

Programme Specification

MASTER OF STUDIES in Writing for Performance

1	Awarding body	University of Cambridge
2	Teaching institution	University of Cambridge Institute of Continuing Education (endorsed by the Degree Committee of the Faculty of English)
3	Accreditation details	180 (CATS)
4	Name of final award	Master of Studies in Writing for Performance
5	Programme title	Master of Studies in Writing for Performance
6	UCAS code	n/a
7	JACS code(s)	W800
8	Relevant QAA benchmark statement(s)	Creative Writing
9	Qualifications framework level	FHEQ level 7
10	Date specification was reviewed	August 2022

Introduction

This MSt. programme is designed for postgraduate students who wish to develop high-level theoretical skills and a vibrant and innovative creative practice within writing for a wide range of performance mediums. Writing for Performance is defined as making scripts for theatre, film/TV, radio drama, or text for performance art/installations, digital platforms, or stand-up comedy. Students will develop skills initially in all mediums and then be guided to choose a specific genre of script-making for their final project. They will develop the capacity to critically reflect on their own work, the work of their peer-group, and that of other professional writers.

The MSt aims to facilitate a high standard of creative practice, in order that students may develop their professional practice in several areas. For example, they may wish to develop as dramatists in order to have a professional career in the entertainment industry as writers or directors, or to enhance their skills as dramaturgs/script editors to allow them to follow a career in literary management, publishing, or agenting. The programme would also be of interest to applicants wishing to enrich their creative writing/drama teaching practice at GCSE or on A-level English Language and Literature courses.

The programme's administration and teaching would be undertaken by the Institute of Continuing Education (ICE) and assured by a sub-committee of the Degree Committee of the Faculty of English.

Educational Aims of the Programme

The overall aims of the MSt degree are to:

- enable students to develop high levels of expertise as writers of performance through engagement with forms of 'embodied knowledge', and 'learning through doing', within both group and individual contexts;
- facilitate students' creative practice, and to encourage originality and experimentation with narrative structures and story-telling;
- use theory and philosophy to develop and enhance students' creative practice through engagement with performance theory and the critical history of performance;
- identify, encourage, and consolidate the distinct and individual strengths within students' work;
- explore, both critically and creatively, the world of dramatic writing across a range of performance genres and mediums;
- develop skills relevant to professional development for those working in creative, pedagogic, or industry contexts;
- create a safe and empathetic teaching environment that students can trust, in order that they may produce their most innovative creative work.

Learning Outcomes

By the end of the programme, students will be able to demonstrate the following:

Knowledge and understanding

- specialised knowledge of histories, forms, and traditions of writing for performance; of the cultural contexts of practitioners and practices within performance; of contemporary critical, analytical, and narrative theories of performance;
- advanced awareness of the relevant market and distribution demands of entertainment industries;
- enhanced understanding of the applications of performance in educational, community, and social contexts;
- detailed understanding of key performance components within the discipline, to include: ideational sources, body, space, image, sound, text, movement, environment.

Skills and other attributes

- dramaturgical and script-editing skills within a range of performance mediums that may include theatre, film/TV, radio drama, performance art/poetry, comedy, digital performance platforms (e.g., podcasts);

- developed advanced self-management skills to include working in planned and improvisatory ways, as well as the ability to anticipate and accommodate change, ambiguity, creative risk-taking, uncertainty and unfamiliarity;
- an understanding of group dynamics and project management skills in order to collaborate within collective, creative, and professional contexts as well as generating performance texts and presentations;
- honed script-writing and dramaturgy/script-editing skills, resulting in the ability to produce a full-length, production-ready script within a chosen performance medium.

Programme structure

The part-time MSt programme is divided into two years. The first year is structured around four modules, that all students must attend. In the second year students will work on their own writing project, supported by their supervisor. Students will be encouraged to reflect on their work through group discussion and individual tutorials in class and online. Summative assessment takes place at the end of each module in year one and at the end of the second year of the course

A Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) offers learning support to students while they are on the programme, including learning resources, peer-to-peer communication, and student-to-tutor discussion between modules to build a virtual community of practice. Informal opportunities to develop creative and research skills also exist through mentoring by fellow students and members of staff.

The programme consists of:

Year 1

Students are given access to the VLE before the course begins and complete a non-assessed introductory exercise that will familiarise them with the technology.

Module 1 (4 days,)

Beginnings: Themes, Scenes, Voice

Module 2 (4 days,)

Dramaturgy: Structure, Character, Dialogue

Module 3 (4 days,)

Collaboration: Production, Direction, Performance

Module 4 (4 days,)

Professional Engagement

Assessment:

Reflective writing exercise following oral presentation (10% of final grade).

Twenty-minute piece of script-writing developed from their formatively assessed writing in the previous three modules (10% of final grade).

Two critical essays (20% of final grade)

Year 2

Each student will have five supervisions.

Students aim to complete a full-length (90-minute) script in a chosen performance medium, and will meet at the end of the second year to present an extract from their creative work to the cohort.

Dissertation

Full-length script within a chosen performance medium
Reflective and critical commentary

Assessment: Dissertation (60% of final grade), submitted 1 July.

Vivas are held for any borderline candidates in September.
Examiners meet and degrees are awarded in the Michaelmas term.

Entry requirements

Applicants will be selected on the basis of creative writing samples, a personal statement, research project (for a script in a chosen medium) and by interview.

Course content

Module 1: Beginnings: Themes, Scenes, Voice

This module introduces students to the fundamental conceptual, creative, and practical elements of writing for performance. They will be encouraged to begin developing a sense of which medium they may wish to work in later, while workshops and encounters with visiting speakers will allow them to experience a wide range of writing tasks. They will begin to engage with processes of critical reflection about their own work, and about the creative practices of their peer-group, as well as being encouraged to respond analytically to a wide variety of philosophical positions within performance theory and history.

Four professional directors (drawn from high-profile theatres and/or the National Film School) will take up mini-residencies over Modules One and Three. They will hold experiential workshops in performance and production vocabularies, skills, and working methods.

Summative Assessment: A 3,000-word critical assignment on a chosen aspect of performance theory or history.

Formative Assessment: Students will also be required to produce 10-minutes (10 pages) of a script for any performance medium.

Module 2: Dramaturgy: Structure, Character, Dialogue

This module will look in-depth at the function of narrative structures and story-telling forms. Writing character will be explored, as well as different techniques of writing dialogue for stage/screen/aural space/digital performance platforms. Students will be encouraged to experiment increasingly within the medium they wish to develop as a

short script for the workshops with the directors in Module Three. There will be stimulating theoretical engagement as well as experiential creative practice workshops.

Summative Assessment: A 3,000-word critical essay focusing on students' own creative practice.

Formative Assessment: Students will be required to produce 10-minutes (10 pages) of a script in a performance medium that is different from their choice in Module One.

Module 3: Collaboration: Production, Direction, Performance

In this module, students will workshop their creative piece from Module Two with the resident directors, facilitating in-depth collaborative experiences inside a working theatre space in Cambridge, where possible.

Allowing collaborative relationships to develop early, across modules, will hopefully encourage the post-MSt production of the students' work in visible professional platforms.

Students will continue to refine their critical, analytical, and experiential practice during this module.

Summative Assessment: A 2,000-word reflective piece of writing, drawn from students' oral presentations on their experience of collaboration and rehearsal during this module.

Formative Assessment: Students will be required to produce 10-minutes (10 pages) of a script in a performance medium that is different to both Modules One and Two.

Module 4: Professional Engagement

This module will focus on the processes and skills involved in bringing a script successfully to market. This module completes the cycle of learning from the 'first idea' to a finished, commissioned, and performed script. Invited speaker panels will focus on industry engagement, with agents, literary managers, show-runners, and producers. Students will develop advanced self-presentation skills, as well as an understanding of new-writing networks and opportunities. Students will prepare and submit their dissertation proposals.

Summative Assessment: A 20-minute script (20 pages), developed from their formatively assessed writing in the previous three modules.

Teaching methods

The programme is delivered through a combination of in-person teaching sessions and asynchronous approaches provided via the course virtual learning environment. Examples of the type of teaching methods used include, but are not limited to, live and pre-recorded lectures, seminars, group discussions, online readings, group activities and discussion forums. Peer-to-peer learning forms an important element of course teaching.

- Experiential learning workshops with professional actors/directors/writers in a working performance space, focused on performance processes of voice, movement, space, text

- Blended learning modules combining residential blocks and online learning
- Workshops, seminars, and discussions led by tutors with creative and academic expertise
- Individual tutorials and consultations with tutors throughout both years
- Guest seminars and interviews with internationally leading industry professionals in theatre, film/TV, and BBC Radio Drama, as well as workshops with performance artists/poets and stand-up comics
- Private study and creative practice facilitated by appropriate reading lists and resources suggested by ICE's panel tutors
- Appropriate use of ICE's VLE
- Online and face-to-face mentoring and support

Assessment methods

In order to proceed to Year Two, students must submit a portfolio of creative work, totalling 20 pages of script/screenplay/performance text; two critical essays of 3,000 words each; one piece of reflective writing of 2,000 words. Between them, these submissions constitute 40% of the final grade. Students must attain an average mark of at least 60% in the first year to progress to the second.

The dissertation consists of:

1. an extract from a larger creative project (a 90-minute stage play or screenplay, or two 45-minute TV episodes, or 90-minutes of performance text/stand-up text), with a synopsis of the broader work and a covering letter to a literary agent, and
2. a written reflective and critical commentary, totalling 5,000 words.

The dissertation constitutes 60% of the final grade. Of that, **the creative project accounts for 50% of the final grade and the critical commentary accounts for 10% of the final grade.** A dissertation will be deemed to have passed if it is awarded 60% or above. A dissertation mark of 57-59% will be deemed a marginal fail and the submitted work will pass subject to a successful viva defence and/or corrections.

The final grade is either Pass or Fail. Students receiving a mark of 75% or above may be said to have Passed with Distinction.

Students achieving a Pass in Year 1 but not completing, or failing to reach the required standard for, the Year 2 requirements, may be awarded a Postgraduate Certificate in Writing for Performance on the recommendation of the Degree Committee.

Entrance to programme from the EdX platform

Students who have successfully completed the MicroMasters in Writing for Performance and the Entertainment Industries, studied on the edX platform will be able to join the MSt in Writing for Performance from module 2 onwards. The assessment and learning outcomes for module 1 of the MSt in Writing for Performance which are worth 30 credits at FHEQ Level 7 are covered in the MicroMasters course. Receipt of the verified certificate from the MicroMasters course is one of the admissions requirements of the MSt in Writing for Performance for those applicants joining from that route.

Graduate employability and career destinations

As well as providing support, feedback, and advice for those pursuing a career in writing for all performance mediums, this programme is useful as a career enhancement for teachers of Drama or English Literature, and anyone seeking professional development within the areas of theatre production/film-making/radio production, publishing, arts journalism/broadcasting, and dramaturgy/script-editing. Students acquire transferable analytical and presentational skills, and knowledge that will prove of value to those seeking to develop or change their careers within a range of areas.

The Careers Service maintains links with employers and takes their needs and opinions into account in the services which it provides for students. The Careers Service also allocates a Careers Adviser to each College, faculty and department to act as a point of contact.

Management of teaching quality and standards

The teaching quality and standards of the programme is monitored throughout by the appropriate member of academic staff, who reports annually to the examiners' meeting, consisting of the Internal Examiner, Moderating External Examiner, other Faculty and ICE members as agreed by the Education Committee. The report of the moderating external examiner is made available to all students on the course via the Institute's virtual learning environment.

Quality indicators

The tutors are recognised creative and/or academic authorities on writing for performance. The programme also benefits from the expertise of a range of visiting speakers of the highest professional and intellectual standing. The Writing for Performance module within the Masters of Studies in Creative Writing has established relationships with leading industry professionals that will benefit the Masters in Studies in Writing for Performance.

Every effort has been made to ensure the accuracy of the information in this programme specification. At the time of publication, the programme specification has been approved by the relevant Faculty Board (or equivalent). Programme specifications are reviewed annually, however, during the course of the academical year, any approved changes to the programme will be communicated to enrolled students through email notification or publication in the Reporter. The relevant faculty or department will endeavour to update the programme specification accordingly, and prior to the start of the next academical year.

Further information about specifications and an archive of programme specifications for all awards of the University is available online at: www.admin.cam.ac.uk/univ/camdata/archive.html