

ASHLAND UNIVERSITY



Master of Fine Arts in Creative Writing 2025-2026 Program Handbook

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Program Overview

The MFA Program at Ashland University is a two-year, low-residency MFA program in poetry, fiction, and creative nonfiction. Unlike many other low-res programs, Ashland hosts a single in-person residency each summer, rather than the summer/winter residencies of most programs. Our online semesters are held during fall and spring and consist not only of individual faculty-to-student mentoring but also regular online discussions during which students and faculty contribute substantial postings on assigned texts and topics. The program resides in the Ashland University English Department.

How We Do Things

Philosophy

The Ashland MFA believes in the power of the individual to express truths inherent to personal experience, belief, intellect, and imagination. We fundamentally value historically marginalized communities and strive to be a place of growth and caring. To this end, we support the rights of all students and faculty to choose pronouns and define language appropriate to their own identities.

The Ashland MFA was designed—and remains—largely a studio program. As defined by the Association of Writers and Writing Programs, “Studio writing programs place primary emphasis on the student’s writing experience within the program. In this way, they most closely parallel studio programs in music, dance, and the visual arts. Most of the degree work is done in workshops, independent writing projects or tutorials, and thesis preparation. The study of contemporary literature and the forms, craft, themes, and aesthetics of writing may be incorporated into workshops or offered through separate seminars. Faculty members of such programs are selected for their achievement in the creative or artistic genres of literature and not for scholarly work. Students are admitted to such programs almost wholly on the basis of a writing sample, and in turn, the significant degree criterion is the quality of the thesis manuscript.”¹ All of this is just to say that first and foremost we care about the writing and developing an understanding of how it can be improved, what it does, and what it can do.

In terms of our pedagogical structure, the Ashland MFA is a hybrid of programs based on one-on-one mentoring and programs based around online classrooms. Some goals (modified from the AWP Hallmarks of an Effective Low-Residency MFA Program in Creative Writing) include:

- *Development of each student’s critical reading skills.*
Students regularly submit critical papers for the teacher’s and students’ commentary. In online workshops, students develop critical skills in evaluating the work of their peers.
- *Development of each student’s creative work and writing skills.*
In scheduled exchanges, the student submits to an instructor or mentor original creative work, critical responses to reading assignments, and responses to the instructor’s or mentor’s critiques and advice about that work.
- *Development of a literary community.*
Students will learn from one another as well as from their assignments and their faculty. They also become acquainted with a greater variety of artistic sensibilities.

¹ AWP Guidelines for Creative Writing Programs & Teachers of Creative Writing.

Completion of the entire program entails 45 credit hours of coursework. This is broken down into 9 credit hours of residency (in person) course work and 36 credit hours on non-residential (online) course work.

Course Sequence & Structure

Students generally begin our program at an annual residency as a 501 student. The residency period is comprised of roughly two weeks in which students and faculty meet in person on the Ashland University campus in Ohio and embark on a period of workshops, craft talks, topic-specific classes, readings, and panel discussions. For workshops, students are generally grouped together based on where they are in the program sequence—ENG 501 (first residency), ENG 502 (second residency), or ENG 503 (third and final residency).

Upon completion of ENG 501, students then work through their first two online semesters, courses ENG 631 and ENG 632; then their second residency, ENG 502; then two more online semesters, ENG 633 and ENG 701, during which they finalize their thesis. Their third and final residency, ENG 503, will include their thesis defense and ends with the student's graduation from the program.

Note that while these course numbers are distinct, there are instances wherein a faculty member will have a “mixed group” of students in an online course and/or at the residency, for example, an online section comprised of two 631 students and two 632 students.

Program-Wide Student Learning Objectives

In order to complete this program, students will achieve the following measurable outcomes:

1. Compose poems, creative nonfiction, and/or fiction which displays a mastery of literary techniques and approaches.
2. Effectively revise and edit their own creative work and critique the work of others.
3. Analyze and critique contemporary literature.
4. Compose, edit, and compile a thesis-length manuscript.
5. Analyze and evaluate the characteristics of their own creative work, especially their thesis, and the process by which that work came into being.

Though not listed as a learning objectives, we also have a goal of making our students into good literary citizens. To that end, faculty should exemplify and promote collegiality, cooperation, and respect among themselves and their students, and encourage wide and varied reading.

Admission

Admission is open to all qualified persons regardless of physical ability, religion, race, creed, age, gender, sexual orientation, or national origin.

Students seeking admission to the Master of Fine Arts Program must submit:

- application form
- transcripts from all institutions from which a degree was received
- writing sample (10-15 pages of poetry or 20-25 pages of prose)
- two letters of recommendation
- \$30 application fee

Applications for the MFA Program are reviewed on a rolling basis. The admission period opens February 1 for the summer residency and September 15 for January admission. Applications for summer will be considered

until May 15 or as long as space is available. Applications for the spring semester will be considered until December 1 or as long as space is available.

Applicants accepted to the program will need to remit a \$150 nonrefundable tuition deposit within two weeks of acceptance. This deposit is applied toward the first semester's tuition costs.

To complete an application online, a link to the Graduate Admissions page can be found on the MFA Program website: www.ashland.edu/graduate/mfa.

Faculty & Administration

Administration

Nadya Williams, MFA Interim Director
nwilli30@ashland.edu

Dinah Ward, Program Coordinator
dward13@ashland.edu
(419) 207-4967 (office)

Faculty

Marcelo Hernandez Castillo, poetry/ creative nonfiction
Cass Donish, creative nonfiction / poetry
Adam Gellings, poetry
Jonathan Geltner, fiction
Kate Hopper, creative nonfiction
Steven Knepper, poetry
Terese Marie Mailhot, creative nonfiction
Thomas Mira y Lopez, creative nonfiction
Nayomi Munaweera, fiction
Tania Runyan, poetry
Joline Scott-Roller, Pedagogy
J. C. Scharl, poetry
Tess Taylor, poetry
Sarah Marie Wells, creative nonfiction
Naomi J. Williams, fiction

Program Requirements

Degree Tracks in Poetry, Fiction, or Creative Nonfiction

There are three degree tracks in the Ashland University MFA in Creative Writing. Students are admitted into the program in poetry, fiction, or creative nonfiction (science fiction/fantasy is a subgenre within fiction). The course requirements are the same in all tracks. All students in the program must complete three semesters of creative/critical reading and writing, one semester of thesis preparation, a thesis defense, and three intensive summer residencies. Students must accumulate 45 hours of class credit by completing all courses in the program.

Course Progression

Note that unlike what students may have done in their undergraduate programs, there are no courses to “choose” in the Ashland MFA (with the exception of students that choose the Pedagogy track). The sequence of courses is set and you will run through them in order. As this program was designed to focus on your writing, you can expect each course to help you build upon what you learned in your previous courses and for your writing to deepen.

Each non-residential (online) course during fall and spring semesters is 9 credit hours. Each summer residency is 3 credit hours. The MFA Program traditionally begins and ends with a summer residency; however, students may begin their course of study with the spring non-residential semester. Students must complete three summer residencies and four semesters of non-residential coursework to complete the degree.

Students Interested in Multiple Genres

Interested students may petition the MFA Director to take either ENG 632: Mentorship II, or ENG 633: Mentorship III, in their secondary genre rather than in their primary genre. For example, a student accepted into the MFA Program in poetry might petition the MFA Director to take one course, either ENG 632 or ENG 633, in fiction or creative nonfiction. Students must support such requests with writing samples in the secondary genre. In making decisions to grant or deny student requests to study in a second genre the MFA Director will consult appropriate MFA faculty. Decisions will be based on the student’s writing sample and on progress the student has made in their primary genre. Students taking courses in two genres must complete ENG 631: Mentorship I and ENG 701: MFA Thesis, and either ENG 632 or ENG 633, in their primary genre. Students may also elect to repeat ENG 632 or ENG 633 in a secondary genre during a fifth non-residential semester.

If a student is interested in doing a truly interdisciplinary program as their thesis, special considerations will be required (and welcomed).

Traditional Course Sequence (beginning in summer)

	Course Number and Title	Hours
<i>First Year</i> Summer	English 501: Residency I	3
Fall	English 631: Mentorship I (online, non-residential semester)	9
Spring	English 632: Mentorship II (online, non-residential semester)	9
<i>Second Year</i> Summer	English 502: Residency II	3
Fall	English 633: Mentorship III (online, non-residential semester)	9
Spring	English 701: Mentorship IV: MFA Thesis (online, non-residential semester)	9
Summer	English 503: Residency III	3
	Total Number of Credits	45

Non-Traditional Course Sequence (beginning in spring)

	Course Number and Title	Hours
<i>First Year</i> Spring	English 631: Mentorship I (online, non-residential semester)	9
Summer	English 501: Residency I	3
Fall	English 632: Mentorship II (online, non-residential semester)	9
<i>Second Year</i> Spring	English 633: Mentorship III (online, non-residential semester)	9
Summer	English 502: Residency II	3
Fall	English 701: Mentorship IV: MFA Thesis (online, non-residential semester)	9
Spring	Semester off: Students with SR grades continue work on theses.	
Summer	English 503: Residency III	3
	Total Number of Credits	45

Note that students who enter the MFA Program in January will need to take a semester off before completion of their final residency.

Pedagogy Course Sequence (further information on page 18)

	Course Number and Title	Hours
<i>First Year</i> Summer	English 501: Residency I	3
Fall	English 631: Mentorship I (online, non-residential semester)	5
	ENG 651: Composition/Rhetoric Pedagogy	3
Spring	English 632: Mentorship II (online, non-residential semester)	9
	ENG 652: Supervised Teaching (online semester, 1 credit)	1
	Teach 1 course, ENG 100 or 101, online in the Correctional Education Program, paid a supplemental contract (\$2,494 per 2021 rates)	
<i>Second Year</i> Summer	English 502: Residency II	3
Fall	English 633: Mentorship III (online, non-residential semester)	9
	Optional: Teach 1-2 course(s), ENG 100 or 101, online in the Correctional Education Program, paid a supplemental contract	
Spring	English 701: Mentorship IV: MFA Thesis (online, non-residential semester)	9
	Optional: Teach 1-2 course(s), ENG 100 or 101, online in the Correctional Education Program, paid a supplemental contract	
Summer	English 503: Residency III	3
	Total Number of Credits	45

Here's How the Online Semesters Work

Non-residential (online) courses in the MFA Program are designed for you to work individually with a faculty mentor and collectively with other students assigned to that same mentor. The success of the Ashland University MFA depends upon each student's individual relationship with their faculty mentor. For this reason, each faculty mentor works with no more than 5 students at a time.

Faculty will provide a syllabus with clear course guidelines including a reading schedule, a list of assigned texts, a weekly schedule for online discussion, and a timeline for submitting creative and critical work. The syllabus should be posted by the faculty mentor prior to the first day of class each semester and emailed to you about a month before the semester begins.

During your online semesters (courses ENG 631, ENG 632, and ENG 633), faculty mentors will respond to your packets of writing within two weeks of submission. During your final online semester (ENG 701), your faculty mentor will respond to your first draft thesis submission within 3-4 weeks; faculty mentors will respond to the rest of the semester's packet submissions within two weeks.

Your faculty mentor will facilitate online discussion about assigned reading and topics through an online forum of their choice. Most student work will be done in the online discussion forums and through email. Each faculty mentor will serve as a catalyst in stimulating threaded discussions of assigned reading and strategies of writing. Though faculty mentors will participate actively, students are expected to take a leadership role in online discussions. Students may be asked to serve as discussion leaders on assigned books and topics. While the exact nature of student participation in online discussion will be defined by each student's faculty mentor, all faculty mentors will require frequent exchanges among students about their work or about their assignments.

Other forms of contact with your faculty mentor will likely include Zoom, telephone, and/or email.

Grading the Online Classes

It is the discretion of faculty mentors to award students an "S" Satisfactory or "U" Unsatisfactory grade for the non-residential semester. Grades are based on the student's completion and quality of required creative and critical writing, response to assigned readings, and class participation in online discussions of assigned materials.

Course Descriptions

ENG 631: Mentorship I, 9 credit hours - or - 5 credit hours concurrent with ENG 651

Course Description

This course represents the first step in a program-long process of working toward the completion of a book of poems or prose (culminating in the MFA Thesis). Via the internet, each student will work individually with their faculty mentor, and collectively with student peers, to develop the craft of drafting the body of a book. Students will also develop skills in judiciously applying constructive criticism to improve the quality of their writing and skills in articulating constructive criticism of both published and student work. While students will actively engage in the revision process, the emphasis of the course will be on the generation of new material.

Student Learning Outcomes

1. Student will compose original creative work in their chosen genre, experimenting with literary techniques and approaches.
2. Student will apply revision techniques to improve the quality of their own writing.
3. Student will interpret literature in their genre.
4. Student will identify possible structures, content, and approaches toward the composition of a thesis-length manuscript in their genre.

Creative Writing Requirements

10-15 pages of prose, four times per semester, or 5-10 pages of poetry, four times per semester. Faculty mentors may count substantial revisions toward this total number of pages.

Critical Writing Requirements

In addition to completing required creative writing, students will write critically in response to books mutually selected by students and their mentors. The critical writing component of the course will involve submitting 2-3 short responses to reading, responses which incorporate and utilize literary terms, craft techniques, and/or critical approaches. Students will also submit a five-page self-reflective critical piece on their own work as a way to further familiarize themselves with critical / craft ideas and terminology and to begin to understand how critical / craft decisions are informing their own work as writers.

ENG 632: Mentorship II, 9 credit hours - or - 5 credit hours concurrent with ENG 651

Course Description

This course represents the second step in a program-long process of working toward the completion of a book of poems or prose (culminating in the MFA Thesis). Via the internet, each student will continue to develop the craft of drafting new poems or pieces of prose by working individually with a faculty mentor and collectively with student peers. In addition, students will work toward the completion of a group of poems or pieces of prose worthy of serving as the core of a book. While students will continually create new work, there will be an emphasis on the revision process and on the ability of students to articulate the nature and degree of aesthetic coherence in their own developing manuscripts, as well as in existing works of literature.

Student Learning Outcomes

1. Student will compose original creative work in their chosen genre, experimenting with literary techniques and approaches.
2. Student will apply revision techniques to improve the quality of their own writing.
3. Student will discuss literature in their genre via appropriate literary terminology.
4. Student will begin composing, compiling, and editing a thesis-length manuscript in their genre.

Creative Writing Requirements

10-15 pages of prose, four times per semester, or 5-10 pages of poetry, four times per semester. Faculty mentors may count substantial revisions toward this total number of pages.

Critical Writing Requirements

In addition to completing required creative writing, students will write critically in response to books mutually selected by students and their mentors. For ENG 632, students will complete 2-3 short responses to reading, responses which incorporate and utilize literary terms, craft techniques, and/or critical approaches.

Students will also submit a ten-page craft and/or critical and/or literary analysis essay guided by a clear thesis and utilizing a specific critical approach. The idea of this essay is to allow students to explore, in detail, a problem or problems they may be encountering in their own work by looking closely at how that problem or problems manifests in the work of others. (This should not specifically be about their own work.) This is a further step for first year students to continue their application of existing critical / craft ideas to their own work and reading.

ENG 633: Mentorship III, 9 credit hours - or - 5 credit hours concurrent with ENG 651

Course Description

This course represents the third step in a program-long process of working toward the completion of a book of poems or prose. Via the internet, students will continue to develop new writing by working individually with a faculty mentor and collectively with student peers. Students will also sharpen the ability to articulate traits, on the level of theme, form and/or style, that characterize the well-crafted books encountered in assigned reading and that characterize their own developing manuscripts. While students will actively work toward the creation of new prose or poems and will continue to revise individual works, there will be an emphasis on the ability to articulate key formal and thematic characteristics that contribute to the resonance and aesthetic integrity of a body of writing.

Student Learning Outcomes

1. Student will compose original creative work in their chosen genre, experimenting with literary techniques and approaches.
2. Student will apply revision techniques to improve the quality of their own writing and will effectively critique the work of others.
3. Student will evaluate literature in their genre via appropriate literary terminology.
4. Student will continue composing, compiling, and editing a thesis-length manuscript in their genre.
5. Student will identify the characteristics of their own creative work, especially their thesis, and the process by which that work came into being.

Creative Writing Requirements

10-15 pages of prose, four times per semester, or 5-10 pages of poetry, four times per semester. Faculty mentors may count substantial revisions toward this total number of pages.

Student should have a rough draft of their thesis assembled by the completion of this course. This rough draft will be due near the start of their 701 semester.

Critical Writing Requirements

In addition to completing required creative writing, students will write critically in response to books mutually selected by students and their mentors. During their 633 semester, students will complete a craft or critical essay on *their own work*, specific to issues and concerns they may have had in their writing. The specific subject of this essay will be worked out and agreed upon between the student and faculty member at the start of the course. The completed essay should total 10 pages of writing and should comprise a formal, well-structured craft / critical essay wherein the writer applies their own critical / craft ideas to their own work. The expectation is that this piece of writing would be a first step into the parallel work that many creative writers engage in, that of writing about writing.

ENG 701: MFA Thesis, 9 credit hours

Course Description

This course represents the fourth and culminating step in a program-long process of working toward the completion of a book of poems, essays, short stories, or a novella or memoir. Via the internet, students will further develop the craft of shaping a book-length collection of poems, creative nonfiction, or fiction by working individually with a faculty mentor and by working collectively with student peers. Though each student will actively work toward the creation of new poems or new narrative segments of nonfiction or fiction, and toward the revision of individual works, the primary emphasis of the course will be on developing the student's ability to shape a book-length collection of writing into an aesthetic construct that is at once informed by, and larger than, the sum of its parts. At the end of ENG 701 faculty mentors will recommend to the MFA Director those students ready to defend theses during ENG 503: Summer Residency III.

Student Learning Outcomes

1. Student will compose creative work in their chosen genre that displays mastery of the creative process.
2. Student will effectively revise their own thesis-length project and will effectively critique the work of others.
3. Student will complete the final draft of a thesis-length manuscript in their genre.
4. Student will analyze the characteristics of their own creative work, especially their thesis, and the process by which that work came into being.

Creative Writing Requirements

The major purpose of this semester is for students to complete their thesis.

The completion of the MFA thesis during ENG 701 represents the culminating step in a program-long process of writing and revising toward the completion of a book of poems or prose. Near the start of the semester, students will submit to their faculty mentors their thesis draft. Over the course of this semester, students must submit to their writing mentors 2-4 revisions of their entire manuscripts. The completed thesis should be approximately 125 pages of prose or 50-60 pages of poetry.

While student preferences will be considered in the assigning of faculty mentors, the MFA Program will determine faculty mentor assignments in order to make MFA courses most beneficial for the greatest number of students. Faculty may choose to assign student theses as texts for the course and/or books and other materials that can serve as models for structuring student manuscripts.

At the end of the semester, faculty will determine if the student's thesis qualifies as passing and will recommend student for their thesis defense at the summer residency.

Students in ENG 701 are expected to continue participating in online discussions and workshops while refining and finalizing their thesis.

Critical Writing Requirements

There are no formal critical writing assignments during the thesis semester; however, students are expected to participate regularly on discussion boards and in discussion with student peers and their faculty mentor.

In addition, faculty mentors should work with their students to begin their 5-page Thesis Introduction, which provides analysis of their own thesis, including major writing influences and themes.

Students will complete the following tasks in ENG 701

- Actively work on the creation and revision of new poems or new pieces of prose to extend and complete the thesis.
- Continue to lead and participate in online discussions and reading assigned texts.
- Continue to revise thesis following critiques from advisor.
- Finalize thesis for submission to advisor by end of semester.
- Submit final thesis to MFA Program Coordinator for review by the Faculty Thesis Committee within two weeks following the end of the semester. Students who receive an S-Satisfactory grade on the thesis are permitted an additional two weeks to revise the thesis before submitting it to the Program Coordinator. See program calendar in the back of this handbook for dates.
- Apply for graduation – visit www.ashland.edu/registrar for more information.

Passing ENG 701

Faculty mentors for ENG 701 will serve as thesis advisors through to the completion of their advisees' degrees. Thesis advisors will recommend for a thesis defense only those manuscripts that realize fully or largely the character of a volume informed by unifying aesthetic traits. Each student will define for a Faculty Thesis Committee attributes that contribute toward the integrity of the thesis as a volume of writing.

A thesis will be ready for a defense when it is clearly defined by one or more of the following:

- common controlling ideas or interaction between ideas;
- specific aesthetic effects that provide a sense of balance, order, or unity;
- distinct relationships of one poem to another, one essay to another, one story or narrative segment to another, in the body of the thesis as a whole.

Receiving the S (Satisfactory) grade in ENG 701 indicates that the faculty mentor recommends the thesis for defense. Faculty mentors may assign the SR (Satisfactory with Revision) grade to a nearly complete thesis that is of such quality that the student's advisor expects a passing grade will result after the student completes final revisions. The U (Unsatisfactory) grade will be used if the thesis shows little sign of promise, even with the possibility of further revision.

The Pedagogy Track (Graduate Teaching Assistantships)

What Is It?

Many writers make the bulk of their income via teaching and lectureships. Ashland's MFA Graduate Teaching Assistantship (GTA) represents a pathway into that world through pedagogy coursework and associated supervised (paid) teaching experience.

How to Apply

Interested students will file a statement of interest with the MFA Program Coordinator mfa@ashland.edu, expressing their desire to teach and offering some sense of their potential ability. Financial need, retention, likelihood of rendering a high-quality service in teaching undergraduates in an online environment, and the needs of online and correctional students will be considered in awarding assistantships.

The Sequence

Selected students must enroll and complete ENG 651, a 16 week, 3-credit course on composition pedagogy, taught by an Ashland University faculty member.

During the following semester, successful students will enroll in ENG 652: Supervised Teaching, a 1-credit course, and will be assigned their first section of composition taught to online students in AU's Correctional Education program. GTAs will teach either ENG 100 or ENG 101, depending on the need of the university.

During their teaching semester, GTAs will be closely supervised by an experienced English instructor. Students will meet bi-weekly online with their supervisor to gain instructor and peer feedback on lessons, classroom management, grading practices, and written feedback.

GTA Financial Package

Students will enroll for ENG 651 and 652 under the current MFA tuition and fee structure. Additionally, students teaching during their ENG 652 semester will be paid a supplemental contract for the one section of ENG 100 or 101 following the standard Correctional Education rates as indicated in the current Supplemental Contract Schedule.

Based on program needs, GTAs may teach as many as 5 courses over the course of the two years of study. Students have the opportunity to gain college-level teaching experience while earning \$2,494 per course (based on 2021 supplemental contract rates).

Sequence

An example GTA course sequence can be found on page 11 of this Handbook.

ENG 651: Composition/Rhetoric Pedagogy, 3 credit hours

Catalog description

This course focuses on the theory and practice of undergraduate reading and writing instruction, with an emphasis on the teaching of writing.

Course Content

The course will engage participants in discussion of philosophical and political issues in composition instruction; workshops on practice, including assignment and syllabus design, response to student writing and discussion leadership techniques; and reflection on our experiences in our own classrooms and with our own writing.

Student learning outcomes

Students should be able to perform the following tasks:

1. Discuss and evaluate theories and research relevant to the teaching and learning of writing.
2. Develop strategies to help composition students improve their writing, reading, and thinking.
3. Evaluate and defend their own teaching strategies in light of our insights into learning and literacy.
4. Discuss and analyze issues that arise as we put our theories into practice, referencing appropriate authorities.

Student assessment criteria

Instructors may make use of any or all of the following criteria:

1. Critical and analytical papers involving secondary scholarly sources and observations.
2. Seminar and/or online discussion.
3. Portfolio.

ENG 652: Supervised Teaching, 1 credit hour

Catalog description

This course offers students support during their first semester teaching composition to Ashland University undergraduates. The course focuses on effective and efficient teaching strategies, particularly in the online environment, including best practices for grading and giving feedback, classroom management, and lesson development.

Course content

Students will meet bi-weekly with instructor and peers via Zoom and/or Blackboard to gain instructor and peer feedback on lessons, classroom management, grading practices, and written feedback. Students will contribute to group discussions on teaching practices, submit written feedback to corrections students work for review, and produce other teaching materials for instructor and/or peer review, which may include a sample syllabus, lesson, and/or rubric.

As part of teaching at Ashland University, students will participate in and complete all pre-semester trainings provided by the Correctional Education platform and the First-Year Composition program. Students will complete a self-evaluation at the end of the semester.

Student learning objectives

- 1) Students will discuss their teaching methods with peers and instructor, as well as critique the feedback and grading methods of their peers
- 2) Students will apply intentional classroom management techniques in their classrooms
- 3) Students will integrate FERPA and University policy within their classrooms
- 4) Students will assess their own grading and feedback methods, as well as revise those methods as needed
- 5) Students will evaluate their own teaching practices

Student assessment criteria

The course will be graded Satisfactory/Unsatisfactory (S/U) by the instructor. In order to be graded Satisfactory, students must evidence active development of effective and efficient feedback practices, grading responsibilities according to Composition Program and English Department policies and guidelines, regular communication with the mentor, understanding and application of all FERPA and University policies, and completion of the First-Year Composition program's self-evaluation.

Summer Residencies

The Ashland MFA's summer residency is a period that you'll very much look forward to as it represents the only opportunity for students and faculty to work together in person. It is a magical time—challenging, inspiring, cordial—and one of the high points of our time together.

ENG 501 (your first residency) and ENG 502 (your second) are structured more or less the same, although the residencies themselves will have different programming, guests, and faculty. During ENG 503 (your third and final residency), you will defend your thesis, learn about publication, and then graduate from the program.

Note that students in ENG 501 and ENG 502 are required to send an electronic version of their manuscripts to the Program Coordinator approximately one month prior to the Summer Residency. Poetry packets should be no more than 10-15 pages. Creative nonfiction and fiction packets should be no more than 15-20 pages. Each manuscript should include page numbers. Students preparing to enter ENG 503, see the "MFA Thesis" section (page 25).

Course Descriptions

ENG 501: Summer Residency I

Catalog Description

During summer residencies (English 501, 502, and 503), students will work at Ashland University with Master of Fine Arts faculty and with visiting writers by attending workshops, lectures, seminars, readings, discussion groups, and individual conferences.

There will be three major components to the course: 1) Writers' Workshop/Mentor Tutorial Sessions; 2) Craft, Style, and Publishing Seminars; 3) Evening/Weekend Readings and Discussions. In addition, students will meet individually with their mentors to define a writing/reading project for the non-residential courses. There will also be new student orientation sessions, academic advising sessions, and computer support sessions.

Collegiality and the ability to work within a supportive MFA arts community is a criterion for passing English 501 and for remaining in academic good standing in the MFA Program.

Course Content

The course will be taught over intensive, in-person class meetings, and evening/weekend programs.

Students will use the residency to workshop existing creative work and to engage in constructive criticism of both published and student work. Intensive class meetings will be geared toward the writing process. Students will develop the ability to listen openly to the constructive criticism of their work and to consider possibilities for the future revision of their writing. Students will learn about the craft, theory, and publishing realities of their chosen genre by participating in the guest craft lectures, publishing seminars, and nightly readings by published writers.

Student Learning Objectives

- 1) Students will compose original creative work in their chosen genre.
- 2) Students will apply revision techniques to improve the quality of their writing.

- 3) Students will develop an understanding of literature in their genre and will utilize appropriate technical terminology in discussing and analyzing such literature.
- 4) Students will articulate reasons why individual pieces of student or published writing have or have not achieved a degree of aesthetic unity.

Critical Components

Much of the second week of residency will be devoted a critical/craft/literary professionalization bootcamp team taught and designed to prepare students for articulate discussion about writing and the arts.

Examples of topics might include: what is craft?, introduction to critical theory topics (and language), close-reading for writers (and readers), submitting to literary magazines, and so on.

ENG 502: Summer Residency II

Catalog Description

During summer residencies (English 501, 502, and 503), students will work at Ashland University with Master of Fine Arts faculty and with visiting writers by attending workshops, lectures, seminars, readings, discussion groups, and individual conferences.

There will be three major components to the course: 1) Writers' Workshop/Mentor Tutorial Sessions; 2) Craft, Style and Publishing Seminars; 3) Evening/Weekend Readings and Discussions. In addition, students will meet individually with their mentors to define a writing/reading project for the non-residential courses. There will also be academic advising sessions and computer support sessions.

Course Content

The course will be taught over intensive, in-person class meetings, and evening/weekend programs.

Students will use the residency to workshop existing creative work and to engage in constructive criticism of both published and student work. Intensive class meetings will be geared toward the writing process. Students will develop the ability to listen openly to the constructive criticism of their work and to consider possibilities for the future revision of their writing. Students will learn about the craft, theory, and publishing realities of their chosen genre by participating in the guest craft lectures, publishing seminars, and nightly readings by published writers.

Student Learning Objectives

- 1) Students will compose original creative work in their chosen genre.
- 2) Students will apply revision techniques to improve the quality of their writing.
- 3) Students will develop an understanding of literature in their genre and will utilize appropriate technical terminology in discussing and analyzing such literature.
- 4) Students will articulate reasons why individual pieces of student or published writing have or have not achieved a degree of aesthetic unity.
- 5) Students will assess the quality of their own work as they work toward assembling a thesis-length manuscript.
- 6) Students will develop an awareness of the publishing industry, including the process of submitting work for publication, the process of working with editors, and the process of exploring venues for the publication of their own work.

Critical Components

Much of the second week of residency will be devoted to deeper issues of professionalization and craft. This week will focus not only how to teach writing in a classroom situation but also how to articulate a craft talk of the variety that writers are asked to give regularly at conferences and events.

ENG 503: Summer Residency III

Catalog Description

During summer residencies (English 501, 502, and 503), students will work at Ashland University with Master of Fine Arts faculty and with visiting writers by attending workshops, lectures, seminars, readings, discussion groups, and individual conferences.

This exit residency will emphasize post-thesis concerns. Each student will defend their thesis before a faculty committee, participate in a thesis reading, and develop a deepening awareness of the publication industry through advisement from faculty, visiting writers, agents, and editors. There will be individual meetings with editors and agents, in addition to the regular three components of the summer residency: 1) Writers' Workshop/Mentor Tutorial Sessions 2) Craft, Style, and Publishing Seminars 3) Evening/Weekend Readings and Discussions. Emphases in the Writers' Workshop/Mentor Tutorial Sessions will vary but might typically involve a focus on methods of publication and navigation of the professional writing life, on new writing unrelated to the thesis, on outtakes from the thesis that might form the nucleus of a new book, or on the further development of the completed thesis into a publishable manuscript.

Course Content

The course will be taught over intensive, in-person class meetings, and evening/weekend programs.

Students will use the residency to workshop existing creative work and to engage in constructive criticism of both published and student work. Intensive class meetings will be geared toward the writing process. Students will develop the ability to listen openly to the constructive criticism of their work and to consider possibilities for the future revision of their writing. Students will learn about the craft, theory, and publishing realities of their chosen genre by participating in the guest craft lectures, publishing seminars, and nightly readings by published writers.

Student Learning Objectives

- 1) Students will compose original creative work in their chosen genre.
- 2) Students will apply revision techniques to improve the quality of their writing.
- 3) Students will develop an understanding of literature in their genre and will utilize appropriate technical terminology in discussing and analyzing such literature.
- 4) Students will articulate reasons why individual pieces of student or published writing have or have not achieved a degree of aesthetic unity.
- 5) Students will present a thesis-length manuscript for evaluation.
- 6) Student will analyze and evaluate the characteristics of their own creative work, especially their thesis, and the process by which that work came into being.
- 7) Students will develop an awareness of the publishing industry, including the process of submitting work for publication, the process of working with editors, and the process of exploring venues for the publication of their own work.

Critical Components

Much of the second week of residency will be devoted to the final professionalization bootcamp. Focus will include panel proposals, publishing, agents, craft talks, the hustle, and so on. Furthermore, students at this level may present short craft talks, panels, and such in the afternoons.

The MFA Thesis

The completion of the MFA thesis during ENG 701 represents the culminating step in a program-long process of writing and revising toward the completion of a book of poems or prose. At the end of ENG 701, the thesis advisor determines whether or not to recommend the thesis for defense at the student's final residency (ENG 503). Refer to "Passing 701" (page 17) for the thesis advisor's recommendation guidelines.

Submitting the Thesis

Within two weeks following the completion of the spring semester of ENG 701, the following material needs to be submitted to the Program Coordinator as three separate files.

1. Final draft of thesis, approximately 50-60 pages of poetry or 110-125 pages of prose. Students who complete a semester of cross-genre study may petition to submit a multi-genre manuscript.
2. List of 50 texts (most of which are books) that have informed the student's growth as a writer. **List texts alphabetically by author.** It is not necessary to include more than title and author. Texts are not limited to assigned readings within the coursework or duration of the program. (This is an internal document only and is not a formal part of the thesis.)
3. **Five-page (double-spaced)** introduction in which the student defines ways a smaller (5-10) select group of texts informed the process of developing the thesis. Each student should think of this essay as the act of defining a literary genealogy, in the form of 5-10 texts, from which the thesis descends. Students should define in this paper specific effects or techniques that they have learned through the experience of reading particular authors and particular texts. (This is an internal document only and is not a formal part of the thesis.)

Submission of the thesis as outlined here replaces the workshop packets due prior to Residency III (ENG 503) unless some other plan/project has been discussed with the summer workshop faculty.

Formatting Guidelines

- Margins should be set at 1" all around
- Title page should center the following:
 - Title of thesis
 - "A Thesis Submitted to the Faculty of the Master of Fine Arts in Creative Writing Program at Ashland University"
 - by [Author]
 - "In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Master of Fine Arts"
 - Month and Year of Graduation (August)
- Table of contents
- Pagination
 - No page number should appear on the title page.
 - Page numbers should appear in the bottom right hand corner of each page.
 - Pages that occur prior to the body of text (acknowledgements, dedication page, table of contents, etc.) should use roman numerals (i, ii, etc.) as page numbers.
 - Each page in the body of text should be numbered using Arabic numbers (1, 2, etc.).
- Electronic version of thesis should be submitted to the Program Coordinator as a PDF.

Prose Thesis Formatting Guidelines

- 110-125 pages
- Double-spaced in Times New Roman or comparable font, 12 point

Poetry Thesis Formatting Guidelines

- Approximately 50-60 pages
- Single-spaced in Times New Roman or comparable font, 12 point

Thesis Committee

Each thesis committee will consist of the committee chair, the student's thesis advisor, and two other MFA faculty. Members of thesis committees will have read and evaluated theses prior to scheduled defense dates.

Thesis Defense

Each graduating student will present a 45-minute defense in front of a Thesis Committee.

1. **Introductory remarks:** The thesis defense will begin with a ten-minute extemporaneous introduction. If the defending student's introduction exceeds ten minutes the chair of the Faculty Thesis Committee will bring the student's introductory remarks to a close. Defending students' introductory remarks may draw on ideas from the previously submitted 5-page written introductions, but students should not merely read their introductions (the Thesis Committee will have already read the written introduction prior to the thesis defense). The extemporaneous ten-minute introduction should supplement and enhance the written introduction.
2. **Questions from the Thesis Committee** will follow the student's introductory remarks and will last for the remaining 35 minutes of the defense. Some questions may involve a discussion of the thesis in relation to the defending student's reading of other texts. In forming questions about the development of the student's thesis in relation to other texts, the Thesis Committee will focus exclusively on the student's 5-page written introduction and on the student's list of 50 texts that have informed the development of the thesis.
3. Thesis defenses are closed to guests except by special arrangement with the Director.
4. The Thesis Committee will respond to each thesis with a decision shortly after the thesis defense.

Passing the Thesis Defense

The faculty thesis committee will determine the success or failure of a defense. Students will be expected to define and analyze the characteristics of their collection of prose or poetry and the process by which that collection came into being. During the defense, each student will articulate the thematic, formal or stylistic effects that characterize their own volume of writing. Each defending student will also define the way in which critical feedback from faculty and student peers helped shape the growth of their book. Each student will articulate the relationship—if any—between the shaping of the thesis and any critical writing or reading experience the student completed in the MFA Program.

After the Thesis Defense

1. *Graduating Student Reading* – Each student passing the Thesis Defense will present a ten-minute thesis reading.
2. *MFA Graduation Reception* – Students approved for graduation following the Thesis Defense will be recognized in a graduation reception near the end of the residency. Each student's thesis advisor will formally introduce their advisees and present them each with an MFA certificate (diplomas will not be formally presented until the graduation ceremony).
3. *Bound Thesis* – The student's final thesis will be bound for the Ashland University library's collection. Additional copies may be purchased by the student for their own personal use at \$30 per copy. The program will assume the cost of the University's copy of the thesis. A final electronic copy of the thesis must be submitted to the Program Coordinator as an archival copy following the residency.

Requirements for Graduation

Each student who applies for graduation must have completed all required courses other than ENG 503: Summer Residency III and obtained the recommendation of their faculty mentor (in ENG 701: MFA Thesis) for a thesis defense. At the conclusion of ENG 701: MFA Thesis, faculty mentors will nominate theses deemed of sufficient quality to merit a defense. Students obtaining the nomination of their faculty mentors will then enroll in ENG 503: Summer Residency III to defend their theses during their last summer residency. Passing the thesis defense and ENG 503 is required for graduation from the MFA Program.

Other MFA Resources

To maintain the sense of community that has developed during summer residencies, the MFA program strives to provide a variety of ways to keep students and faculty connected and informed throughout the non-residential semesters. As social networking and electronic communications continue to increase in the world, the program is working to incorporate and streamline these communication devices to best serve students and the community.

Website

The MFA program website is used to promote upcoming summer residency details for prospective and current students, as well as to host other important program information. Faculty bios, visiting writer bios, overviews of the program, and recent faculty, staff, and student activity is all available on the website:

<http://www.ashland.edu/mfa>

Blackboard MFA Community Group

The MFA Community Group is a program-wide section of the course software. It is available for the informal use of all students, staff, and faculty. A program-wide discussion forum is available for students to interact from a cross-genre and classroom perspective. This is also where sample critical essays and thesis materials are saved, as well as thesis-specific information. This site can be found at <http://ashland.blackboard.com>.

Substack (Formerly a Blog)

The MFA Substack (formerly a blog) features a monthly newsletter to which students and alumni are invited to submit content. Announcements include special events; calls for submissions and contests; news about upcoming residencies; and accomplishments of faculty, students, alumni, and staff. [AU's MFA in Creative Writing | Substack](#)

Twitter and Facebook

You can find us on Twitter and Facebook! Make sure to follow/friend us so we can keep you informed of program news—and also let us know what's happening with you!

With each of these tools, the program's goal is to continue demonstrating to the current students, alumni, prospective students, university, and the larger writing community that Ashland is a wonderful and unique place to practice the art of creative writing. Let the program administrators know if there are additional ideas or information to include or promote via these resources.

Academic Policies

Transfer Credits

Per AU policy, no more than 9 credit hours of graduate creative writing classes can be transferred into the program.

Time Limits

The minimum length to complete the program is two years and two weeks. The maximum length to complete the program is four years and six months. Students absent from the program for a year or longer must complete a form required by the Admissions Office to enroll in classes again. Students who have exceeded the maximum time allotted must reapply for admission. Any credits earned prior to readmission cannot be used toward the fulfillment of the degree.

Waivers of Degree Requirements

Waivers of degree requirements will be granted rarely. Any such waivers must be approved by the MFA Faculty Committee. Requests for waivers must be submitted in writing to the MFA Director.

Course Repeat Policy

Any student receiving U (Unsatisfactory) for a course will be given the opportunity to retake the course. Both first and second grades will appear on the student's transcript.

Students may elect to take any course in the program a second time. Both first and second grades will appear on the student's transcript.

Non-Degree Seeking Students

People who do not wish to receive college credit for coursework in the MFA program may apply as non-degree students for the summer residency or for non-residential semesters. Non-degree students must submit a writing sample in addition to completing the graduate school's requirements for admission. There is no application fee for non-degree seeking students.

Grades

Courses will be graded as follows:

S—*Satisfactory*: applies to performance equivalent of B- or higher

U—*Unsatisfactory*: applies to performance equivalent of C+ or lower

SR—*Satisfactory with Revision*: a grade option available only for English 701: MFA Thesis

The SR-Satisfactory with Revision Grade

The "SR" grade indicates that the thesis shows promise and should be of sufficient quality to pass following substantial revision. Students receiving the "SR" grade in the spring for ENG 701: MFA Thesis will have four weeks to complete thesis revisions if they intend to graduate that summer. The student's faculty mentor for ENG 701 will review thesis revisions within one week of submission and consult with one other MFA faculty member before deciding whether or not to change an "SR" grade to S-Satisfactory.

If the faculty mentor decides revisions to the thesis are inadequate, the student is not eligible to graduate during the immediate summer residency. The student will have until September 15 to complete satisfactory revisions

to the thesis, at which point the student's thesis advisor will again consult with another MFA faculty member prior to deciding whether the thesis has been completed successfully. If the thesis has been completed successfully, the student is eligible to apply for graduation as outlined above.

If the thesis is not yet certified as complete by September 15, the student has the following two options: First, the student may choose to retake ENG 701 and work with a new thesis advisor in fulfilling all requirements for the course. Alternatively, after September 15, the student may choose to work independently toward the completion of their thesis. In this scenario, the student's thesis advisor will no longer be involved in recommending the student's thesis for a defense but will serve on any defense committee that may eventually review the completed thesis. All students exercising the second option must submit revised theses to the MFA Director by March 1. The MFA Director and one other MFA faculty member will then decide whether to change the SR (Satisfactory with Revision) grade to S (Satisfactory) or U (Unsatisfactory). An SR grade that is not resolved by March 1 reverts to a U grade.

Students who take ENG 701 during the fall semester and receive the "SR" grade will have until March 1 to make satisfactory revisions to the thesis. The same procedure for reviewing an "SR" grade applies in this instance. If the first review is deemed inadequate, the student will have until the end of the first week of June to complete satisfactory revisions. If by this date the thesis has been completed successfully, the student is eligible to apply for graduation as outlined above. If the thesis is not yet certified as complete by the end of the first week of June, the student shall either retake ENG 701 or work independently toward the completion of their thesis. All students exercising the second option must submit revised theses to the MFA Director by September 15. The MFA Director and one other MFA faculty member will then decide whether to change the SR (Satisfactory with Revision) grade to S (Satisfactory) or U (Unsatisfactory). An SR grade that is not resolved by March 1 reverts to a U grade. In this scenario, the student's thesis advisor will no longer be involved in recommending the student's thesis for a defense but will serve on any defense committee that may eventually review the completed thesis.

The maximum time to complete the program is four years and six months, as defined in the MFA time limits above.

Other Grades:

I—Incomplete: may be given when students are not able to complete the coursework due to illness, accidents, or other emergencies. This grade applies to work of acceptable quality when the full amount is not completed. It is never applied to unsatisfactory work. The required work in non-residential mentorship classes must be completed within three months of the completion of the course. In Residencies I & II (ENG 501 & 502), students receiving an Incomplete must repeat the course. In Residency III (ENG 503), at the discretion of the Program Director, students receiving an Incomplete must either repeat the course or submit the remaining required work within three months of course completion. In all cases, the I grade becomes a U if not completed within the time frame allotted.

K—Transfer: credit accepted in transfer. Courses are recorded on the student's permanent academic record. (A maximum of 9 credit hours may be transfer credits.)

W—Withdrawn: assigned for official withdrawals.

Academic Good Standing

To remain in good standing in the program, students must receive a grade of S for each course previously taken. Students who receive a U grade for a course will be placed on academic probation. Students placed on

academic probation will be given the opportunity to retake the course for which they have been assigned a U. Upon receiving a grade of S for the retaken course, such students will return to the state of being in good standing in the program.

Students who receive the grade U for two courses will be subject to a dismissal review by the MFA Faculty Committee. Such students will appear before the MFA Faculty Committee to plead their cases. The MFA Faculty Committee may grant such students the opportunity to retake both courses for which they have been assigned the grade U. The Committee will determine by vote whether or not to dismiss.

Students who receive the grade U for three courses will be dismissed automatically from the program without possibility of review or reinstatement.

Satisfactory Academic Progress Policy

The following is the policy of the Ashland University Graduate School:

Federal regulations require that an institution develop and enforce a policy for standards of satisfactory academic progress for students who receive financial aid. These standards must be the same or stricter than the standards the institution has for students not receiving aid. This policy is applied to graduate students receiving federal assistance at Ashland University. It should be noted that this policy is separate from the academic policy administered by the Academic Standards and Graduation Committee. Students may be allowed to enroll at Ashland University but may not be eligible to receive financial aid due to academic deficiencies.

Interpretation and Enforcement

The Director of Financial Aid will have primary responsibility for the interpretation and enforcement of this policy. Unusual issues related to this policy may be directed to the Financial Aid Committee for consultation.

Qualitative Requirements

MFA students must achieve a cumulative S-Satisfactory grade to meet eligibility requirements for financial aid. Students who receive a grade of U-Unsatisfactory in all courses during any term will immediately lose eligibility for financial aid. In order to continue receiving financial aid, the student must appeal to the Financial Aid Office (see below).

Appeals of Financial Aid Decision

A student who is ineligible for financial aid due to not meeting the requirements of this policy may submit a written letter of appeal to the Financial Aid Committee via the Director of Financial Aid. The committee will review the student's appeal and make a final determination as to whether the student will be offered financial aid for another term considering any unusual or extenuating circumstances which may include, but are not limited to, the following:

- A. Illness
- B. Injury
- C. Severe mental or emotional stress
- D. Physical or mental hardship

In the event of unusual and/or extenuating circumstances, the Financial Aid Committee may place the student on Financial Aid Probation for another loan term. During this term, the student will be eligible to receive financial aid. The student's academic status will be reevaluated at the end of the term to determine if the student has met the required standards.

Financial aid policies and programs are subject to change under the direction of the Board of Trustees.

Graduate Student Conduct Code

All MFA students, faculty, and staff are expected to be supportive members of a constructive arts community.

Building a Community of Respect

The Ashland University Student Conduct Board strives to build a community of respect. To encourage Ashland University students to organize and unify their experiences into a workable and satisfying philosophy of life, we, as a community:

- Respect new ideas.
- Emphasize personal development by encouraging the examination and discussion of differing opinions.
- Support the worth and dignity of each individual.
- Promote justice and compassion on our campus and in our world.
- Enjoy Ashland University's rich cultural, ethnic, and racial diversity.
- Celebrate the heritage of the institution, affirming both tradition and innovative change.
- Teach the spirit of excellence and integrity through scholarship, research, and service

If you feel your student rights have been violated, you may initiate a complaint. A Conduct Report may be filed by any member of the University community for violations at any level of regulations.

For more information, please see the Ashland University Student Handbook available from the Office of Safety Services: <https://www.ashland.edu/safety-services>.

Collegiality

Community is central to this program's success. A measure of trust and mutual respect is a crucial element for the workshop experience. Therefore collegiality and the ability to work within a supportive MFA arts community is a criterion for passing any and all MFA courses and for remaining in academic good standing in the MFA Program.

Students (or faculty) whose words or actions undermine this program's sense of collegiality and community will be issued a warning from the Program Director and observed closely for further violations. If the individual continues to disrupt the learning environment, they may be asked to leave the program. If this occurs during a summer residency, tuition and meal plan costs will not be refunded, but there may be a partial refund issued for campus housing if keys and access cards are turned in properly. Tuition refunds and grading policies set by the university will be followed for the longer non-residential semesters.

Specific actions or situations that justify expulsion include, but are not limited to:

- racist, sexist, or other statements of intolerance, including comments or behaviors that may be interpreted as microaggressions
- false accusations against fellow students or faculty members
- demonstrated lack of respect for fellow students and/or faculty members and their art
- classroom disruption
- physical threats
- hostile comments or actions in person or online
- theft or blatant destruction of personal or campus property

Students with concerns should first discuss these with a faculty member, the Program Coordinator, or the Program Director. The administrative staff will then defer to Ashland University's Student Complaint Policy. In situations where students feel they are in danger, immediate action may be taken without a warning stage, and campus security will be called in to assist.

In essence, all in our writing community are expected to be kind and respectful. The work of being a writer is that of being an empathy machine, which is work that should manifest itself in our daily encounters.

Sexual Harassment Policy

Ashland University promotes an environment free of sexual harassment and will not tolerate conduct by any individual that harasses a student, disrupts or interferes with a student's academic performance, or creates an intimidating, offensive, or hostile environment.

Sexually harassing or offensive conduct toward MFA students, guests, faculty, administrators, staff, and other University personnel is prohibited.

Prohibited conduct includes but is not limited to:

- Sexual flirtations, touching, advances, or propositions;
- Sexually explicit language or gestures;
- Sexually graphic or suggestive comments about an individual's dress or body;

- Contributing to an offensive overall environment, including the use of vulgar language, the presence of sexually explicit photographs or other materials, and the telling of sexual jokes or stories;
- Explicit or implicit threats or comments that an individual may be affected in a tangible way for refusing to engage in sexually-related conduct.

Ashland MFA faculty and staff are required to report to the MFA Director and to the Director of Human Resources any actions or words that constitute sexual harassment. Sexual harassment complaints or related issues involving students should also be reported to the University's Vice President for Student Affairs.

Student Appeals Policy

The following is the policy of the Ashland University Graduate School:

Students who have questions about instructional faculty performance or conduct should follow the procedure listed below. Any appeals must be initiated no later than the end of the semester following that in which the issue arose:

1. The student should consult the faculty member in question. It is only after this approach has been attempted that further recourse is appropriate. No appeal will be heard until this initial step has been taken, unless the complaint involved conduct that the student does not feel comfortable raising with the faculty member. In this case, the student may initiate the complaint by writing directly to the director of the graduate program as described in step 2 of this process.
2. If consultation with the faculty member in question does not produce satisfactory results, the student should submit their appeal in writing to the Director of the graduate program. The written appeal should specify the details and circumstances that justify the appeal and state the action or decision sought by the student.
3. If the Director of the graduate program, after having consulted with the individual who is the subject of the complaint, denies the student's appeal or complaint, the student may submit a copy of the appeal to the Dean of the academic college in which the graduate program is housed.
4. The Dean will review the information presented, make such inquiries as necessary, and render a judgment. If the student is dissatisfied with the Dean's decision, the student may make final appeal to the Provost.
5. If a written appeal is made to the Provost, the Provost will schedule a meeting including the student, the faculty member in question, and a Review Committee consisting of the academic graduate Program Chair and the academic Dean. The Provost, in consultation with the Review Committee, will make a final decision on the appeal or complaint and will specify what action, if any, is required by the student, the faculty member and/or the university.

Tuition

See the website for the current academic year's tuition and fees.

Tuition Refund Policy

Students who withdraw from ENG 501, 502, & 503 (Summer Residencies) prior to the start of the residency will receive a 100% tuition refund. No tuition refund for a summer residency will be available once the residency has begun.

The refund schedule for ENG 631, 632, 633 & 701 will follow the Ashland University tuition refund policy. Inquiries should be directed to the Ashland University Business Office at busoff@ashland.edu or 419.289.5022.

Financial Aid

Ashland University participates in the Federal Family Education Loan Program. Under this program, Federal Stafford Loans are available for all eligible students enrolled in Master's Degree-Granting Programs to provide students with help to pay for their Ashland University education. In addition, there are private education loan programs available for MFA students.

Financial aid will not be processed until students are accepted into the MFA Program. However, prospective students may begin the financial aid application process prior to acceptance to ensure that all forms have been received by the Financial Aid Office and are ready to be processed as soon as students receive their acceptance letters.

A separate AU Summer Session Loan Application (for the Summer Residency) is required in addition to the AU Graduate/Post-Baccalaureate Loan Application for MFA students in order to access federal loan funding for the Summer Residency and for classes taken during the regular academic year. In addition, the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) must be completed each year.

For further information about federal and private loans, application procedures, and required forms, please see the Ashland University Financial Aid webpage: <https://www.ashland.edu/financial-aid>.

AU Graduate Writing Center

The writing center has expanded services to become the Ashland Multiliteracy Center for Writing, Speaking, and Digital Communication, or AMuLit Center for short. The AMuLit Center is a free service available for students in graduate degree programs at Ashland University. At the AMuLit Center, you will receive one-on-one feedback from one of our professional graduate consultants on any project that involves communication - essays, presentations, literature reviews, poster presentations, conference proposals, and much more! All graduate consultants have a graduate degree and extensive experience with writing center theory and practice. The aim of our service is to support and mentor students as they explore ways to improve their graduate-level academic writing and communication skills. All consultations are confidential.

Scheduling an Appointment

Because the majority of graduate students prefer the flexibility of asynchronous (not live) online appointments, **our default type of appointment for graduate students is asynchronous.** To schedule an asynchronous appointment, use our online scheduler, WOnline, www.ashland.mywconline.com. Within 48 hours of your scheduled appointment, one of our graduate consultants will review your appointment and email you feedback. Graduate students can request a synchronous (live) appointment by emailing amulitcenter@ashland.edu.

How We Can Help

Our masters' qualified graduate consultants can help you with the following issues:

- Provide constructive feedback on your ideas, outlines and drafts
- Provide help with improving organization and structure
- Provide feedback to improve word flow, clarity, readability
- Provide feedback on APA or other formal style guidelines, including in-text citation and documentation
- Provide feedback on grammar and punctuation errors

Please remember, however, that our graduate consultants are not permitted to do the following:

- Graduate consultants cannot "fix" or correct errors--they can identify them and point you to resources for help
- Graduate consultants cannot be content experts in your discipline. GWAs are masters-qualified experts in writing. If you provide an assignment guide, GWAs can let you know if you seem to have met the basic requirements; however, they cannot tell you whether you have gotten your content "right." Consult your professor for help with that.
- Graduate consultants cannot write your work for you or serve as editors/proofreaders. They are here for your guidance and support only.
- Be available at the last minute, if you have not completed your work early enough to get feedback in a timely manner.

Student Accessibility Center (SAC)

The Student Accessibility Center (<https://www.ashland.edu/student-accessibility-center>) at Ashland University collaborates with students who have disabilities in order to coordinate accommodations and services that enable equal access to education and university life.

Accommodations include, but are not limited to, the following:

Academic accommodations – extended time for exams, access to a distraction reduced testing area, access to text-to-speech software, alternative versions of textbooks, etc.

Classroom accommodations – Sign Language Interpreters, attendance policy modification, accessible seating as requested, access to record lectures, etc.

Assistive Technology/Equipment – digital recorders, mobile scooter, amplification system, etc.

Requesting Accommodations

- Students requesting accommodations should contact SAC
- Students may be requested to provide third-party verification documentation - IEP & ETR; 504 Plan; healthcare provider verification letter; completed disability verification form -available on the web page at: <https://www.ashland.edu/administration/academics/student-accessibility-center>.
- Schedule Intake meeting – SAC will contact students to schedule once any necessary documentation is received
- For additional information please refer to the online orientation Student Accessibility Center Module and/or the Handbook on the SAC webpage

SAC Director: Silvia Henriss, shenriss@ashland.edu

Using AU Technology

Username and Password

Ashland University will assign you a username. Your username is also the prefix to your AU email address. Your username and password are used for all University systems including email, network access while on campus, and Blackboard.

Ashland University will assign you a temporary password based on your student id number. (For example, if your student ID number is 1234567, your initial password would be au-1234567.) You will need to change your password after your initial login. You should also sign up for self-service password reset at <http://pass.it.ashland.edu>. After completion, any time you forget your password or your password expires, you can click on “forgot password” and you will be linked to the password reset page. Passwords expire every 180 days.

AU Self-Service

The AU Self-Service is a one-stop shop for Ashland University students. To access the portal, visit <https://selfservice.ashland.edu>. Login with your current username and password. Via Self-Service you can access information on financial aid, grades, and student accounts. (Transcripts may also be ordered through the registrar’s office after graduation.)

Self-Service is an avenue for students to view and edit their university account. The following information can be accessed through WebAdvisor:

- Financial Aid Awards
- Forms Needed to Complete Financial Aid Process
- Student Account Balance
- Tuition Payments
- Transcript at AU

Financial Aid Forms & Awards

Once you have submitted your Financial Aid documents, you may view the status of your award online through WebAdvisor. WebAdvisor also allows you to see if there are any necessary documents missing from

your application. If you have a problem with your financial aid award, feel free to contact the Financial Aid Office at 800.882.1548 x5003.

Student Accounts

WebAdvisor allows you to view the balance of your student account. *All student accounts must be paid in full prior to the start of each semester.* There are a number of options for paying off the balance on your account. Visit the Ashland University Business Office website for more information on making payments online or in person, tuition payment plans, corporate reimbursement, and other student accounts questions.

Graduation Application

You should apply for graduation in the spring semester prior to your last residency. Follow the instructions set forth by the Registrar. Graduation applications are due by May 1. There is a \$100 graduation application fee that will be added to your student account. Applications may be submitted after May 1, but a late fee will be applied.

If you are interested in walking in the University graduation ceremony, you will need to indicate that you plan on attending the graduation ceremony when you apply. MFA students graduate in August and are eligible to walk in the December graduation ceremony. Caps, gowns, and hoods are ordered through the Campus Bookstore.

Ashland University Email

Login Information

1. Outlook mail and calendar are accessible on your computer via the MyAU portal on ashland.edu. Click the button for AU Email (Microsoft)
2. Enter your username and password. It is the same one you will use to access Blackboard, the portal, and the wireless network on campus.

As per University policy, all program communication between faculty, students, and university personnel must take place via Ashland University email accounts. Please note that University offices are in no way obligated to accept a student's failure to check email as a legitimate excuse for non-compliance with instructions, requests, or appointments.

Information Technology Help Desk

Students can receive technological support by calling the Information Technology Help Desk at 419.289.5405. The Information Technology Help Desk is open for calls Monday-Friday, 8 a.m.-5 p.m. (except during university holidays).

Student Health Insurance

MFA students are eligible for the Ashland University student health insurance plan. For more information, visit <https://tinyurl.com/auinsurance>.

MFA Program Calendar

Summer/Fall 2024	
June 15	ENG 501 & 502 writing packets due - Students put in folder assigned to their course
June 25	Students receive syllabus from faculty mentor - Read assigned books in advance. Faculty: Email Program Coordinator an editable copy.
July 25-August 5	Summer Residency
August 4	MFA Graduation Celebration
August 18	Faculty: Summer Grades Due to the Registrar's Office by 12 p.m. EST
August 18	Faculty: Student Progress Forms via Google Form due to Program Coordinator
August 20	Final Thesis Due to Program Coordinator for Library Binding and Archiving
August 22	Students receive syllabus from faculty mentor - Read assigned books in advance. Faculty: Email Program Coordinator an editable copy.
August 29	Fall Non-Residential Semester Begins: Students <i>must</i> report to faculty mentor by posting to their assigned online discussion groups the first day of class.
September 2	No Class: Labor Day
September 16	Last Day to Drop Without Grade on Transcript
October 14	No Class: Fall Break
October 15	Cross-Genre Applications Due
October 15	Thesis Advisor Preference Forms Due for Spring 701 Students
November 15	Last day to Withdraw from a Class
November 23-25	No Class: Thanksgiving Break
December 9	End of Fall Non-Residential Semester: Final manuscripts are due to faculty mentors.
December 15	Faculty: Student Progress Forms via Google Form due to Program Coordinator
December 21	Faculty: Semester Grades Due to the Registrar's Office by 12 p.m. EST
December 22-January 4	Campus and Program Offices Closed

Spring 2025	
January 2	Students receive syllabus from faculty mentor - Read assigned books in advance. Faculty: Email Program Coordinator an editable copy.
January 6	Spring Non-Residential Semester Begins: Students <i>must</i> report to faculty mentors by posting to their assigned online discussion groups.
January 20	No Class: Martin Luther King Day
January 24	Last Day to Drop Class Without Grade on Transcript
March 3-7	No Class: Spring Break
March 15	Cross-Genre Applications Due
March 15	Thesis Advisor Preference Forms Due for Next Academic Year's Fall 701 Students
April 1	Thesis Committee Forms Due for Previous Fall & Spring 701 Students
April 9	Last Day to Withdraw
April 17-21	Easter Break (including Monday)
April 25	End of Spring Non-Residential Semester
May 1	ENG 701 Students: Graduation Applications Due - Done through Registrar's Office
May 7	Faculty: Student Progress Forms due to Program Coordinator
May 7	Faculty: Semester Grades Due to the Registrar's Office by 12 p.m. EST
May 15	Previous Fall & Spring ENG 701 Students: Final Draft of Thesis + Book List + Introduction of Thesis Due to Program Coordinator Electronically
Mid-May	ENG 501 Student Orientation via Zoom
June 10	SR-Grade Students: Thesis Revisions Due to Faculty Mentor

Program & University Contact Information

MFA in Creative Writing Program
Ashland University
401 College Avenue
Ashland, OH 44805
mfa@ashland.edu

Nadya Williams, MFA Interim Director
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Dinah Ward
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(419) 207-4967

Information Technology Help Desk
419.289.5405

Registrar's Office
419.289.5666
regis@ashland.edu

Student Accounts Office
800.882.1548 Ext. 5022
busoff@ashland.edu

Financial Aid
800.882.1548
gradfinaid@ashland.edu

Student Accessibility Center
419.289.5904
au-sac@ashland.edu

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