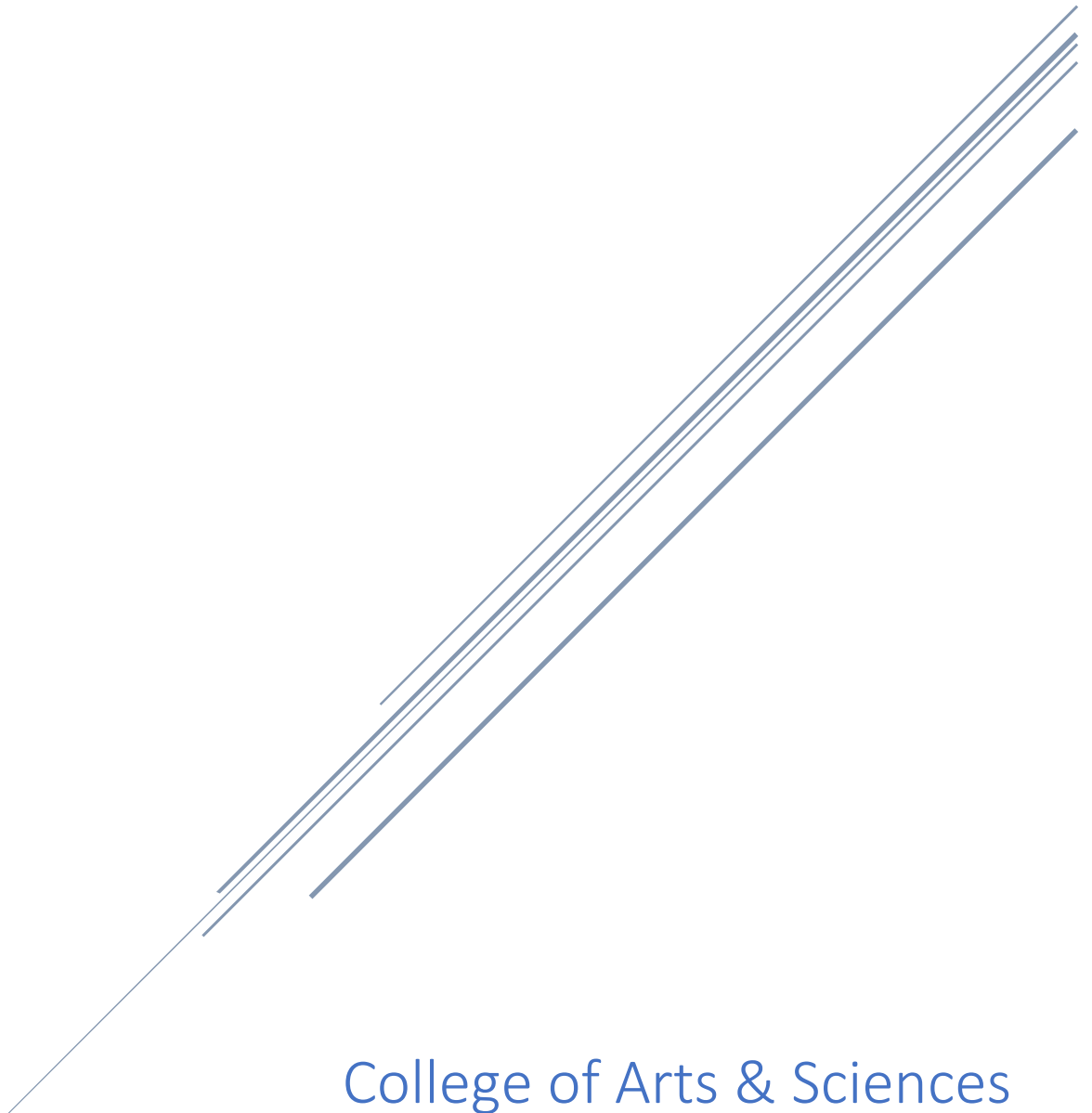


# STUDENT HANDBOOK

## Master's in Fine Arts



College of Arts & Sciences  
Drexel University

*Updated October 2023*

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## Message from the Director

Dear Students,

I'm delighted to welcome you to the MFA in Creative Writing.

You are about to embark upon a specialized course of study that fits in with the rhythm of a writer's life. Our degree embraces core principles of a Drexel education - career preparedness, civic engagement, and experiential learning. You will be learning important craft lessons from published writers and gathering the tools you need to get your work out into the world. You will join with your fellow students to explore how writers can use the written word to build community, amplify the voices of the unheard, and change lives for the better.

All the MFA administrators and faculty pledge to give you the best educational experience. We anticipate that you will see yourselves as partners with us on this journey. Do not hesitate to reach out to me, your MFA director, Nicole Pearson, your advisor, or our talented faculty for any questions or concerns. You have our best wishes for a productive and successful year.

*Nomi Eve*

Director, Drexel MFA in Creative Writing  
Associate Professor of English  
Department of English and Philosophy  
College of Arts and Sciences

## About the Creative Writing Program

Drexel University's Master of Fine Arts (MFA) in Creative Writing provides writers with the tools and skills to forge professional ties and succeed after graduation. This two-year, low-residency is designed with the university's commitment to experiential and career-focused education in mind. Online workshops, reading tutorials, and one-on-one packet exchanges with notable published writers help students deepen their understanding of their craft, while residencies and an emphasis on learning teaching pedagogy will prepare students with the skills and connections they need to succeed after completing their degree.

Designed for aspiring writers, an MFA in Creative Writing empowers students to enhance their creativity, while sharing and developing their work within a supportive academic community. Through workshops, residencies, and literary courses, students receive feedback from their peers and professors, gain insight about the world of professional writing, and work toward creating a publishable product.

## Contacts

The Master's in Fine Arts is part of the Department of English & Philosophy, located in MacAlister Hall at 3250-60 Chestnut Street.

### Program & Department Contacts

Program Director	Nomi Eve	5064 MacAlister Hall	n/a	<a href="mailto:nae28@drexel.edu">nae28@drexel.edu</a>
Program Manager	Nicole Pearson	3201 Arch St, Rm 151	215.895.2524	<a href="mailto:nmp39@drexel.edu">nmp39@drexel.edu</a>
Department Head	Dr. Roger Kurtz	5044 MacAlister Hall	215.895.2446	<a href="mailto:jrk353@drexel.edu">jrk353@drexel.edu</a>
Department Administrator	Liz Heenan	5045 MacAlister Hall	215.895.6911	<a href="mailto:eh647@drexel.edu">eh647@drexel.edu</a>

## Faculty

A listing of all MFA Faculty members, along with their contact information, can be found online in the [Faculty Directory](#).

## University Resources

### Services

- [ask.drexel.edu](http://ask.drexel.edu)
- [Drexel Central](#)
- [Information Technology](#)
- [Graduate College](#)
- [Student Services](#)
- [Bookstore](#)
- [Counseling and Health Services](#)
- [Drexel Student Health Plan](#)
- [Disability Resources](#)
- [Human Resources](#)
- [Parking Services](#)
- [Identification Card \(DragonCard\)](#)
- [Drexel Recreation Center](#)
- [Drexel Libraries](#) (including interlibrary loans)

### Academic Calendars and Campus Maps

- [Academic Calendars](#)
- [Events Calendar](#)
- [Campus Directions and Map](#)

## Program Admission

### Process

The MFA follows a rolling admissions process for a new cohort each Fall Term. This means we review applications and make admission decisions as applications are completed and not all at once. Therefore, once a cohort is full no additional students can be admitted, so early application is advised. The absolute deadline for each year is late August.

### Transfer Credits

Transfer of graduate courses from elsewhere must be approved by the Program Director. *Students with prior relevant coursework at the time of admission must complete any transfer credits before matriculation.* For any other potential coursework, students must receive pre-approval of transfer credit before taking a course at another institution. At least 30 credits towards the degree must be taken at Drexel.

## Curriculum

### Program Requirements

MFA students undertake an intensive two-year process of story creation, critique, revision, and career preparation. Students take part in online workshops, reading tutorials, and one-on-one packet exchanges with notable published writers. Three times during the MFA students gather with professors in intensive residencies. The program requires a total of 45 credits: 33 credits in core requirements and 12 credits in creative writing electives, along with the submission of a creative thesis.

### Core Courses

All Creative Writing students take three core courses to build foundational knowledge in the field.

- CW 500 Reading as a Writer (Fiction)
- CW 501 Reading as a Writer (Genre Authors)
- CW 550 Fiction Writing On-Line Workshop

### Packet Exchanges & Thesis Development

During the five packet exchanges in the program, students are matched with published authors for individual guidance and fine-tuning of their craft through mentorship. Author-mentors provide review and critique of student writing efforts and return work with robust editorial notes. This culminates in the development of a creative thesis – a publishable piece of work – by the end of the program.

- CW 555 Fiction Writing Packet Exchange I
- CW 556 Fiction Writing Packet Exchange II
- CW 690 Thesis Development
- CW 691 Thesis Packet Exchange I
- CW 692 Thesis Packet Exchange II

### Residencies

Three times during the MFA, students gather with each other and their professors in intensive residencies. Accomplished authors lead workshops and give craft talks at all meetings. Residencies are important for community building and are mandatory for all students. Please mark your calendars with the approximate dates now and the exact dates once they are announced.

In their first term, students meet with writers in a craft retreat in Philadelphia at Drexel University. It is normally held the *second to the third week of October*, spanning Indigenous Peoples' Day (Columbus Day). In Fall of Year 2, students convene in New York to meet with publishers, agents, and editors beginning *the second week of November*. The program culminates in Spring of the final year during *the second week of May* with a graduation residency on campus at Drexel.

- CW 600 Creative Writing Craft Residency
- CW 601 Professional Residency in New York
- CW 602 MFA Creative Writing Graduation Residency

*\*\*Please note that residency fees, lodging, and transportation are not included in the price of tuition.*

## Electives

The MFA program consists of 12 elective credits in Creative Writing, allowing students to choose from a variety of relevant topics and tailor the program to their individual creative and professional goals.

Sample topics include:

- Writing Pedagogy (required for students accepted into the assistantship program)
- Black Women Short Story Writers
- Writing Historical Fiction
- YA Novel Intensive
- Writing Science Fiction
- Prepared to Publish
- Writing Thrillers

## Creative Thesis

The purpose of the creative thesis requirement is for graduates to have a polished chunk of work to use as the basis for completing a manuscript at the end of the Drexel MFA. The MFA thesis can be an excerpt from a novel, novella, or a collection of short stories. It should be between 15,000 and 23,000 words. Some students will have more than the word limit requirement, which is allowed but not required.

### Formatting

General advice on formatting for different types of manuscripts can be found for [short stories](#) or for [novels and novellas](#). These are simply suggestions and students do not need to adhere to these specific guidelines. The document must simply be submitted as a clean copy, with a title page, page numbers, and double-spaced in either Calibri or Times New Roman 12 pt. Font. The file should be saved as “Last Name, Thesis, Year” (e.g., Eve Thesis 2022).

### Review Options

The creative thesis should mostly represent work that was reviewed by the packet exchange mentors. It is still possible to include unreviewed pages in the final document, but those parts should make up only a small portion of the total work.

Because there will be different preferences for how and whether the creative thesis is reviewed, students are given two choices in how to handle their final packet exchange course CW 692. Discussions around the choices should be part of the creative thesis development process in CW 690 during Fall Term of Year Two. When enrolled in CW 691, each student must inform the Program Director by Monday, Week Three of Winter Term, Year Two which option they choose. **Once selected, the choice cannot be altered.**

#### Full Review Option

Submit your full creative thesis to your CW 692 packet exchange instructor by Monday, Week Five of Spring Term, Year Two of your MFA studies. You must also submit the final creative thesis to the Program Director and Manager at this time. You will receive comprehensive feedback on the full work from your packet exchange instructor by the end of Exam Week. Please note that a submission of more than 23,000 words will only receive a review of 23,000 words. This will fulfill the requirements of CW 692 for the quarter.

Non-Review Option

CW 692 will function the same way as the other packet exchange courses. Submit three packets of new and/or edited writing to the packet exchange mentor throughout the spring quarter and receive three rounds of feedback. Students who choose this option will not have an additional review of the final creative thesis. Submit the final creative thesis to the Program Director and Manager by Monday of Week 10 of Spring Term, Year Two of your MFA studies.

For students with a personalized plan of study, where enrollment in the thesis sequence (CW 690, 691, and 692) does not match the overall program plan, due dates will be adjusted to be in alignment with your individualized schedule.

Plan of Study

The MFA program in Creative Writing is designed to be taken in a specific order and completed in seven consecutive quarters, beginning in Fall of Year One and culminating in Spring of Year Two.

First Year							
Fall	Credits	Winter	Credits	Spring	Credits	Summer	Credits
<a href="#">CW 550</a>	3.0	CW Elective	3.0	<a href="#">CW 500</a>	3.0	<a href="#">CW 556</a>	3.0
<a href="#">CW 600</a>	3.0	CW Elective	3.0	<a href="#">CW 555</a>	3.0	CW Elective	3.0
	6.0		6.0		6.0		6.0
Second Year							
Fall	Credits	Winter	Credits	Spring	Credits		
<a href="#">CW 501</a>	3.0	<a href="#">CW 691</a>	3.0	<a href="#">CW 602</a>	3.0		
<a href="#">CW 601</a>	3.0	CW Elective	3.0	<a href="#">CW 692</a>	3.0		
<a href="#">CW 690</a>	3.0			Creative Thesis			
	9.0		6.0		6.0		
Total Credits							45

Students who need to deviate from this path should speak with the Program Manager, *preferably before beginning their studies but as soon as possible thereafter*, to create an individual plan that meets their needs while staying on track for graduation. This is especially important for students who need to remain enrolled half-time to maintain eligibility for federal financial aid purposes.

Grading

In the first year of the program and for all electives, courses are graded with “standard” letter grades (A, B, C, etc.). These letter grades allow students to build a strong GPA, necessary for good academic

standing and financial aid purposes. In the second year of the program, excluding the final elective, courses are graded based on a system assigning Credit or No Credit. An earned grade of Credit (CR) means the course credits count towards program completion while a grade of No Credit (NC) means the credits will not count and need to be retaken. Credit/No Credit grades do not affect the overall GPA.

In order to advance through the program, students must earn a grade of B or better in CW 550 Fiction Writing Workshop, CW 600 Craft Residency, and the first-year packet exchange courses (CW 555 and 556). Students who choose to pursue letter grades in the second-year residencies (CW 601 and 602) and thesis exchange courses (CW 690, 691, and 692) must also earn a B or better.

### Independent Study

Writers have a variety of inspirations, and direct experience can provide raw material for story creation. Students are invited to propose Independent Study projects of any kind, including through community-based learning. Students are also invited to propose Independent Studies that draw inspiration from Drexel's unique resources, such as the Academy of Natural Sciences, the Bioko Biodiversity Protection Program, or the Robert and Penny Fox Historic Costume Collection. Independent studies may also be inspired by subject matter far outside of university collections. The format of the class depends upon the particular project and will be determined in collaboration with the MFA director, the course instructor, and the student.

## Special Programs

### Assistantships

Optional in-person teaching assistantships let participants gain paid experience that can be put toward their degree. Students must apply and be admitted to the assistantship program. Usually this occurs during the admission process and first year students receive priority, but second year students can apply as well. Applications to the Teaching Assistant program are due by May 15 and [instructions](#) are available online.

Once accepted, participants receive instruction and mentoring in teaching composition via CW 564 Writing Pedagogy in Fall Term. Students are then able to teach up to four courses in their first year and five courses in their second, gaining experience in multiple course delivery modalities: in-person, hybrid and online. Upon successful completion of the pedagogy track, students will receive a letter documenting their teaching experience at Drexel.

### Drexel Creative Writing Retreat in Collioure, France

The [Storylab Creative Writing Retreat](#) is designed for beginning, emerging, and published writers — anyone who feels the urge to reconnect with their writing self or deepen and improve their craft. Students in Drexel's MFA in Creative Writing have the option to take the retreat for elective credit or just to awaken their writing self or deepen and improve their work. There are limited spots available on a first come, first served basis and all spots must be filled for the retreat to run. Dates, pricing, and registration information are online at the website above.



## Writing Through the Walls

Writing Through the Walls is a creative writing exchange between Drexel MFA students and writers who are incarcerated. It is a not-for-credit extracurricular activity that takes place two times a year for ten-week periods. Drexel students are paired up with writers on the “inside.” All writers suggest writing prompts for the group. Writers then choose a prompt, write a short piece of fiction, and then exchange their work with their partner. Partners critique each other’s fiction, and once feedback is exchanged, writers revise and share work with their partner a second time.

Writing Through the Walls was created in response to the global lockdown in March of 2020 when people around the world were forced to stay away from loved ones, friends, neighbors, and others with whom they had become accustomed to interacting and creating or sustaining human connection. While some were able to experience the lockdown with family or other loved ones, for those living in U.S. prisons quarantine meant an abrupt end to any connections outside the prison walls.

For Drexel students, Writing Through the Walls provides students with sensitive readers eager to engage in creative conversation. For inside participants, Writing Through the Walls is a way to engage with other people, and an opportunity to occupy and challenge the mind with creativity and critical feedback.

## Registration

Students register for classes online through DrexelOne. Students can look up courses each term in the [Term Master Schedule](#) by clicking links for the desired quarter, college, and program.

Log on to the [DrexelOne](#) with your e-mail ID and password. (Visit [Drexel IT](#) to find out how to activate your e-mail account.)

1. Click on the “Academics” tab
2. In the Registration Box, select “Register for Courses”
3. Select the term you are registering for
4. Enter the CRN\* number(s) of the course(s) you are trying to register for

\*A CRN is a course registration number. This number can be found in the Term Master Schedule by clicking “Review the Term Master Schedule” under the Academics tab in Drexel One.

On Drexel One, you can register for classes, check your grades, financial aid information, etc. Incoming graduate students can register for classes this way before they arrive at Drexel for their first term. Drexel Central will assign you a registration time ticket each term. Go to the [Registration page](#) for more information on registration time tickets or contact the Program Manager.

## Satisfactory Academic Progress

Students will be required to meet the minimum standards set forth for good [Academic Standing](#) by Drexel’s Graduate College. A graduate student must maintain a minimum 3.00 term and cumulative GPA to progress toward graduation. Students not achieving minimum standards are subject to Advisor Check, Academic Probation, and may be subject to Academic Dismissal. Policies related to Academic Standing are upheld and overseen by the Graduate College under the [Office of the Provost](#).

Please note that the [Grades Policy for Graduate Students](#) allows no more than two grades of C to count towards degree completion.

## Course Program of Study

To meet financial aid requirements for loans and loan deferrals, students must be enrolled at least half-time. At the graduate level, that is at least 4.5 credits per term. Only courses which apply to a specific academic program are eligible for most financial aid. Drexel uses a technology referred to as [Course Program of Study](#) (CPoS) to track registration and make sure aid is only applied to qualified courses.

Students who follow the standard plan of study as laid out in this Handbook should not have any problems associated with CPoS. Students who deviate from this plan will need to coordinate with the Program Manager as soon as possible to create an individualized plan. The later a change is incorporated during the program, the more difficult it becomes to continue half-time registration and at some point, it may not be possible at all. Adding unnecessary credits does not help because they will not apply to the degree and therefore are not eligible for aid.

Questions about financial aid should be directed to [Drexel Central](#).

## Graduation

Students must apply for graduation. The application deadline is normally the Monday of Week 5 of the final term. Application deadlines and instructions are available [online](#). Students must be registered for credit during the term in which they graduate.

Drexel holds one [Commencement celebration](#) each year in June. There is an individual ceremony for graduates of the College of Arts and Sciences, where graduates' names are called as they receive their ceremonial diploma. There is also a university-wide event to officially confer degrees. Details are posted at the website above each year, with instructions updated periodically for purchasing regalia, requesting tickets, and logistics.