Applying to the M.F.A. in Creative Writing

Fiction, Poetry, Creative Nonfiction, Screenwriting, and More...
M.F.A. in Creative Writing

What is an MFA?
A Master of Fine Arts in Creative Writing focuses on the art and practice of writing for those interested in publishing their own original works. As with other creative areas (dance, visual art, music), the M.F.A. in Creative Writing is primarily a practitioner’s degree. Classes will focus on craft rather than literary studies.

A bachelor’s degree is required before beginning a master’s degree program. While master’s in creative writing programs may encourage applicants who have a bachelor’s degree in English or creative writing, degree seekers may come from any field where they want to improve their writing abilities.

Why would you pursue an MFA?
A master’s in creative writing provides a foundation of theory and form along with workshops to develop your skills and hone your craft. Whether you are looking to get published or to advance your career, an MFA in Creative Writing will help you develop your voice and become a more proficient writer.
M.A.s & Ph.Ds in Creative Writing

Many graduate programs offer the M.A. (Master of Arts) in English with a creative writing emphasis. Although the M.A. is not a terminal degree, it can be a good middle ground for writers who may want to explore literary studies, Rhetoric, or other humanities options as well as practitioner courses (craft) in creative writing.

The Ph.D. (Doctor of Philosophy) in Creative Writing is a relatively new degree, with both practitioner (craft) focus and the academic breadth of a doctoral program in literary studies. Possibly a good choice for writers who also want a career in academia.
Practical Considerations

Funding

An art degree carries no guarantees of monetary success. Make sure the program you select offers a strong funding package in the form of fellowships, teaching assistantships, or editorial positions.

Location

You'll likely spend two or more years in this program. Make sure it's somewhere you can live! For example, if cold weather gets you down, don't choose a program in the midwest or the northeast.

Budget

Applications are expensive. How many schools can you financially afford to apply to? Hopefully between four (4) and ten (10). You can also ask for a fee waiver from schools, if you are eligible.
The Right Fit

Program Specializations

Faculty

Editorial and Other Opportunities
Where to Start

Associated Writing Programs (AWP)
www.awpwriter.org

Poets & Writers Magazine
Database
www.pw.org/mfa

Best Colleges Web Feature on M.F.A. Programs
https://www.bestcolleges.com/features/mfa-creative-writing-programs/
Application Materials

Writing Sample

Varies from program to program, but typically 20-40 pages of prose, 10 pages of poetry, or a screenplay. Be sure to read each program’s guidelines very carefully. (Note: Ph.D. programs in creative writing may also ask for a critical writing sample—a piece of scholarly writing generally adapted from a critical essay written for an undergraduate literary studies course.)

GRE Test Scores

Usually only the “general” GRE test is required; though not all programs require even that. (Ph.D. programs may also require the Literature GRE.)

Statement of Purpose

You will need to write a statement about your goals for graduate study.

Letters of Recommendation

Generally, you need three letters from people familiar with your work. Ask your professors or editors you’ve worked with. Note: ask months in advance. Include your CV and a short piece of your work. Tip: Use the dossier service Interfolio for most efficiency.
Writing Samples & Statements of Purpose

Selecting Your Writing Sample

Statements of Purpose

https://writingcenter.tamu.edu/Students/Writing-Speaking-Guides/Alphabetical-List-of-Guides/Professional-Writing/Personal-Statements/Personal-Statements
Application Timetable

Application season starts in the fall for the following fall semester, with acceptance decisions coming in the spring, generally between March and April.

Work on your writing samples and statement of purpose, starting the summer before application season;

Secure your letters of recommendation in May/June;

Take the GRE by October/November.
Undergraduate Preparation

Concentration in Creative Writing at TAMU
https://english.tamu.edu/creative-writing/

LAUNCH
https://launch.tamu.edu/

The Aggie Creative Collective
https://writingcenter.tamu.edu/Students/The-Aggie-Creative-Collective