THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

M.F.A. in Creative Writing
Application Guidelines

Contacts

School of Creative Writing Inquiries & Information
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Application Process

1. Potential students apply to UBC by using the Graduate & Postdoctoral Studies online application form. Applicants upload all required documents, including copies of official university transcripts, a Statement of Intent, a literary CV and their creative portfolio. Applicants also enter referee names and email addresses; referees will be contacted automatically by the online application system.
2. Our faculty select the successful applicants through a competitive reading process. We usually accept fewer than 15% of applicants.
3. Successful applicants who are selected by our faculty and who meet UBC's academic qualifications will be formally offered admission at UBC.
4. Successful applicants arrange for original official transcripts to be sent to Graduate & Postdoctoral Studies for final review.

We expect to offer admissions by mid-March, 2024.

Application Details

Applications will be open October 15, 2023.

Deadline
All online applications must be completed and submitted by **midnight PST on Friday, January 5th, 2024**.

On-Line UBC Application Form
https://www.grad.ubc.ca/prospective-students/application-admission

Please review UBC's admission requirements and application instructions. You will create a CWL (Campus Wide Login) account when you apply. If you already have a CWL from a previous application, please use this account.

Choosing the correct program
When you start the application process, you must search for the program you want to apply to (using the "Program Search" button). Ensure you select UBC's **Vancouver** Campus. Search for "creative" as the **Program Keyword**.

You have three program choices when applying:

1. M.F.A. in Creative Writing (On Campus) **(September 1 start date)**
2. M.F.A. in Creative Writing (Optional Residency) **(July 1 start date)**
3. M.F.A. in Creative Writing and Theatre **(September 1 start date)**

Note: you'll also see the Film Production and Creative Writing degree listed. This degree is coordinated by the film program, not by Creative Writing. Further details can be found here: [MFA Film Production and Creative Writing | UBC Theatre and Film](#)

Note: The Master of Arts in Children's Literature (MACL) degree is coordinated by the School of Information. Further details can be found here: https://macl.arts.ubc.ca/prospective-students/application-process/

Application Fee
The current fee is CDN $112 for Canadian applicants (citizens, permanent residents, refugees & diplomats). International applicants pay CDN $168.25. This fee is set by UBC Graduate & Postdoctoral Studies.
https://www.grad.ubc.ca/prospective-students/application-admission/online-application-fee

Do you identify yourself as an Aboriginal person, that is, First Nations, Métis or Inuit? Thanks to the generosity of a donor, the School of Creative Writing is able to cover the application fee for applicants who self-identify as Indigenous on their applications (that is, First Nations, Métis or Inuit). Please email the program to request a unique coupon code that must be entered in advance of submitting the application in eVision. Eligible applicants who have paid the fee will not be issued a refund. Applicants who apply to multiple programs may receive a coupon from one program but not another. In the event of a false self-declaration, we will cancel the application and/or withdraw any offer of admission, whether accepted or not.

Academic Requirements
Students must have an existing **four-year** undergraduate degree (or the equivalent for international students) with a minimum B+ average in order to pursue graduate studies at UBC. Please see the Prospective Students section of the Faculty of Graduate & Postdoctoral Studies website at https://www.grad.ubc.ca/prospective-students for more information.

We strongly recommend reviewing all UBC Graduate requirements in advance of your application to determine eligibility and to help you prepare for the process. If you are not considered eligible by UBC you will **not** be able to enter the program, even if we have accepted your portfolio. Under some circumstances, students with less than a B+ average will be accepted into UBC; in these cases, if a student is recommended for admission by our faculty we will work with the student to create a letter of rationale requesting a waiver of the GPA requirement.

GRE/GMAT & Other Academic Scores
GRE, GMAT and other academic scores are not required.

Transcripts – Please Follow Carefully
https://www.grad.ubc.ca/prospective-students/application-admission/transcripts-academic-documents
Applicants must first upload scanned or photographed copies of **official** transcripts (front and back) in PDF format to the application website when they apply. Applicants must include **ALL** current and previous post-secondary study the applicant has undertaken, regardless if it resulted in a degree. To be considered official, these transcripts **must** either be on official letterhead or contain the institutional stamp or seal. Unofficial copies of academic history reports will not be accepted. **If an offer of admission is made, applicants will then be required to order official hard copies of all transcripts sent directly from their institution to Graduate Studies (6371 Crescent Road, Vancouver, BC, V6T 1Z2).

Letters of Reference
UBC requires three letters of reference with each application. They **do not** have to be academic references if you are not able to get current references from academic sources – work or personal references are acceptable. References are most commonly submitted using UBC's E-reference system, which is part of the online application. Please note, we are unable to accept electronic submissions from referees using Hotmail, Yahoo, Gmail, MSN or other free e-mail accounts. In that case, the referee will submit a paper reference.
Deadline: References should be received by **January 31, 2024.** A late reference will make it more difficult to evaluate your application, so please ensure your referees will be able to submit their references on time.

Full information including the official paper referee form can be found on the Graduate & Postdoctoral Studies website at https://www.grad.ubc.ca/prospective-students/application-admission/letters-reference

Electronic references: In the online application system, applicants are asked to provide an e-mail address for each referee. A unique link will be emailed to each referee, allowing them to log in to a secure site and submit an online reference. Including an additional reference document as an attachment is optional.

Paper references: Reference letters must be sent to the Creative Writing Program and they must be in a sealed envelope with the referee's signature across the seal. Referees may send their paper reference by email to crwr.grad@ubc.ca for initial consideration but are **still required** to send their hard copy by mail. Referees may use the official form (link below), letterhead or plain white paper. For mailed references we accept a postmark date before the deadline; letters do not have to be couriered.
https://www.grad.ubc.ca/sites/default/files/forms/reference_letter_academic.pdf

Address for referees sending paper letters of reference by mail:
UBC School of Creative Writing
1866 Main Mall
Buchanan Room E462
Vancouver, BC, V6T 1Z1
CANADA
Attn: Giulia Sperman

TOEFL Testing
Applicants from a university outside Canada in which English is not the primary language of instruction must present evidence of competency to pursue studies in the English language prior to being extended an offer of admission. Tests must have been taken **within the last 24 months** at the time of submission of your application.

Applicants who have studied at an institution where English was the language of instruction **do not** need to provide English proficiency results. See the UBC Grad Studies page- English Language Test

Class Selection
Do not select or request classes with your application. Students only select workshops once enrolled in the program.

Application to Both MFA Programs
Students may apply to both the on-campus MFA and Optional Residency MFA programs if they wish. Each application will be evaluated by a separate reading committee. Students (except for those self-identifying as Indigenous) must pay the application fee separately for each program. Referees must submit references to each program separately. The application deadlines are the same for both programs.

MFA in Creative Writing & Theatre Applicants
MFA in Creative Writing & Theatre applicants must choose the *M.F.A. in Creative Writing & Theatre* program when applying online. They must also be accepted by the Theatre Program in addition to the approval of Graduate & Postdoctoral Studies. Students who apply to the Joint Program in Creative Writing and Theatre (MFA in Playwriting & Theatre) **cannot** also apply to the On-Campus or Optional Residency MFA Programs.

Portfolio Guidelines

All work must be in English. All work must follow the guidelines below. If you have applied previously, please note the application process has changed to accommodate the UBC Graduate Application System instituted in 2015.

We cannot provide critiques of manuscript submissions or explanations to students who are not accepted into the program, nor can we provide pre-evaluation of portfolios. To find out if you will be accepted, you must apply.

File Specifications

All files must be in Microsoft Word, PDF (Adobe Acrobat) or Rich Text format. All modern word processors are capable of producing files in one of these formats. Electronic submissions in other formats will be rejected by the application form.

We require all applicants to upload **three separate files** on the **Experience and Interests** section of the online application. All must be in Microsoft Word, PDF (Adobe Acrobat) or Rich Text format and each can be up to 10MB in size, maximum. The files are:

1. **Statement of Intent:** This should be a max of 500 words (1 page, single-spaced) and may include:
   - your literary influences in your primary genre (favorite authors / works)
   - other genres you anticipate working in
   - past experiences with other writing teachers / mentors
   - a brief description of your potential thesis project (if you have one in mind)
   - a description of your writing habits over the past three years
   - anything else you'd like to let us know about your creative practice.

   UBC Creative Writing is currently engaged in a multi-year process of building and reinforcing anti-racist pedagogies and structures in our School.
   - Please describe how you'll bring awareness of and engagement with diverse voices to a creative writing workshop.

2. **Literary CV/Resume:** This should list any publications, awards and relevant experiences/education.

3. **Portfolio:** This must include at least **two different genres** of writing (maximum of three). It must be numbered and formatted as one complete document. The form will only accept one portfolio file.

Portfolio Details

Table of Contents
Include a Table of Contents for the writing portfolio with the genre of each piece indicated beside its title. Your main genre should be at the top of the list.

Numbering
All pages must be numbered. It is also helpful to place your last name on every page as part of the page footer.

Genre Requirement
Your portfolio **must** include a minimum of 2 different genres. Three genres are preferable but not absolutely essential. We would rather you send work in 2 strong genres rather than including a weak genre to make 3.

File Names
Ensure that you name your files correctly with your first and last names. For example: Jules Verne's application contains three files. 1: verne_jules_statement.doc 2: verne_jules_cv.doc 3: verne_jules_portfolio.doc

Length Requirement
The page length requirement for each genre submitted should be followed as closely as is reasonable **without exceeding it**. For example: in short fiction, if you have one short story which runs 15 pages, you could submit it alone, but if you submit only one story of 5 pages, this is not sufficient. You may send more than one piece in a particular genre, as long as the cumulative page count in that genre does not exceed our requirements. Short & long fiction are not considered separate genres; therefore, you **must** send in another genre in addition to fiction.

Do not submit work in genres which we do not teach.

Do not use non-standard fonts, font sizes or page margins in order to squeeze in more material; our faculty will be able to evaluate your writing based on the page requirements stated. We prefer 12-point Times New Roman or similar.

Individual Genre Length Requirements

Poetry: 15 pages, single-spaced, one poem maximum per page.

Fiction: 20 pages, double-spaced. For example, this could be two 10 page short stories totaling 20 pages or a 20 page novel excerpt (outline not required).

(Note: short fiction & novel/novella are not considered separate genres; therefore, you must submit a second genre in addition to fiction.)

Graphic Novel: 25 pages. PDF or Word format only. Material can be script only, or script and art if you illustrate your own work. Keep in mind that the entire portfolio cannot exceed 10MB in size. For layout, please follow the specific **Comic Script Template** in the appendix at the end of these guidelines.

Screenplay: The first 20 pages of a screenplay as well as a two-page outline for the same screenplay, or a 20-page short screenplay. Standard screenplay format. 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, development of characters, etc., must be original to you.

Stage Play: 20 page excerpt from a full-length play, or two one-acts totaling 20 pages all together. Standard stage play format.
> **The exception to this rule:** Applicants to the Joint Creative Writing/Theatre Program are allowed to submit one full-length play and/or three one-act plays. There is no page limit for these applicants' manuscripts.

Non-Fiction: Creative Non-Fiction: 20 pages double-spaced. Creative Non-Fiction may include autobiographical writing, personal essays (but not academic essays), travel writing, literary journalism (but not newspaper reporting), commentary, and cultural reviews (but not technical reviews). In essence, we are looking for any non-fiction written in your own opinionated voice – as opposed to the more neutral, formulaic style characteristic of most academic, technical or newspaper writing.

Children's Literature: 20 pages double-spaced text (no illustrations) for any age level or combination of age levels (chapter books, middle-grade, young adult, picture book). Work should be intended for children and/or young adults.

Translation: 15 pages double-spaced, except poetry, which should be single-spaced (one poem per page). Submit translated work into English in any literary genre. Please indicate language and publication information for source text. Faculty evaluating the translation may request that applicants forward the original source texts.

Lyric and Libretto: 20 pages. Pieces can be song lyrics or short prose/poems you deem conducive to being reworked as song. For libretto, submit 10-20 pages as text, with or without score. In addition to either of the above, include links to three musical pieces hosted online (Soundcloud or similar).
Note: collaborative works of **any type** are not acceptable in any genre. All work must be original to you alone.

Notes on the Portfolio File
Your portfolio MUST be uploaded as a single file. If using a word processor, look up how to combine / merge multiple files in Google or in the help documentation of the word processor. There are multiple ways to do this, depending on your word processor and operating system. It may also be possible to combine your portfolio materials into a PDF using Adobe Acrobat or a similar PDF creation program or online utility.
*We cannot provide technical support for students having trouble creating their portfolio file. Please do not leave this to the last minute.

If you have submitted your portfolio and need to update it before the deadline, or if you submit your application without uploading your portfolio (this is possible, as it will trigger your electronic referee requests), you must contact us directly to update/add the portfolio file, as you cannot add this yourself after the application has been submitted.

Important Note: Since the portfolio is an admission requirement that is unique to our program and the online application system is UBC-wide, the system does not recognize this document in the "Program Requested Experience" field and will automatically move it to "Other/Misc." field. This will prompt a message stating that your application is incomplete; please disregard this message if you have uploaded all of the requested documents.
Maximum file size: 10MB

Email is the primary means of communication for this program. Applicants will be notified by email of the results of the competition.

Please ensure that you update your UBC Application and CWL account if your email address changes after your application.

Optional residency students are accepted for the academic year beginning July 2022. On-campus students are accepted for the academic year beginning September 2022.

Appendix: Comic Script Template

Please use this format (or a format with the equivalent amount of information) when submitting comics scripts as part of your application.

TITLE IN ALL CAPS
by First Name Last Name
Script for X-Page Comic OR Script for X number of X-panel strips.

CHARACTER NOTES

CHARACTER 1:   Short description (about 25 words).

CHARACTER 2:   Short description (about 25 words).

Etc.

ART NOTES
Briefly note what materials you plan to use, whether the comic is black and white or colour, any specifics about the lettering, panel borders, etc. that you want the reader to know.

PAGE ONE – THREE PANELS

PANEL ONE
Start each page with the page number, followed by the number of panels. Underline it. Then put the panel and number in all-caps. Underneath it (here) is the panel description, in bold.

1. CHARACTER ONE: Dialogue.

2. CHARACTER TWO: Dialogue. Note that the lines are numbered. Each number indicates a new word balloon, thought balloon, caption, etc. Restart the numbering on each page, not each panel.

PANEL TWO
When you mention a character for the first time in the panel descriptions, put their NAME in all-caps. Some people cap the name every time it appears in the panel description and sometimes people put action words in all-caps. For example, "TOM, a small chicken, RUNS across the road, desperate to get to the other side." When deciding what to put in all-caps, try to do whatever would provide clear and concise communication with the artist and letterer if they were not you.

PANEL THREE
Keep the panel descriptions concise, just enough information so that the reader can understand the context for the action and dialogue. The following are some examples of how to describe captions:

4. CAP – FLOATING: The night before…[This indicates an "unboxed" caption, i.e. without a border.]

5. CAPTION: This indicates the usual boxed narration.

6. CAP – CHARACTER NAME: This indicates that the caption box is a specific person's thoughts.

LETTERING NOTE: If you have a lettering note about one specific line of dialogue, put it here.

PAGE TWO – SPLASH PAGE

PANEL ONE
This is how you'd title a splash page. If you have a two-page spread, just hyphenate, PAGES TWO-THREE. Some people start a new page (in Word) when they start a new page in the script, but this is optional. The following are some additional instructions for formatting dialogue.

1. CHARACTER NAME (OP): If a character says something off-panel (on the phone, or as a carry-over from the previous panel) you can handle it like this.

2. CHARACTER NAME: If you want a word to appear in bold or italics in the lettering, format it accordingly or add a note for the letterer like the one on page 2. Be sure not to overdo the fancy formatting because it gets hard to read.

3. CHARACTER NAME: If a line of dialogue starts in one balloon but ends in another …

4. CHARACTER NAME: … use ellipses to indicate that. Okay, I'm sure there's more but that's all I can think of right at—

5. CHARACTER NAME:Hey! If someone interrupts, use an em-dash (—) as shown in the previous line. The following is an example of how to indicate a sound effect.

6. SFX (Door): SLAMMM!