, numbered. Submission may be one long piece or a number of shorter works totaling 20 pages. Short or long fiction (i.e., short story or novel excerpt). Note that long and short fiction constitutes only one genre.

**POETRY:** Maximum 15 pages, single-spaced, numbered. No more than one poem per page (i.e. no more than 15 poems). Even a poem of only one or two lines needs be on its own page, while a longer poem can spread over more than one page.

**SCREEN:** Maximum 20 pages of a screenplay (film or TV). This can consist of short screenplay(s) or the first 20 pages of a feature-length work. Sample scripts (also called show scripts) from pre-existing television series as well as adaptations or collaborations of any kind are not acceptable. The writing and development of characters, etc., must be original to you alone. Screenplays should follow industry-

standard formatting.

**STAGE:** Maximum 30 pages: excerpt from a full-length play, or one or more one-act plays for Stage, Adaptations or collaboration of any kind are not acceptable. The writing and development of characters, etc., must be original to you. Stage plays should follow industry-standard formatting.

**WRITING FOR CHILDREN/YOUNG ADULTS:** Maximum of 20 pages, double-spaced, numbered. Illustrations do not count towards the page requirement. The manuscript may be a short story, novel, picture-book text (formatted like a short story with no descriptions of art unless absolutely necessary—e.g. the visuals juxtapose with text), poetry, stage play or screenplay but the target audience should be children, including young adults.

**CREATIVE NONFICTION (CNF):** Maximum 25 pages, double-spaced, numbered. Preferable forms of CNF include memoir, personal essay, lyric essay, and literary journalism. Other forms of nonfiction writing, so long as it highlights personal voice and narrative, that might serve as application material include, but aren't limited to, commentary, personal journalism, newspaper and magazine writing, blogs, travel writing. Do not submit academic essays or reports.

**SONG LYRICS AND LIBRETTO:** Maximum 20 pages, double-spaced, numbered. Pieces can be song lyrics or short prose/poems applicants deem conducive to being reworked as song. For libretto, submit 10-20 pages, double-spaced, numbered, as text, with or without score. In addition to either of the above, a CD of up to three musical pieces may be submitted. CDs can be mailed or dropped off at the Creative Writing office, Buchanan E block room 462.

**GRAPHIC FORMS:** Up to 25 pages. Maximum file size 19MB. PDF only. Material can be script only, or script and art if you illustrate your own work. Scripts should be properly formatted and images should be finished art, scanned at print resolution.

## CONTACT INFORMATION

### **Creative Writing**

**Undergraduate Advisor:** Heather Miller  
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