Welcome from the Graduate Students

Welcome to UMass Amherst’s MFA for Poets and Writers! We are so happy to have you joining us in Western Massachusetts, and we’re excited to have you as a part of this amazing program!

This handbook is a collaborative effort between MFA students, faculty, and staff, and its goal is to respond to some of the questions we couldn’t find answers to when we got here. The book aspires to ease your transition into the program, provide a comprehensive overview of the program, as well as offer contact information for who to reach out to if you require further guidance or clarification.

Many have participated in the creation of this handbook, and we appreciate their contributions. If you have ideas about what we could include in future versions, please contact the MFA Graduate Students Organization. Additional thanks must be extended to Jennifer Jacobson, Sabina Murray, Barbara McGlynn, and members of the English Graduate Organization.

Enjoy the Pioneer Valley, and we’ll see you soon!

Bukem Reitmayer
Rhean Westerlund
Aliza Sajjad
Elizabeth Mikesch
Rachel Hinkel
Welcome from the MFA Director

We could all use a little clarity and it is the sincere hope of the members of the UMass MFA for Poets and Writers—students, faculty, and staff—that this handbook will provide some of that. As you can see, the handbook covers a wide range of material. Course requirements are laid out, as well as some internship opportunities, and I point to these two items—perhaps extremes—because it is hoped that not only will this handbook allow you to accomplish the basics necessary for graduation, but also that it will inspire you.

The Student Handbook is a realization of a concerted effort on the part of the MFA GSO—it is a document created for students by students. With some irony, I consider the recent past where—in a program created to explore the possibilities of the written word—one relied upon an oral tradition for guidance through the regulations. So here is the information, as complete as it could be, but also a volume that—like the dictionary—will respond to the changes in culture. You too can contribute to this handbook.

As with anything in the world of writing, one must know the rules before one can break them. Or, in the case of this handbook, one must know the rules before one can successfully complete the requirements of the degree. But keep in mind that we don’t like people wandering around in the dark, so if the answer is not here, please do not hesitate to ask me, Jennifer, Barbara, and the MFA faculty.

Sincerely,

Sabina Murray
Director
MFA for Poets and Writers
Degree Requirements

Summary

MFA students earn a total of 60 credits. These credits typically appear as follows:

- Writing Workshops (27 credits)
- Modern & Contemporary Requirement (9 credits)
- Thesis Credits (6 credits)
- Individualized Study (18 credits)

Writing Workshops (27 credits)

Writing workshops (English 780 & 781) comprise almost half of the required credits for the MFA degree and are the cornerstone of the MFA experience. Topics and structure vary. Students are encouraged to take workshops with different faculty in order to gain a variety of perspectives on one’s work and also to give basis for selecting one’s thesis committee. Typically these credits are comprised of four workshops in your genre and one workshop outside of your concentration.

Workshop Placement: Students indicate their first and second choice of workshop each semester. Every effort is made to place students in their first choice for workshop, but this is not always possible due to space limitations and other logistics. The MFA faculty considers the following issues for workshop placement:

- Overall workshop balance in terms of size, poetry/fiction distribution, and new student inclusion (fall semesters)
- Student’s semester in the program and time left to fulfill requirements
- Whether workshop is required to fulfill degree requirements
- Whether student has previously taken a workshop with a particular faculty member
- Faculty input and discretion

Modern & Contemporary Literature Requirements (9 credits)
Students complete a minimum of 3 courses (9 credit hours) in modern and contemporary poetry and fiction; contemporary and modern in your genre; one or the other outside of your genre. In general, “Modern” is considered poetry and fiction written prior to 1960; “contemporary” is 1960 to the present. These are suggested parameters. Ultimately whether or not a course fulfills a particular requirement is up to discretion of the program director in consultation with the MFA faculty.

Here are common ways to fulfill the requirement:

- Contemporary Poetry and Contemporary Fiction, 700-level English graduate courses offered regularly.

- Modern Poetry and Modern Fiction, 700-level English graduate courses offered regularly.

- English 891 seminars such as Form & Theory, etc.: Course descriptions are reviewed for each semester’s offerings; courses that fulfill one or both of the requirements will be noted. If you read a course description that you think should fulfill a requirement, but there’s no note that it does, ask Barbara to confirm with the MFA Director.

- Other English and Comparative Literature courses, or courses in other UMass departments. English Department graduate courses indicate whether they fulfill this requirement. Please note: to earn graduate credit, English Department courses must be 500-level or above and other UMass courses must be 400-level or above. Please contact Barbara to confirm whether a course you’re interested in meets these requirements prior to registering for the class.

- Select MFA workshops: When a significant amount of reading in a required area is included as part of the course, a workshop may fulfill a modern or contemporary requirement and will be noted as doing so.

- Five-College Courses: If you find a course on another campus that looks like it fits the bill and for which you can earn graduate credit, please contact Barbara to confirm whether the course meets these requirements prior to registering for the class. (Arrangements can often be made via independent study to earn graduate credit for high-level undergraduate courses.)

- Independent Studies: Although independent studies should not be relied upon to fulfill degree requirements, you may request to work with faculty members independently or in small groups to pursue a course of study that fulfills a requirement. It’s important to note that faculty availability is limited and all arrangements must be made directly with the sponsoring faculty member. Independent studies typically cannot replicate courses regularly offered, such as workshops or regularly offered seminars.

Please note: A single class cannot count towards two literature course requirements at once, i.e. both a contemporary and a modern requirement.
**Thesis Credits (6 credits)**

Students typically enroll for thesis credits during their 3rd year. These credits are designed to give you time for writing. These credits can be used to fulfill full-time status, or for other requirements in consultation with the thesis director. A maximum of 6 thesis credits may be counted towards your degree. Credits may be taken all at once or split up by semester (3 in the Fall, 3 in the Spring).

**Individualized Study (18 credits)**

The remaining 18 credits can include graduate coursework in other departments or programs. Students may also pursue individualized concentrations. Some examples include, but are not limited to, literary history and aesthetics, interdisciplinary studies, translation, publishing, arts administration, and the practice of teaching. Students are strongly encouraged to take advantage of opportunities the University and the Five Colleges has to offer. You are encouraged to explore and propose internships that interest you and further your art or professional identity.

In addition, the Program supports unique opportunities for writers to participate in accredited applied literary arts internships with literary journals and presses, community arts projects, local schools, libraries, and other organizations.

**Receiving Graduate Credit for Five College or Undergraduate UMass courses:** To receive graduate credit, courses taken within the English Department must be 500-level or above to meet the graduate requirement. Academic classes university-wide and, as part of the Five College system, at Amherst, Smith, Mount Holyoke, and Hampshire colleges, are open to you. In order to receive graduate credit, you must get approval from the professor and the MFA Program Director. Though some colleges in the Five College system do not have graduate programs, it is possible to receive graduate credit for non-graduate courses. This is done by working out an arrangement with the professor to do additional work in order to bring the course up to a graduate level. You need to get approval from the professor and the MFA Director prior to doing this.

**Graduate Expectations**

In the MFA program, students are expected to conduct themselves with integrity, discipline, a sense of individual responsibility, and regard for other people.

Students are expected to attend all workshops and seminars in which they are enrolled. If you are unable to attend a workshop or seminar, please let the writer leading your workshop know in
advance. One unexcused absence is within acceptable parameters, if circumstances create a situation in which you find that you are going to miss more than one workshop, be sure to talk to the poet or writer leading the workshop. You can also talk about this with the Associate Director, Jennifer Jacobson.

Preparing to Defend and Graduate: Graduate Milestones

Your time in the MFA program will culminate in the production of your thesis, which will be a book-length manuscript. It’s assumed you will defend your thesis within the three years/six semesters of the program. Thesis requirements are established by both the Graduate School and the MFA faculty and must be completed in order to receive your degree. These requirements are identified by the Graduate School as Milestones:

- Thesis Committee
- Master’s Degree Eligibility
- Thesis Defense & Submission
- Thesis Submission

MILESTONE #1 Thesis Committee

Establishing Your Thesis Committee: Committees are comprised of a chair and two committee members (or readers). Your chair must be a faculty member in your genre. One of your readers must also be a faculty member in your genre. The other should be an individual you and your chair agree will add to the conversation (e.g. MFA faculty, other faculty, writers or poets you admire and who might be willing to participate, etc.). You may request an exception to this composition from the MFA Program Director in consultation with your thesis director. As soon as your committee is selected and each member has agreed to serve, let Barbara know. She will submit the formal request to the Graduate School for their appointment. For a spring defense and graduation, typically committee establishment should be completed by the second semester of your second year.

MILESTONE #2 Master’s Degree Eligibility Form

The Master’s Degree Eligibility form tells the Graduate School you have completed all of your requirements and expect to graduate at the next official graduation date. This form must be submitted by the Graduate School deadline, the dates vary from year to year.

- May 12, 2017 graduation: Deadline is April 1, 2017
- September 1, 2017 graduation: Deadline is August 31, 2017
- February 1, 2018: Deadline is December 1, 2016
For all practical purposes, a September degree is equivalent to a May degree; no additional fees or extensions are required.

The form is available at the Graduate School website here.

- List only those classes, independent studies, practica, seminars, etc. that you want to use towards your degree. You may include teaching practica for Writing Program and English. You need at least 60 credits. Please note that every course you list will count towards your degree. Should you decide to pursue another advanced degree in the future, any courses listed on this form will not be transferrable.
- List all the courses taken by semester, not by course type. The Grad School reviews this by comparing it to your transcript, so semester by semester is their preference.
- Include all relevant “in progress” credits—count credits in overall total; just leave grade column blank. This means any courses you are currently enrolled in during the semester you are filling out the form and any Thesis Credits (which will continue to show up as “IP” credits).
- Print form, sign it, and give it to Barbara. She will get the additional signatures and get it to the Graduate School. Please don’t leave this until the last minute, as the Department Chair must sign and may not be available.

MILESTONE #3  Thesis Defense

Scheduling Your Thesis Defense: It’s your responsibility to schedule your defense with your chair and committee members. Confirm the date with your chair, then reach out to other members of your committee. As soon as your defense is scheduled, let Barbara know the day and time; she will help you reserve a room, if needed. Defenses may take place throughout the year but remember, faculty are generally unavailable during the summer and over the winter break. Discuss the timing with your chair. You’re encouraged to schedule as far in advance as possible. There are advantages to not waiting until your final semester to defend as you will have more time for faculty input on revisions and advice for publication. To ensure a May graduation, your thesis defense must occur by the April 6 deadline. Defenses that take place after April 6 will have a September 1, 2017 graduation date.

Distribute Manuscript: At least two weeks prior to your scheduled defense, distribute your final manuscript, including the introduction, to all members of your committee. The introduction is mandatory for your defense, but optional for submission to the Graduate School. If you have questions about the introduction, you can ask Barbara to show you some examples, and/or speak with your thesis committee chair. The manuscript should be paginated, include a table of contents, and single-sided. A prose thesis should be double-spaced with one inch margins in a 12 point font. The thesis is distributed in hard copy to advisors at the address to which they agree.
**Thesis Signature Pages:** Several days prior to your defense, Barbara will print out the required two copies of your signature page on the required acid-free paper. You should bring these to your defense along with a black ink ballpoint pen. Be sure to have all committee members sign these pages. Return signed pages to Barbara, who will get the additional signatures required and bring it to the Graduate School. Please note: When you upload your thesis you will need to include a blank signature page (not the ones you had signed). Barbara can email you the blank page.

**Thesis Defense:** The thesis defense is the time when you will meet with all three of your committee members to talk about the manuscript you’ve written. It will be similar to a long, thorough workshop of your manuscript. Defenses are generally scheduled for no more than two hours. Assuming a positive outcome, Barbara will send a formal announcement of the successful completion of your defense of to the Graduate School.

**MILESTONE #4  Thesis Submission**

The MFA thesis is required to be electronically submitted and incorporated into ScholarWorks, an open-access web archive maintained through the W.E.B. Du Bois Library. You’ll work with the Graduate School Student Service Center to submit your official thesis online according to Graduate School specifications.

Visit the [Graduate School web site](https://www.umass.edu) for complete information about thesis submission, the Master's Graduation Degree Eligibility Form and all other graduation-related tasks. You can log into ScholarWorks and look at previously submitted theses no longer embargoed for samples of the required formatting, or ask Barbara to show you some older bound theses that are kept in the program office.

When you upload your thesis on ScholarWorks you will have two options:

- The default option is Open Access Thesis. Open Access permits anyone with internet access to view the thesis. The second option, Campus Access, must be selected from the drop down menu. Campus Access limits the access to only those with a UMass IT NetID username and password, or through interlibrary loan.
- An embargo period, during which the thesis will not be available, is also offered. The default is No Embargo Required. The drop down menu also includes a One Year Embargo option. The Graduate School allows a 5 Year Embargo with a memo of support from the MFA Program Director. The staff of the Graduate Student Service Center will set the embargo date when the memo is received.

A memo from the MFA Program Director requesting the 5 Year Embargo will automatically be sent to the Graduate School along with your Degree Eligibility form. If you prefer a different option, please let Barbara know when you give her your Degree Eligibility form. Information about the University of Massachusetts’ Intellectual Property Policy can be found [here](https://www.umass.edu).
Advising

First year students should consider the poet and writing leader of their fall workshop as their temporary advisor, and are also welcome to contact any MFA faculty for advising about the program, and consultations about their work. The MFA Program does not assign advisors. Students are encouraged to become acquainted with all of the faculty in their genre in their first year.

During the second year, students indicate their first and second choice for a thesis advisor. Every effort is made to place students in their first choice, but this is not always possible due to scheduling and other logistics. The Thesis Chair serves as their thesis advisor and is the person with whom they will work with most closely for the remainder of the program.

Students are also encouraged to build relationships and seek advice from other English Department faculty, the wider UMass community, and poets and writers in the world.
Career Development

Career development opportunities are available through The Graduate School and the MFA program.

**Graduate School Office of Professional Development:** The [OPD](#) (538 Goodell Building) offers assistance for graduate students throughout the year. Once a month the office holds a Pizza and Proposals event where students can receive grant writing advice with a free dinner. Additionally, OPD offers grant writing classes, research workshops, and brown bag lunches with speakers on topics like academic publishing and effective teaching. For more information, contact their office at 413-545-0669 or email opd@grad.umass.edu.

**Personal Career Advice:** You should expect to work primarily with your thesis advisor for specific advice tailored to your concentration and career goals but you may also consult with other MFA and English Department faculty.

**Writers Work:** Writers Work is a series of professional development workshops offered through the academic year, hosted by the MFA program and featuring professionals—lawyers, doctors, ferriers, real estate agents, museum executives, agents, editors, and others representing the way writers and poets make their living in the world.
Funding Opportunities

MFA students are granted up to six semesters of eligibility for University funding. This is the maximum number of funded semesters available to students in good standing. It is not a guarantee of funding. In accordance with MFA and university policies, to be eligible for funding, MFA students must be in good academic standing and achieving “progress towards the degree,” i.e., successfully moving towards the fulfillment of degree requirements in a timely manner. Failure to maintain good standing and progress towards the degree may result in not being recommended for funded positions.

MFA students receive funding through a range of appointments, including Teaching Associate (TO), Teaching Assistant (TA), and Research Assistant (RA). A “funded” position is defined as an appointment that qualifies as one that includes a tuition and curriculum fee waiver, and a stipend of at least $4700 per semester. It may or may not include the health insurance fee. A Teaching Associate is a graduate student who is responsible for teaching a class. A Teaching Assistant is a graduate student who assists a faculty member in teaching a class.

Funding & Progress Towards Degree

The MFA Committee, along with the Writing Program and the Graduate School, tracks candidates’ progress towards the degree by making note of incompletes, grades, and other information.

Incompletes:
- If you elect to take an incomplete in a class, you’re responsible for establishing and fulfilling a timeline for completion of all coursework in collaboration with the course instructor/independent study sponsor.
- Incompletes (INC) automatically turn into Incomplete/Failure (IF) after one year.
- Typically, anyone with more than one INC or IF will not be recommended for funding.

Grades:
- The MFA Committee makes note of grades of C or below. (Remember, in graduate programs, a C is considered analogous to an F.)
- Typically, anyone with more than one sub-par grade will not be recommended for funding.
- A minimum GPA of 3.0 (cumulative) is required by the Graduate School for the awarding of degrees.

Teaching in the Writing Program

The Writing Program is an independent entity from the MFA Program and English Department. Each year, it serves more than 4,000 undergraduate students in their First Year Writing classes.
(Basic Writing and College Writing). The instructors for these classes predominantly consist of MFA and English PhD graduate students. These positions are generally retained for 6 semesters, or the 3 years of the MFA program. Teaching Associates in the Writing Program teach a one-two course load (a total of three classes during an academic year).

MFA students who are not offered a Writing Program position upon entering are encouraged to meet with the Writing Program Director during their first semester to discuss their re-application and consideration for a Writing Program position for their second and third years.

Any MFA student who has a position with the Writing Program, or is considering applying for a position, should become familiar with their website here.

Contacts:

Rebecca Dingo
rdingo@english.umass.edu
(413) 545-0610

Heidi Terault, Office Manager
Office: 303C Bartlett Hall
Phone: 413.545.0633
hterault@acad.umass.edu
For information regarding: applications, appointments, scheduling and contracts

**Teaching in the English Department**

MFA students may apply to teach Creative Writing courses in the English Department. In October of each year, a call is sent out for applications to teach in the following academic year. The application requires submission of a course description and syllabus for the proposed course. Samples from previous years are available for review from the MFA office. The number of courses available each year depends on funding availability and need as determined by the English Department and CPE. Generally between 14 - 17 positions are available annually. The MFA faculty reviews the applications and makes decisions based on the criteria listed below. Students chosen to teach these classes are required to participate in the Creative Writing Teaching Practicum (English 698L) in the semester prior to teaching and the semester during their teaching of these classes.

Those who also have TOs with the Writing Program will be released from teaching for the semester they are teaching in the English Department. The stipend for teaching in the English Department is **$9,459** (AY 2016-17) and brings with it a tuition and curriculum fee waiver, and health insurance. Details about benefits may vary with individual circumstances.
Appointments are made in four categories of courses:

- **English 140, Reading Fiction / English 141, Reading Poetry**: General Education literature courses designed to introduce students to the reading of fiction or poetry. Maximum enrollment of 35.

- **English 254, Writing & Reading Imaginative Literature**: A General Education course that is both an introductory creative writing course and a literature course. These sections are generally mixed-genre (poetry and fiction) with a maximum enrollment of 20.

- **English 354, Creative Writing: Intro to Fiction / Creative Writing: Intro to Poetry**: These are genre-specific creative writing courses, with a maximum enrollment of 20.

- **Continuing & Professional Education (CPE) Courses**: The MFA Program provides instructors for English 254 and English 354 sections offered through CPE throughout the year. All CPE classes are online. Training and support for online courses is provided through CPE. Due to the training investment, online appointments may be renewed for a second session. Stipends for CPE classes are dependent on enrollment.

**Eligibility**

- Applicants should have completed at least two MFA writing workshops before the semester they will begin teaching.
- Applicants should have completed at least two graduate literature classes or independent studies before the semester they will begin teaching. We suggest these be from among modern and contemporary offerings, ideally one in poetry and one in fiction. Applicants who don’t meet this criterion may still apply.
- Applicants must be making good progress towards their degree and may not have more than one incomplete. Any current incomplete must be resolved in a timely manner.
- Applicants must be eligible for at least one semester of time and funding in academic year for the semester they will be teaching. (Applicants with extension requests pending may apply.)

**Criteria for Evaluation**

- Merit of proposed course syllabus.
- Teaching experience and publications are considered, but don’t outweigh the evidence contained in proposed course description.
- Applicants who have already taught these courses are considered along with new applicants. However, the MFA faculty wants as many qualified applicants as possible to have the experience of teaching these courses, so when all other things are equal, the applicant who has not yet had the opportunity will be ranked more highly.
The MFA Committee attempts to divide its final ranking as evenly as possible among applicants in both genres.

**Teaching in Continuing & Professional Education (CPE)**

Each year CPE asks the English Department to provide instructors for their English classes. Teaching a CPE class is not included in your 6 semesters of funding eligibility. Since Fall 2009, the MFA Program has provided instruction for English 354—Creative Writing Mixed Genre and English 254—Writing & Reading Imaginative Literature ranging throughout the year, including Summer and Winter sessions. These are online classes and the instructors must complete CPE online training in the semester prior to teaching. English 354—Creative Writing Mixed Genre is generally offered during the Summer and Winter sessions. English 254—Writing & Reading Imaginative Literature has been offered online during the past two Fall semesters only. Capacity of the class is 25.

**Salary:** Salary is based on enrollment in the class. The average enrollment for English 354 has been 15. *It is incumbent on the instructor to recruit for the class.* Suggestions for recruiting strategies are:

- Ask Celeste Stuart in Undergraduate English office to send email out to English majors
- Ask instructors of English 254 to promote class to current students
- Putting up flyers around Bartlett
- If you receive inquiries from potential students who do not have the prerequisites for the class (if applicable), you may waive the prerequisites at your discretion. But you must notify CPE that you are willing to do so in order for that student to enroll in the class.

As of Fall 2015, according to the GEO contract, for each three credit class taught with an enrollment of 2-7 students, the instructor would earn $357.00 per student for a maximum of $2,499. For an enrollment of 8-11 students, the salary would be $3,309. 12-21 students, the salary would be $4,235.

Teaching contracts are prepared by Mary Coty in the English Department and are processed through CPE.

**Benefits:**

**Tuition and curriculum fee:**

- Fall/Spring Semesters or Winter Session: For one 3 credit course taught during the Fall or Spring semester, or during Winter Session, the instructor is eligible to receive a tuition and curriculum fee waiver, regardless of enrollment.
- Summer: For any two 3 credit courses taught over the summer, the instructor is eligible to receive a tuition and curriculum fee waiver for the Fall semester.
**Health Benefits:** Health benefits are included for the semester the instructor is teaching, except for summer.

**NOTE TO INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS:** We recommend when applying for a CPE position that you take into consideration the limitations on the hours per week you may work as well as the uncertainty of the salary and benefits. CPE considers their instructors to be working from 5-7-1/2 hours per week. If you are offered a CPE position during the fall or spring semesters and you also have a teaching position in the Writing Program, you will have to work out a course reduction with the Writing Program that would take into consideration the limitations on the number of hours per week you may work. International students may work 20 hours per week during the fall and spring semesters. *In addition,* you may work 40 hours per week during Winter Session and Summer.

**FOR MORE INFORMATION:**

On Salary & Benefits: For any questions or concerns about the salary and benefits associated with teaching CPE classes, please contact the Graduate Assistantships Office of the Graduate School, 517 Goodell. Telephone: 413-545-5287

On Teaching CPE classes: go to [http://www.umassulearn.net/instructors](http://www.umassulearn.net/instructors)

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**Delaney Creative Development Fellowship**

In 2014, the MFA program launched the Delaney Creative Development Fellowship. The fellowship is designed to support a woman fiction writer currently enrolled in the program, and to provide enriching professional development and arts administrative experience on and beyond campus. The Delaney is a full-year working fellowship. As of 9/2016 this Fellowship is on hold.

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**jubilat Managing Editor**

*jubilat* supports a Managing Editor position for an MFA student. The Managing Editor is responsible for all aspects of *jubilat*'s production and office management, and works closely with *jubilat*'s publisher, editors, and staff to produce spring and fall issues each year. This three year position includes tuition and curriculum fee waiver, and a stipend of approximately $19,175 annually. Typically, poets seeking admission to the MFA program apply for the position.

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**Other Funded Positions and Jobs on Campus**

MFA students have worked in offices and departments across the University, ranging from teaching Junior Year Writing in various departments, to administrative work, undergraduate
advising, and information technology. There is not one central location where graduate student job openings are listed, so job searchers need to be proactive, persistent, and creative.

It is important to note that not all jobs on campus come with the tuition and curriculum fee waiver, and health insurance. Some jobs come only with an hourly wage and no additional benefits.

**Resources & Suggestions:**

- [Graduate Assistantships Office](#)
- [Human Resources](#)
- Departments looking for TAs or other positions may list openings on their own website
- If you have another skill or interest area (e.g., technology, film, foreign language), contact those departments or offices directly
- Ask Barbara for a list of places on campus MFA students have worked
Applied Literary Arts Internships

The MFA Program supports a wide range of opportunities for students to gain experience and expertise in literary publishing, arts administration, and teaching. The Juniper Initiative that includes the Juniper Summer Writing Institute and Juniper Institute for Young Writers, provides many opportunities on campus along with Route 9, jubilat, The UMass Press, The Massachusetts Review, and The Common. These organizations, along with a rich array of local and regional presses, journals, schools and arts organizations offer accredited internships through the MFA’s Applied Literary Arts program. Students receive literary arts credits which may be used towards their degree. In some cases, stipends are available. Students may also seek internships in other geographic locations.

Juniper Fellowships

The MFA Program hires two Juniper Fellows each year, one from each genre. Working with the program's Associate Director, Juniper Fellows assist in the management of the Visiting Writers Series, Writers Work, and serve as liaisons for the Juniper Prizes in Fiction and Poetry in conjunction with the UMass Press and Juniper Prize judges. This two year commitment comes with an annual stipend of $4,700 and 3 literary arts credits each semester.

Juniper Prizes in Poetry and Fiction

MFA students can read for the Juniper Prizes in fiction and poetry nationally recognized annual book prizes for collections of poetry and fiction administered with the University of Massachusetts Press. The Juniper Literary Series awards two prizes each for poetry and for fiction. For poetry, one prize recognizes a first publication. The second is open to previously published poets. For fiction, one prize recognizes a short story collection; the second prize is for a novel.

Juniper Summer Writing Institute

The Juniper Summer Writing Institute is a week-long conference on the UMass Amherst campus that encourages participants to explore the creative process and develop new approaches to the craft of writing through workshops in poetry, fiction, and memoir; craft sessions; and readings. Each year four MFA students are chosen to be Institute Assistant Directors who gain literary arts management experience in marketing, program coordination, and event planning. Assistant Directors earn 3 literary arts credits per semester and an annual stipend.
Juniper Institute for Young Writers

For high school students who have completed their sophomore year, this nine-day conference offers dynamic workshops in fiction and poetry, as well as craft sessions, studio courses, field trips, and open mics on the UMass Amherst campus, giving them a pre-college experience with a literary arts focus. MFA students may apply for positions to teach in the Young Writer program, gaining experience in developing mixed genre curricula and working with high school students.

jubilat

Published twice yearly, jubilat offers the best in contemporary American poetry alongside a selection of reprints, found pieces, lyric prose, art, and interviews with poets and other artists. Work from jubilat has been selected for inclusion in Best American Poetry, The Pushcart Prize: Best of the Small Presses, and Harper's Magazine. MFA students gain professional experience and literary arts credit through internships with the magazine.

jubilat/Jones Reading Series

jubilat/Jones is a reading series open to the public at the Jones Library and supported by Friends of the Jones. During the fall and spring, generally MFA poets in consultation with jubilat’s publisher and editors, organize readings and Q&As for local and regional audiences.

For a more complete list of literary arts internship possibilities, contact Barbara.
Grants & Awards

MFA Thesis Grants

Thesis grants are stipends to help with creative development and research for your thesis. These funds are made available to the MFA through the generosity of the Graduate School’s Dean, John McCarthy. Awards range from $180 to $750, but may vary depending on the number of qualified applications received. They are distributed in the spring.

Thesis grants can be used to support:
- Fieldwork, research, and/or travel to locations and sets relevant to your work in progress
- Residencies at an artist's colony to set aside time for sustained concentration on a manuscript and to engage in conversation with artists working in other fields
- You may propose other activities in the grant as long as they comprise creative development or research undertakings requiring discrete financial support to achieve specific goals

Eligible candidates must:
- Be in the second year of the program
- Be in good academic standing, making good progress towards the degree
- Have selected a thesis advisor who supports your grant application
- Wish to engage in one or more of the kinds of creative development/research activity supported by the grant program

MFA Travel Grants

The MFA Program, with funds provided by the Graduate School and the English Department, is able to support opportunities for students to present their work at readings, conferences and other events. Each year, the funds are divided equally between poets and fiction writers.

Criteria: Grants of $100-$300 are offered to offset travel costs associated with an invitation to read, present a paper, or representing a literary organization at a conference. Typically the call for Travel Grants goes out in October, but monies are available until the funding pool is distributed.
MFA Program Annual Awards

In February each year, a call goes out for submissions for the following prizes:

Poetry Prizes

The American Academy of Poets Prize in Poetry: Given for excellence in the craft of writing poetry. ($100 to winner from AAP).

Best New Poets Anthology: Submissions are judged for nomination to Best New Poets for consideration. Winners may be published in Best New Poets the following year.

The Daniel and Merrily Glosband MFA Fellowship in Poetry: Awarded to recognize and support poets of exceptional merit and promise at a critical stage of their progress. (approximate award: $1,600)

The Deborah Slosberg Memorial Award in Poetry: Given by Mr. and Mrs. Jay Slosberg in memory of Deborah Slosberg, who studied at the University of Massachusetts-Amherst, to MFA candidates whose work in poetry or prose constitutes substantial and worthy achievement over their careers in the MFA Program. (approximate award: $950)

The Skolfield/Goeckel Award in Poetry (even years only): $500 to winner

Fiction Prizes

The Harvey Swados in Fiction: Named for the novelist and short-story writer who taught on the MFA faculty from 1970 to 1972, awarded for excellence in the craft of fiction writing. (approximate award $1,300)

The Deborah Slosberg Memorial Award in Fiction: Given by Mr. and Mrs. Jay Slosberg in memory of Deborah Slosberg, who studied at the University of Massachusetts-Amherst, to MFA candidates whose work in poetry or prose constitutes substantial and worthy achievement over their careers in the MFA Program. (approximate award $950)

The Cara Parravani Memorial Award in Fiction: Offered by the family of Cara Parravani (MFA ’07) for excellence in fiction. (approximate award $250)
Title IX

Title IX is a U.S. law that prohibits discrimination in education on the basis of gender. A particular focus of Title IX is the prevention of sexual misconduct on college campuses. “Sexual misconduct” includes sexual assault, sexual harassment, domestic or dating violence, and stalking.

To create a caring and compassionate University culture, it is important for all of us to understand the resources that are available and our Title IX reporting responsibilities. Sexual misconduct harms its victims and the entire campus community; it is in the interest of all of us to prevent such offenses.

As a student, you or a peer may be a potential target of Title IX-related violations. If you are also a graduate student employee, you have Title IX reporting obligations as well. Under federal law, graduate student employees who are made aware of a possible incident of sexual harassment, sexual assault, or any other kind of sexual misconduct are required to report it.

If you or someone you know needs to report a possible Title IX offense, please follow these procedures:

- If the accused is a student, the report should be made to Patricia Cardoso, Deputy Title IX Coordinator, Dean of Students Office (DOSO): 227 Whitmore Administration Building, telephone (413)545-2684 or email at pcardoso@stuaf.umass.edu.
- If the accused is an employee, the report should be made to Kelly Burgess, Deputy Title IX Coordinator, Office of Equal Opportunity and Diversity (EOD): 243 Lederle GRC Lowrise, telephone (413) 545-3464 or email at kellyb@admin.umass.edu

Graduate student employees are not confidential reporters and cannot guarantee confidentiality to anyone reporting a Title IX issue. If a student or employee asks to discuss such a matter in confidence, graduate student employees must state that they may not be able to maintain confidentiality. If you are approached regarding a possible Title IX violation, you might respond in this manner: “While I’m not a confidential source, I respect your privacy rights and will work with the campus Title IX coordinator and other resource areas to provide support.”

If the individual reporting the incident to you chooses not to continue the conversation, you should encourage them to contact the Dean of Students Office, the Office of Equal Opportunity and Diversity, the UMass Police Department (UMPD), the Center for Women and Community (CWC), or the Center for Counseling and Psychological Health (CCPH). UMPD, CWC, and CCPH are permitted to maintain confidentiality.

Failing to report a possible Title IX offense deprives the campus community of valuable information and will not help victims/survivors to get the resources they need.
You can find extensive additional information about Title IX and the University’s resources and policies by navigating to the UMass Title IX webpage, http://www.umass.edu/titleix.

**Health Services**

Most students are insured through GEO. This insurance covers many services which are detailed at the GEO website. Who is eligible for the health insurance cost waivers? In general, if you are working at least 10 hours a week in two semesters or 20 hours a week in one semester, you’ll be eligible for waivers for the entire plan year.

The easiest way to see a doctor is to go to University Health Services on campus. UHS offers an array of services that are included through the Cigna graduate health plan. Hop over to UHS for free acupuncture (with student favorite, Jack Radner!). Get free contacts and glasses every year! Get a pap smear from Yanghee Kwon at the Women’s Health Center! UHS is by-appointment only. Call the appointment line at 413-577-5101 and someone will schedule you with the doctor, nurse practitioner or physician assistant appropriate to your needs.

Urgent care is the exception to the appointment-only rule. One may simply come to the Urgent Care clinic and sit in the waiting room. You can also call ahead to make an appointment at 413-577-5101. If you simply want to talk to a triage nurse about your illness or injury, you can do that as well, just dial 413-577-5229. Clinic hours are from 8:30 am to 5:00 pm, Monday through Friday. The Urgent Care clinic is open 24 hours a day during the semester.

**Mental Health**

Mental health is also covered under the Mandatory Student Health Fee for six visits per semester. Mental Health Services, located in 127 Hills North, has a staff of psychologists, social workers, and psychiatrists to provide crisis intervention and short-term psychotherapy to individuals, families, and groups (family and couples counseling is also available). The Mandatory Student Health Fee also covers referrals by UHS to other therapists in the area.

Six visits per semester are fully covered by the Mandatory Student Health Fee. To request services, call 413-545-2337, Monday through Friday between 8:00 AM and 5:00 PM, and a senior clinician will help match you to the service appropriate to your needs.

Twenty-four hour emergency mental health is available every day of the year. For mental health emergencies, call 413-545-2337 between 8:00 AM and 5:00 PM on weekdays and ask for an “on-call” clinician. After 5:00 PM and on weekends and holidays, call 413-577-5000 or go directly to UHS.
The Center for Women and Community is an on-campus resource. They offer a plethora of support groups (group for mothers of young children, women in academia, survivors of sexual violence) and services. CWC offers counseling and rape crisis services on a walk-in (M-F 9am-4pm, 180 Infirmary Way, New Africa House) and appointment basis. One need not identify as a woman to use these resources. CWC has some of the most supportive and knowledgeable advocates on campus and can refer clients to other services and groups in the Pioneer Valley area. All services at CWC are free and confidential. Their phone number is 413-545-0883. Their 24-Hour Rape Crisis Hotline is 413-545-0800. The Hampshire County Toll-Free Rape Crisis Hotline is 1-888-337-0800.

Other Resources:

**Tapestry Health** is a non-university affiliated sliding scale clinic offering STD testing and family planning services. The phone number is 413-548-9992.

**Cooley Dickinson Hospital** is the the closest hospital to the program located in Northampton at 30 Locust St. The phone number is 413-582-2000.

**Safe Passage** offers support for survivors of domestic violence. Their hotline is available 24 hours a day 7 days a week: 413-586-5066, or toll-free at 888-345-5282. Safe Passage also runs an emergency shelter and advocates are available for medical, housing, and educational issues. Individual and group counseling are also offered.
International Students

Below is advice from several current international students. The International Program Office has more detailed information and regulations.

International Student Tips:

Social Security Number
One major hurdle to setting up new accounts is that you have to wait until the third week of September to get your Social Security Number. Around that time you’ll get an email telling you when the SSN people will be on campus and what you need to bring, so be sure to drop by with your forms those days. The SSN comes in the mail very quickly after you’ve dropped off your documents. More information can be found here.

Banks: To get a US bank account, bring your passport and a second form of ID (e.g. Driver’s License) into a branch that you would like to bank with. TD Bank offers a lot of options for international banking, which is especially convenient for Canadian students. The day you sign up they give you a few checks, which is helpful in setting up your direct deposit if you are teaching in the Writing Program.

Mobile Phones: You can not usually get a cell phone contract plan without an SSN or an American credit card. To start, you can buy a SIM card for your unlocked phone (or buy a cheap phone), and use a Pay as You Go Plan. T-Mobile, AT&T, and Verizon can all help you with this.

Establishing Credit: If you’d like to establish credit in the states, you can apply for a secured credit card or ask your bank what your options are. CapitalOne.com has a secured Mastercard for those with bad or no credit (you pay a fee to “secure” the limit) which allows you to track your credit score.

Internet: You can set up your internet without an SSN and American credit card, but may need to go into the store to pay in cash and show your ID (Comcast/Verizon).

Writing Program: If you are teaching in the writing program as an international student, you can only teach 1 section per semester (2 total), but are paid the same as those teaching 3 total sections. To make up for the extra hours you are paid, you will be involved in special projects, research, or tutoring (someone in the WP will be in touch about this).

Employment Session for New International Graduates (This is a different session than the mandatory international student orientation)
You will be given 2-3 possible dates to attend an August employment session. I strongly suggest going to the first one. This makes sure you are paid on time and helps you with any questions/bumps in the road.

The auditorium where this is help will be extremely cold. Bring a sweater!

You can print off the packet/forms you need ahead of time here, but they will also have copies there.

Don’t forget to bring your passport/visa information (DS 2109 for J Visas, I-20 for F Visas)

You have to bring direct deposit information (a void check from a new US bank account works)

**Working Extra Jobs On/Off Campus:** This is a tricky subject, best dealt with by contacting the International Programs Office. F-1 students can be granted employment after a year of school if it is in their field and if permission has been given by the IPO. J-1 students may work on and on campus, but only limited hours (20/week during school, 40/week during vacations), and only with permission of the school. More information here.

**Taxes:** Filing your taxes can be pretty straightforward. UMass will send you the forms you need, and you can enter all of the information in TurboTax. Your refund can be deposited directly into your account.

**MFA International Contacts (2015-2016):**

Ann Ward, Canadian, J-1 Visa with J-2 Dependents ann.ward@gmail.com
Brendan Bowles, Canadian, F-1 Visa brendan.j.bowles@gmail.com
Ali Ünal, Turkish, F-1 Visa aliunal@gmail.com
Graduate Student Organization

The MFA GSO was formed during the spring semester of 2015. Our purpose is to represent the student body in communication with faculty and staff, organize community events, and develop new ways for this program to better serve its members.

If you have any ideas or concerns regarding your MFA experience here at UMass, we would be happy to hear from you! You can submit an anonymous request through the form below, email the GSO, or email any of our chairs directly.

We are always looking for new members! The GSO is a good way to make friends and connect with community members. We meet monthly to discuss events and issues. To get involved contact any member of the GSO and/or join our group on Facebook!

Anonymous Concern Form:
https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1htFDvcbaxBhopq5gSvvOTQi1vleWMCMFdXARRyq2Ik/viewform

Facebook Group:
https://www.facebook.com/groups/347421455460455/

GSO Contacts:
Main: poetsandwritersgso@gmail.com
Current Faculty & Staff

Browse profiles for faculty and staff on the UMass English Department website:

Poetry Faculty
  Dara Wier
  Email: darawier@gmail.com

  Peter Gizzi:
  Email: gizioni@hfa.umass.edu

  James Haug (Spring 2016)
  Email: james.haug@comcast.net

  Lynn Xu (Fall 2016 & Spring 2017)
  Email: lxulxu@gmail.com

Fiction Faculty
  Sabina Murray: sabbatical Spring 2017
  Email: sabina@english.umass.edu

  Noy Holland: sabbatical Spring 2017
  Email: f holland@english.umass.edu

  Edie Meidav:
  Email: emeidav@hfa.umass.edu

  Jeff Parker: leave Spring 2017
  Email: jpark@umass.edu

Visiting Faculty:
  Annie Liontas
  Tony Tulathimutte

Administration
  Barbara McGlynn (Administrative Assistant):
  Email: mfapoetsandwriters@hfa.umass.edu
  Phone: (413) 545-0643
Responsible for administrative matters e.g., SPIRE, registration, enrollment, requirements, any issues with Graduate School, graduation, funding, referrals, etc.

Jennifer Jacobson (Associate Director, MFA Program):
Email: jenniferj@hfa.umass.edu
Phone: (413) 545-5510
Responsible for academic and public program development and implementation, including the Juniper Summer Writing Institute, Institute for Young Writers, Visiting Writers Series, Writers Work, Juniper Literary Festival, and the Applied Literary Arts Internship Program; collaborates with Graduate Program Director to supervise graduate candidates and Teaching Associates; supervises internal and external communication, outreach and fundraising efforts.

Graduate Student Organization 2016-17

The MFA’s GSO can be contacted at mfagradstudentorg@gmail.com.
Important Links

STUDENT AFFAIRS & CAMPUS LIFE:
http://www.umass.edu/studentlife/
http://www.umass.edu/studentlife/community
http://www.umass.edu/studentlife/advocacy-inclusion-support
http://www.umass.edu/diversity/
http://www.umass.edu/studentlife/faculty-staff

FIVE COLLEGE CONSORTIUM:
https://www.fivecolleges.edu

GRADUATE EMPLOYEE ORGANIZATION:
http://www.geouaw.org

FROM GRAD SCHOOL WEBSITE FOR NEW STUDENTS:
http://www.umass.edu/gradschool/sites/default/files/new_student_todo_list.pdf
Information on Transportation to and from Amherst, Housing, getting campus id, setting up email accounts, parking, health services, SPIRE info, HR orientation for new employees, banking, financial aid, GEO, resources for International Students

FOR CURRENT STUDENTS:
http://www.umass.edu/gradschool/current-students
http://www.umass.edu/gradschool/funding-support
http://www.umass.edu/gradschool/policies-forms
http://www.umass.edu/gradschool/policies-forms/graduate-student-handbook
http://www.umass.edu/gradschool/funding-support/graduate-assistantship-office
http://www.umass.edu/dean_students/codeofconduct
http://www.umass.edu/umatter/bullying
http://www.umass.edu/umatter/%3Cfront%3E/sexual-misconduct

FOR GRADUATING STUDENTS:
http://www.umass.edu/commencement/ceremonies/graduate

LOCAL INFORMATION:
http://www.valleyvisitor.com/visitors.html
http://www.movoto.com/ma/moving-to-pioneer-valley/