



ALMA COLLEGE

CREATIVE WRITING

STUDENT HANDBOOK

Alma College
614 W. Superior Street, Alma MI 48801

Updated 9/2023

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Welcome to The Alma College MFA in Creative Writing

Your Voice Matters

The Alma Master of Fine Arts in Creative Writing offers the opportunity for writers to enter an artistic community in which they will read deeply, study and hone their writing craft, and participate in energetic discussions that will help them see their poems, stories, essays, and memoirs in the context of current issues and events. As they gain confidence in their voices Alma MFA students will write and wield their words in ways that may change the world. They will know they have their own contributions to make because the question always at the forefront of our work will be, “How can you as an artist, as a writer, participate in and influence the important conversations of our times?” This is about a more expansive way of writing, and of being human. This focus on relevance will encourage students to persevere and to have their own answer whenever they find themselves asking, “Why am I writing?” They will know their voices matter, and they have something to say.

The MFA in Creative Writing degree represents the study of literature from the writer's, not the critic's or the scholar's, perspective. The reading and analytical components of each term project, and the variety of lectures offered during the residencies, provide for a well-integrated, humanities-based curriculum without sacrifice of direct manuscript work and criticism. It serves the growth of the student as a creative writer. A graduate of the program is especially well-prepared in literature as well as in writing and should be an attractive candidate for teaching positions. The graduate also will have significant professional development in, and knowledge of, the publishing industry. While no program can offer guarantees of employment prospects, students will advance in their writing and their education which is the goal of the program. They will be well-situated to take advantage of opportunities and to create their own.

Alma College recognizes the Master of Fine Arts as a terminal degree in creative writing.

Accreditation and Compliance Statements

A full list of compliances and policies is available at <https://www.alma.edu/college-policies-and-disclosures/>.

The Alma College MFA in Creative Writing has received accreditation or approval from the following state or national credential-granting organizations.

Higher Learning Commission

230 South La Salle Street, Suite 7-500 Chicago, IL 60604-1411

Phone: 1-800-621-7440 / (312) 263-0456

E-mail: info@hlcommission.org Web site: hlcommission.org

Michigan Department of Education

John A. Hannah Office Building 608 West Allegan, Box 30008

Lansing, MI 48909

Phone: (517) 373-3324

Web site: michigan.gov/mde/

Membership in the National Council for State Authorization (NC-SARA)

Alma College is a member of the National Council for State Authorization Reciprocity Agreements (NC-SARA). We are listed on the www.nc-sara.org website as a participating institution. NC-SARA was established to help expand students' access to educational opportunities and ensure more efficient, consistent, and effective regulation of distance learning programs. As a member institution, Alma is able to make its academic programs more widely available and accept enrollments from students in all states except for California without additional work to seek state authorization.

Federal Compliance Statements

Campus Security. Alma College abides by the Student Right-to- Know, the Campus Security Act of 1990 and the Higher Education Act Reauthorization of 2008. The College makes information concerning campus crime statistics available in printed form and electronically to the campus community each year. This information is also available to prospective students or employees upon request.

Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act. Respecting our students' right to privacy is a priority at Alma College. The college complies with the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974, as amended — a federal law that requires each institution to establish a written policy and procedures to protect the confidentiality of a student's education records.

At its discretion, Alma College may provide directory information in accordance with provisions of the Act. Typical use of this information includes but is not limited to media releases, publications, event programs and lists for on-campus office use. Directory information may

include (1) student name, address, telephone number, and date and place of birth; (2) e-mail address; (3) field of study; (4) class schedule and class rosters; (5) identity of parents, guardians or next of kin; (6) dates of attendance, and degrees and awards received; (7) most recent previous educational agency or institution attended by the student; (8) participation in officially recognized activities and sports; (9) photographs; and (10) weight and height of members of athletic teams. Social security numbers are not considered directory information and will not be released except as required or permitted by the Act. As a general rule, Alma College will not release lists of directory information to off-campus vendors.

The Registrar at Alma College coordinates the inspection and review of procedures related to the protection and release of student education records. For more information about the law and related college policies, go to [https://www.alma.edu/wp-content/uploads/2023/07/The-Family-Educational-Rights-and-Privacy-Act -About -Alma-College.pdf](https://www.alma.edu/wp-content/uploads/2023/07/The-Family-Educational-Rights-and-Privacy-Act-About-Alma-College.pdf).

Financial Information. The College's annual financial report is available for review by prospective students, alumni and the public upon request at the Financial Services Office.

Alma College Policy on Nondiscrimination. Alma College adheres to all federal and state civil rights laws banning discrimination in private institutions of higher education. Alma College will not discriminate against any employee or applicant for employment, student or applicant for admission on the basis of race, color, sex, religion, national or ethnic origin, physical or mental disability, age, height, weight, marital status, sexual orientation, gender, gender identity, arrest record, genetic information, or any other protected category under applicable local, state or federal laws; including protections for those opposing discrimination or participating in any resolution process on campus or within the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission or other human rights agencies. Questions or concerns about our policies and practices regarding these matters should be directed to David Blandford, Civil Rights/Title IX Coordinator at (989) 463-7251 or blandford@alma.edu.

Students with Disabilities. Alma College is committed to complying with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) by providing access to campus facilities and reasonable accommodations in programs, services and classroom activities. Students with disabilities who require accommodation should contact the Center for Student Opportunity to initiate services.

Right to Modify Policy. Alma's academic catalog contains the most accurate information available at the time of publication. Alma College reserves the right to change without notice, statements in this catalog concerning, but not limited to, curricula, fees, rules, policies, scholarships and tuitions.

Alma College shall have full academic freedom to determine the best method and manner of teaching and does not guarantee a particular method of teaching, including but not limited to, face-to- face or virtual classes.

Our Commitment to Diversity and Diverse Voices

Alma College recognizes that we are all transformed when we celebrate and value the varied identities, backgrounds, experiences, and perspectives in our campus community. We are committed to recognizing and removing barriers to success and providing equitable access to opportunities through education and advocacy. In our increasingly diverse campus and world, we pledge to create a climate where everyone is safe and free to grow intellectually, spiritually, and emotionally. For more information about the Office of Diversity and Inclusion go to <https://www.alma.edu/about/offices-services/diversity-and-inclusion/>.

Alma College Policies

MFA students are bound to all policies and procedures as stated online on the Alma College website at <https://www.alma.edu/college-policies-and-disclosures/>.

Program Director

The program director, Sophronia Scott, will check in with students and advise them about program goals, faculty mentor choices, program requirements, transfer credits, and other official program business. She can be reached by email (scotts@alma.edu) or by phone: (989) 463-7394.

Inside Alma

Alma College provides a portal, Inside Alma, through which students can pay their bills, access their academic records, complete residency forms, and maintain their contact information. The portal is located at <http://inside.alma.edu/>. Accepted students will be notified with instructions for how to login.

New Student Email

New students, upon receipt of their official commitment deposit of \$300, will be notified by the program office when their alma.edu email account has been created. It is then the responsibility of the new student to activate their new email account and to check it regularly. This is the way the program will communicate with you.

Emergency Procedures

Alma College has adopted an Emergency Response Plan that provides contingency procedures for Alma College administrators, staff, faculty and students in the event of a campus emergency. The College also has implemented a Campus Alert System that allows the College to send immediate, time-sensitive voice, e-mail and text notifications to students, faculty and staff in the event of a campus emergency. Students, faculty and staff can update their emergency contact information via Inside Alma.

Tuition and Fees

Tuition and fees are determined on an annual basis and published on the Alma College MFA website. Tuition and fees are subject to change. Tuition bills are mailed 6 weeks prior to the beginning of each new term. Payments may be made by check, e-check, or by credit card payment.

All applicable fees and charges are payable in advance of enrollment. Tuition is due on a term basis. Each term begins with residency so tuition is due before the first day of each new residency. Tuition and fees are subject to change. All MFA students will receive an email that their bill is available online through their student self-service account (tuition; room and meals for students staying on campus; the single-room fee for students who request a single room, if available), with the exception of graduating students who are charged housing and dining (if staying on campus) and the graduation residency fee.

Enrollment Deposit Fee

All accepted applicants are required to pay a commitment fee of \$300. One hundred dollars of the commitment fee is applied as credit to the student's account for the first term. Another \$100 serves as a security deposit from which the college may recover expenses incurred by the student for damage to or loss of College property upon the student withdrawing or graduating from Alma College. The final \$100 is a processing fee. Any unexpended portion of the security deposit can be gifted back to the college upon graduation or is refunded to the student after separation from the College providing all students charges have been paid in full.

Late Payment Fee

Tuition and fees are due before classes start for each term. A late payment of \$25 per month is assessed on student accounts with a past due balance.

Housing and Dining

"Housing and Dining" is a comprehensive fee that covers a student's stay in Alma College housing as well as all meals in the campus cafeteria throughout the residency. For students staying off-campus, there is a meal plan available for a flat fee that covers all meals throughout the residency.

Housing Portal

All housing will be completed through the College's online housing system unless otherwise noted. The housing portal can be found by going to InsideAlma < Student Links < Housing.

Housing Eligibility

To be eligible for housing, all students must be Alma College students and must be registered for classes during the term of residency. All students must complete a housing agreement before they can receive an on-campus housing assignment. In addition to the housing agreement, students living on campus will be asked to complete a roommate preference questionnaire. The housing agreement can be found in the housing portal.

Accessibility

We are committed to ensuring that all students have access to the educational, social and cultural opportunities that are part of the Alma experience. Housing accommodations, advocacy and support are all part of the services we provide to students who identify as having a disability and provide the required documentation. More information about disability services at Alma, including information about housing accommodations, contact information, services, and policies and procedures can be found at: <https://www.alma.edu/disability-support-services/>.

Students with food allergies or special dietary restrictions will be asked to complete an allergy form which will be shared with the cafeteria staff in order to make necessary food accommodations.

Release from the meal plan is only available for students with a documented accommodation through the Academic Support and Disability Services Office. Please see “Accessibility” for more information about this process.

Admissions

To apply to a graduate program at Alma College, students must submit through the MFA’s website an application for admission and the following materials. Additional program specific requirements will be listed on the program application.

- Statement of Purpose (explaining the student’s intellectual interests, preparation, and goals)
- A minimum of 2 letters of recommendation (individual programs may require more)
- Transcripts from any undergraduate and/or graduate work
 - Completion, or on-track to completion, of an undergraduate degree from an accredited college/university prior to the start of the program
- Resume/CV

Admission will be determined on the following factors:

- Undergraduate academic performance GPA of at least a 3.0 cumulative grade point average

- Students with under a 3.0 will be considered on an individual basis by the faculty reading committee based on academic and professional experience(s)
- Graduate level work should show similar academic performance
- Writing Quality
 - Students entering a graduate program at Alma are expected to demonstrate their ability to effectively communicate their viewpoint(s)
- Academic and/or professional preparation
 - Students should show that they are adequately prepared to succeed at the graduate level

These guidelines represent the minimum requirements for admission; however, meeting these requirements does not guarantee admission. Overall academic record, writing quality, and preparedness will be major factors in evaluating applications.

International Students

Due to its low residency nature, this program is unable to support F-1 visa for international students to pursue this degree and program requirements cannot be completed remotely. International students applying to the program should contact the Admissions office for details on visa requirements.

MFA Application Requirements

To apply to the MFA in Creative Writing at Alma College, students must submit an application for admission and the following materials:

- College transcripts for each college or university attended
- Curriculum vitae (CV) or resume
- A creative writing sample.
 - Length: A maximum of 25 pages for fiction or creative nonfiction, a maximum of 10 pages for poetry (no more than one poem per page).
- Personal essay (3-4 pages)

In this essay please address the following:

 - Discuss your specific interest in the Alma College MFA and your preparation for pursuing a formal study of creative writing
 - Your strengths and weaknesses as a writer
 - Goals for your two years in the program
 - Additional experience including what you can bring to our artistic community
- Literature essay (3-4 pages).

In this essay please discuss the books and writers that have influenced you.
- Two letters of recommendation.

Degree Overview

The MFA in Creative Writing requires the successful completion of the following components of the degree:

- Full participation in five residencies (six for the dual genre concentration).
- Four terms of work with a faculty mentor (five for the dual genre concentration).
- Completion and presentation of a critical thesis (20 pages).
- Completion of a creative thesis manuscript (125 pages for prose, 45 pages for poetry). Dual genre students will submit a thesis in each genre.
- Delivering a public reading of selections from the creative thesis.
- Completion of a document reflecting on your work in the program and an assessment of where you might venture next in your creative journey (seeking publications, teaching in the community, entering the publishing industry, etc.).
- Working with at least three different faculty mentors during the course of the program.
- Extensive reading demonstrated by the preparation of a cumulative bibliography.

Credit Hours

Full-time enrollment at the Alma College MFA in Creative Writing is defined as a minimum of 13 credits per term. The regular degree option in the program requires a minimum of 54 credit hours (four 13-credit terms and a 2-credit graduating residency) for the award of the degree. Students pursuing the dual-genre degree option may graduate upon completion of 67 credit hours (five terms and a graduating residency).

Note: An MFA term consists of one in-person residency followed by five months of individual study with a faculty mentor.

Transfer Credit

The program will consider one term of transfer credit from a student transferring from another MFA in Writing program provided that (a) the student applies for admission to the Alma program and is accepted; and (b) Admissions deems the student's writing to be at least equivalent in quality to that of Alma MFA students at a corresponding stage in their progress toward the MFA degree. Previous coursework must be from an accredited institution of higher education. The earliest that a transfer credit decision will be made is at the point of acceptance into the program.

Alma College will accept credit earned from regionally accredited colleges or universities in the United States. An evaluation of credit gained is available upon submission of an application and transcripts to the Admissions Office. Limitations are as follows:

1. Only non-developmental courses that are graded "C" (2.0) or higher will be accepted for credit.

2. Transferred credit must be documented by receipt of an official transcript from each institution attended.
3. Transfer credits from courses below the graduate level will not be accepted.

Transfer students are encouraged to consult with the Program Director to review transfer credit equivalencies.

Enrollment Status

Full-time enrollment at Alma College MFA in Creative Writing is defined as a minimum of 13 credits per term. A student enrolled in the program has full-time status; part-time study is not offered. Currently enrolled students in need of enrollment verification should contact the registrar's office.

Program Learning Outcomes

Upon leaving the program, MFA students will be able to demonstrate (with noted assessment activity):

1. A strong understanding of craft and the ability to discuss technique. (Critical Thesis/Lecture Presentation)
2. A proficiency of writing skills including the strong use of organization and structure, skillful use of language, forming and communicating well-developed ideas with creative thought and expression in selected genres: creative nonfiction, fiction, and poetry. (Graduate Reading)
3. An ability to read and think critically as a writer. (Critical Thesis)
4. A knowledge of how to get work published in a variety of venues. (Reflection on Program Work with Publishing Assessment)

Genre Study

Because the program provides such a high level of learning and engagement, it's designed to have flexibility so you can explore the new interests you will inevitably discover. You may enter the program to study one genre out of those offered (Creative nonfiction, fiction, and poetry) and find you are drawn to add another to your program of study. With this in mind, there are three options for completing the MFA degree:

- Single genre degree— A study in one genre for four terms (two years).
- Mixed genre degree— A study in one genre for three terms and a second genre for one term (two years).

- Dual genre concentration degree— A study in two genres: three terms in a major genre and two terms in a minor genre (two and a half years). **NOTE: Students seeking this option must before the beginning of their third residency 1) have spent one term in the second genre, and 2) have declared in writing to the program director their intent to pursue a dual genre concentration.**

Genre Descriptions

Poetry: traditional or experimental.

Fiction: literary, young-adult, or speculative.

Nonfiction: creative/narrative/literary—i.e. personal essays or memoir; nonfiction students may also choose to specialize in research-based narratives, e.g. writing about the lives of other people.

Sample Program Progression Schedule

Students accepted to the Alma College MFA may begin their studies in either June or late December. (Typically, winter residencies will be scheduled for the end of December going into early January; summer residencies will take place during the third week of June).

The following is a sample schedule for the students beginning in June:

YEAR 1

June	Residency I
July-early December	Writing Term I
January	Residency II
January-May	Writing Term II

YEAR 2

June	Residency III
July-early December	Writing Term III (Critical Thesis)
January	Residency IV (Critical Thesis Presentation)
January-May	Writing Term IV (Thesis)
June	Residency V (Creative Thesis Reading, Graduation Ceremony)

The MFA Residency

The ten-day residencies in June and December/January form a principal component of the Alma MFA in Creative Writing program. Each residency (all required) provides the student with seminars, lectures, workshops, and time to prepare the term's term study plan. It also offers the student an inspiring artistic community for peer support and relationship-building.

Students and faculty participate in intensive learning activities in writing and literature, as well as informal exchanges with students, faculty and special guests on cultural and social issues and the expression of individual thought connected to these issues. New students are oriented to the program and how to meet degree requirements. Faculty, visiting writers, and critical thesis term students present lectures in literature, literary theory, the craft of writing, and the professional aspects of a writing life. Each residency schedule includes a variety of special presentations, optional off-site events, performances, and other activities. Faculty members and graduating students give public readings of their work. Additionally, visiting writers are brought to the campus to participate in residency activities and give readings or presentations. Special discussion sessions are held on publishing, life after the MFA, literary citizenship, and networking. These discussions vary with each residency.

Descriptions of residency seminars, panels, and other presentations are included in the MFA Residency Schedule. The schedule is posted online in advance of the residency so that students may select learning activities in which they wish to participate and to prepare for them. The learning activity descriptions include a list of works a lecture may require students to be familiar with in order to attend that lecture. Students are required to attend all workshop meetings, at least eight craft lectures, and at least six faculty/visiting writer readings, not counting the informal evening student readings, along with required orientations for specific student cohorts. In addition, students must attend two community activities (at least one student reading, organized in the evenings by student volunteers) every residency. During graduating residency students are encouraged to attend as many graduating student readings as possible to support their classmates.

All enrolled students are expected to participate fully in the entire residency period. Such participation is required for the term's credit and for the granting of the degree. If a student cannot participate fully he or she must petition the MFA Program at least one month prior to the residency. Exceptions will be considered and approved for one-time only situations deemed appropriate and affecting a student's arrival or departure from the residency by no more than one day.

Students may reside off-campus during residencies and, for billing purposes, must notify the office of such accommodation eight weeks prior to the residency. **First term students are encouraged to reside on campus so that they may experience the residency and become acquainted with students and faculty to the greatest degree.**

Although readings are open to the public, other activities and facilities are for students and faculty only, and students may not be accompanied to the residency by spouses, friends or family. The residency period is an extremely demanding time to which students must give full attention. Guests are allowed for special occasions only such as graduation.

Workshops

The writing workshops, which meet for six days scheduled throughout the residency, encourage the development of analytical skills and critical abilities in a genre. Workshops are led by faculty members and includes six to ten students. During the residency, each student has original writing discussed in a workshop. This writing is submitted by students **in advance** and should be new work completed during the previous term's study; new students may submit the work submitted with their program application. Once the submissions are received and the workshops are organized, students will receive the pieces from everyone in their specific workshop so that they can read the work prior to the first meeting.

Residency Workshop Submissions

Students are required to submit their first workshop sample one month prior to the start of each residency. Faculty will email students specific guidelines. Writing samples should be work students want to edit and get feedback on during the residency workshop.

Workshop Sample Formatting: Work should be typed, double-spaced with 1-inch margins, 12-point serif font (e.g., Times New Roman or Garamond). Put your name and genre on the upper left corner of the first page of your submission. For excerpts, include a brief paragraph that contextualizes the work. Please make sure all pages are numbered.

Poetry students are required to submit 5-10 pages of poetry; fiction and nonfiction students are required to submit 12-20 double-spaced pages.

Prior to the residency, students should read the workshop submissions, mark the manuscript with comments, and prepare typed critiques for each workshop author and plan to hand the annotated manuscript and critique out in person to the author immediately after the writer's work has been discussed in class. The critique should be a minimum of 200 words with no maximum for each separate work (story, essay, poem, etc.) submitted for discussion. (Note: Faculty may use their own critique requirements.)

Expectations of Confidentiality

The Alma College MFA supports students in a learning process that encourages them not only to explore the reading and writing of literature but to debate, express, and experience a broad array of social, cultural, political, and religious ideas and perspectives. Students are encouraged to take risks in their work, to experiment with voice and personae, and to broaden their lives as writers and thinkers. Because the MFA program fosters an environment of open dialogue and expression both personal and artistic, it strives for an atmosphere of trust and reliance, and values a close community in which many lasting friendships are formed. The fact that everyone

in the program comes together twice a year for ten intensive days of workshops, lectures, panels, conferences, and social events in a small campus setting, further contributes to this sense of community and camaraderie. We believe the intense, open atmosphere of our residencies is essential to our students' education. At the same time, however, we want to be sure that we all respect and appreciate each other's personal and professional boundaries and that personal information and experiences as well as literary and academic work are not shared outside of this community.

Faculty Mentor Assignment

The Alma College MFA program employs faculty in the arts based on their publications, expertise, teaching ability, and academic credentials. All MFA faculty are part-time, and therefore bring to their teaching the benefits of simultaneous artistic careers and networks, but they are also committed creators and guides of the program.

Prior to the residency, students are encouraged to read published work by members of the faculty for that term. During the residency, after discussions and informal interview sessions with several faculty members, students are asked to submit a faculty preference list. Student/mentor assignments will be made according to student preferences and mentor availability and announced by mid-residency. Each faculty member works with a maximum of five students during the term. While every effort is made to ensure that student choice will be respected, the program does not guarantee that any student will be able to work with any one particular faculty member.

End of first year review: Those students beginning their degree year will also be counseled to assist them in developing their overall curriculum in the program and in preparing to demonstrate that they have met the requirements for the degree. Unless the faculty member requests it, students should not expect faculty to read and comment on large amounts of material during the residency period.

Students are required to work with a variety of faculty during their time in the program, and they are permitted to request to work with the same mentor for a maximum of two terms. During the residency, students meet in groups and in individual conferences with their assigned faculty mentor to discuss their study plan for the upcoming term.

The Residency Journal

Each student is required to maintain a Residency Journal, a provided form on which a student lists the activities attended and reflects on learning acquired and ideas inspired. It ends with a two-page residency reflection discussing their learning from the various activities during the residency and reviewing the overall residency experience. The journal must be submitted within ten days of the conclusion of each residency via Canvas.

This self-assessment document becomes a part of the student's permanent file. In addition, students will complete a separate residency review survey, identifying strengths, weaknesses,

and suggestions for future residencies. The review, submitted via an anonymous survey, helps the MFA program faculty plan the next residency period more effectively.

Students are expected to participate fully in the entire ten-day residency period. Full participation is required to earn the term's credit and for the granting of the degree. If, for some exceptional reason such as health or family emergency, a student cannot participate fully, s/he/they must petition the MFA program for a one-term withdrawal. Students on leave cannot begin a new term without participating in a residency first.

Remote Residencies

Alma MFA students may occasionally be offered the option of attending a remote residency in lieu of a residency on campus. Remote residencies will take the place of a campus residency in that the student attending a remote residency will earn the same number of credits towards the MFA degree and fulfill the same requirements. Remote residencies will feature visiting writers from the region or country where the residency is held; a smaller number of core faculty; and additional expense. Students will be notified about a year in advance regarding the details of an upcoming remote residency.

The Term Study Period and Plan

The students' main study component during the Alma MFA is the term study period. The primary focus of every term study will be the student's own creative writing. The student will submit packets of work to the faculty mentor every three to four weeks (five packets total for the term), respond to criticism and suggestions, and submit revisions of the material. All students will receive equivalent faculty time and attention regardless of genre or discipline.

At the faculty mentor's discretion, submission schedules and work methods may be modified to suit the individual needs of novelists. New students should discuss with their mentors continuing work on a novel or story with which they were involved for an extended period before the program. Students often find they learn much more by creating new material under the guidance of their advisors, rather than continuing to revise old material.

An important part of each term is the reading commitment. The student's preliminary bibliography is part of the study plan and is compiled with the advice of the faculty mentor. The list should include books that answer the needs and address the background of the student, as well as either broad reading in contemporary letters, a focused examination of a few writers, an exploration of the traditions of literature, or theoretical studies in a genre. Each first and second term student study plan must include critical essays in reading, the form of which can vary. Reading and analytical work are especially important in the third term when the student is writing a critical thesis and demonstrating readiness for the degree. Term work requires a minimum investment of 25 hours per week. The term study plans are filed with the MFA office via Canvas.

The faculty mentor is the chief resource for the term study and work. However, students are encouraged to become involved with local activities as well, such as library events, readings, and workshops. Some students include teaching and/or editorial work as part of their term work. This type of involvement does not become a substitute for work on their writing and exchange with the faculty mentor. These activities may be included in the evaluation of the term and as evidence of increased experience and commitment.

The term study plan will include the following elements:

- A list of specific learning objectives for the term
- A list of what the student will write to achieve these objectives
- A list of books and shorter works the student will read to achieve the learning objectives
- A schedule by which writings, submitted in five monthly packets, and readings will be completed

A completed study plan is required before the student departs from the residency.

Activities in the plan are completed during the term study period. During these five months, regular communication is conducted with the faculty mentor via email, telephone, mail, and Canvas, Alma's online learning management system. Over the course of the term, students submit five monthly packets of work to their mentors. This packet must also include a letter to the mentor with a narrative of describing the contents of the packet, how the writing month has progressed, and including any questions or comments about the completed work. Small groups of students may also participate in an online reading conference supervised by their respective mentors. Each term's independent study activities require a minimum of 25 hours per week, consisting of reading and writing. It may also include conferencing and communicating with other students.

The primary focus of the study is the student's own creative writing as well as written craft papers, 3-4 pages each, on a craft technique or techniques gleaned from the reading. Specific term study periods also include other degree requirements, such as the Critical Thesis (discussed in the second term, completed during the third, presented as a lecture at the fourth residency), the Final Manuscript of a Creative Thesis, the Reflection on Program Work with Publishing Assessment, the Graduate Reading, and Cumulative Bibliography. The last set of requirements are completed during the student's final study period in either the 4th or 5th term, depending on whether the student is pursuing a dual genre concentration.

The Term Packet

During each term students will submit to their faculty mentor five packets of original and/or revised work (one packet per month, according to the schedule established by their mentors). Each packet will consist of the following:

- **PACKET LETTER** (1-2 double-spaced pages)

Students will preface each packet with a brief letter to their mentor in which they reflect on their writing process that month, list detailed questions they'd like their faculty mentor to address when responding to their work and discuss the genesis and process of the work and any revisions they made. Students must proofread each packet for spelling and grammatical errors before submitting; if not, the mentor may consider the packet unacceptable.

- **CREATIVE MANUSCRIPT** (4500-7500 double-spaced words of prose; 10-15 pages of poetry or flash fiction)

Students will submit packets consisting mainly of original work. If revised work is submitted, the revision should reflect holistic structural changes, not minor edits or proofreading corrections. Students should submit only one draft of any piece per packet and respect the word and page limits.

- **CRITICAL MANUSCRIPT** (3-4 pages)

Students will submit a paper analyzing/discussing an aspect of writing craft studied or gleaned from the assigned reading. Ideally the student will choose the topic based on a technique they need to work on or wish to learn. **Note:** In the **third term** the critical thesis work replaces this requirement. Since the critical thesis is 20 pages, the student should work with the faculty mentor to plan/schedule how much creative work will be submitted in the packets to balance out this requirement. The student, for example, may focus on revising creative work instead of generating new work, submitted in alternating packets, while writing the critical thesis. In the **fourth term** students do not write critical papers unless the mentor feels the student's critical writing skills need more attention.

NOTE: BIBLIOGRAPHY

In the last packet of each term students will submit an annotated bibliography of the books read during the term. Annotations should be arranged in alphabetical order by authors' last names, in current MLA formatting.

All packet work should be typed, double-spaced with 1-inch margins, 12-point serif font (e.g. Times New Roman).

Dual Genre Requirements

The dual-genre option is a five-term program of study reserved for those students who are judged advanced enough in two genres to produce satisfactory theses in both after only three

terms of study in one and two terms of study in the other. Dual-genre students are not required to produce more writing or submit more packets per term than single-genre students.

Dual-genre students must work in both genres within the first three terms unless they petition and are approved for an alternative schedule.

Dual-genre students will complete a mandatory five-term course of study (67 credits), though students accepted into this option late in their tenure may be required to complete a longer course of study.

After being accepted into dual-genre study, the student will select a primary and a secondary genre and develop a plan of study objectives that outlines the completion of at least five terms' work, the balance, progression, and order to be decided by the student in consultation with, and with the approval of the program director in consultation with the student's faculty mentors. Any changes over the course of the student's study, including, in particular, any change in the designation of primary and secondary genres, should be made only in consultation with the program director and the student's immediate and most recent mentors.

Three of the five terms of study must be devoted to the student's primary genre and two to the student's secondary genre. Students may not submit work in more than one genre per term, with one exception: in the student's final term, they must submit for the mentor's approval a creative thesis in each of the student's genres. However, the student may submit work in only one genre in the monthly packets during the final term. If the mentor is qualified to evaluate the student's work in both genres, he or she will read but not critique the creative thesis in the genre that is not the focus of the term's work. If the mentor is not qualified to evaluate the student's work in the genre that is not the focus of the term's work, the program director will assign a second reader for that creative thesis and this reader will determine whether the thesis meets program requirements.

The requirements for a creative thesis are identical for single-genre and dual-genre students. If the student's final mentor (or the second reader assigned to evaluate a thesis) does not approve one or both theses, the student will have the opportunity to take an extension or, if considerable revision is necessary, an extra term to bring the thesis or theses up to acceptable quality.

Pertaining to the critical thesis, the student may choose to write a critical thesis that addresses both genres the student is studying. The critical thesis may be written in either the student's third or fourth term of study, but the fourth term is recommended since the student may wish to focus on generating creative work in their new genre in the third term.

Evaluation

A student learning in Alma's MFA in Creative Writing program is evaluated in several ways, all of which are grounded in the program's learning objectives and the knowledge that students are more likely to be successful if they have a clear understanding of expectations for their critical and creative work.

Each student's writing is evaluated by a faculty admissions committee during the application process. This writing sample and faculty evaluation serve as a baseline from which to identify the student's strengths in writing and assess the student's improvement through the course of the program.

The evaluation of the student's learning and, more precisely, the student's development and mastery of writing skills in a selected genre occurs in several ways:

- Students receive ongoing responses to their writing from faculty mentors and peers throughout the program.
- The midterm evaluation: Midway through the study period, the mentor completes a midterm evaluation that indicates the student's satisfactory work toward the study plan's learning objectives or indicates problems with the student's work and student-faculty relationship that might prevent the student from successfully completing the term. This midterm evaluation is submitted to the program office. If it is an unsatisfactory evaluation, the student is contacted by the program director to discuss strategies for academic improvement or the potential for the student being placed on probation. The student also completes a midterm self-evaluation which is submitted to the mentor and the program office. By mutual agreement, the student and mentor may modify the term study plan during the term, but any significant changes to the original plan must be noted in the mentor's student learning evaluation at the end of the term.
- Students write their own end of term student learning analysis and receive their mentor's evaluation (grade) at the end of each term study. **NOTE:** Students will not receive grades for their terms until they have submitted their evaluations.
- At the end of the final project period, the mentor approves the student's creative thesis final manuscript (which also must be approved and signed by the MFA director) and writes the final evaluation, clearing the student for graduation.

MFA Grading

Grading System. The following letters are used to record evaluations of student work: "A" (4.0); "AB" (3.5); "B" (3.0); "C" (2.0) and "E" (0.0-failing). An "E" will be recorded for such

reasons (other than failure to meet course requirements) as dishonesty, excessive absence or failure to comply with other conditions specified by the instructor.

Incomplete Grades. Incomplete (“IN”) grades must be replaced by letter grades within six weeks after the end of the term or they automatically convert to “E.”

The A or AB Term: The student handed in high-quality original or substantially revised work for all five packets at or near the maximum allowable word count, by or before the due date, along with a clear and informative cover letter. The student took advice well and applied it, with positive results, to their writing. Communication with the faculty mentor was prompt, respectful, open-minded (i.e. not defensive), and limited to the schedule on the syllabus and/or study plan. The student wrote strong critical papers, expressing clear ideas on craft, based on the books read on the term list.

The B Term: The student handed in some original and some revised work for all five packets at or near the minimum word count and after the due date, along with an unclear or uninformative cover letter. The student did not always take advice well and/or sometimes did not apply it to their writing. Communication with the faculty mentor was sometimes late, disrespectful, closed-minded (i.e. defensive), and/or in violation of the schedule on the syllabus and/or study plan. The student either failed to write strong critical papers or read all books on the term list.

The C Term (not passing): The student failed to hand in the required amount of work according to the schedule outlined on the study plan or syllabus. The student did not take advice well and/or did not apply it to their writing. Communication with the faculty mentor was late, disrespectful, closed-minded (i.e. defensive), and/or in violation of the schedule on the syllabus and/or study plan. The student either failed to write critical papers or read the books on the term list.

Note: A “C” term would place the student on academic probation. More than one “C” term would result in an expulsion from the program.

Degree Requirements

The decision to grant the MFA degree is made by the MFA Faculty Committee upon recommendation of the faculty mentor. The student’s record must demonstrate the following:

- Full participation in five residencies (six for the dual genre concentration option)
- Successful completion of four project periods (five for the dual genre concentration option)
- Completion of the Critical Thesis
- Working with at least three different faculty mentors (during the term study periods) during the program

- Extensive reading demonstrated by the preparation of an annotated cumulative bibliography
- Successful completion of the final term requirements: the graduating student public reading, the creative thesis final manuscript, and the document reflecting on the student's work in the program and an assessment of where they might publish their work.

The criteria for granting the degree include completion of all the above degree requirements, creative writing ability, engagement with explorations of individual voice and the role a writer may play in influencing current events, experience in applied criticism, and skilled knowledge of the genre/genres studied in the program. It is expected that developing mastery in these areas will be demonstrated in each residency and term study evaluation, as well as documented specifically in responses to and evaluations of the student's work for each term, including monthly packets of creative writing, critical papers, the critical thesis writing and presentation, the creative thesis final manuscript, and at the student's final residency, the graduating student reading.

Degree Requirement Details and Course Numbers

1. Single Genre Track

54 Credits which must include:

- 10 residency credits consisting of CWR 610, 620, 710, 720, and 730.
- 44 credits in mentored studies, which must include:
 - Fiction track: CWR 611, 621, 711, and 721.
 - Creative Non-Fiction track: CWR 612, 622, 712, and 722.
 - Poetry track: CWR 613, 623, 713, and 723.
- Successful presentation of a Critical Thesis and a Creative Thesis.
- No class graded at less than a B (3.0) may count toward completion of the MFA.

2. Mixed Genre Track

Students interested in completing a mixed genre MFA must receive prior approval from the MFA program Director. The requirements for the mixed genre track are identical to those of the single genre track, except that instead of completing a second 600-level mentored study in the area of primary concentration, the student will complete an introductory 600-level mentored study in a secondary concentration. Thus a fiction student interested in mixed genre work in creative non-fiction, for instance, would complete CWR 611, 711 and 721 in fiction, and CWR 612 in creative non-fiction.

3. Dual Genre Track

Students interested in completing a dual genre MFA must receive prior approval from the MFA program Director. The Dual Genre MFA requires 67 credits, which must include:

- 12 residency credits consisting of CWR 610, 620, 710, 720, 730, and 740.
- 55 credits in mentored studies, which must include:
 - 33 credits of mentored studies, including 22 credits at the 700-level, in a primary genre.
 - 22 credits of mentored studies in a secondary genre distinct from the primary genre.

Dual genre MFA students with prose as the primary genre and poetry as the secondary genre, for instance, would complete CWR 611, 711, and 721 as their primary genre studies, and CWR 613 and 623 as their secondary genre studies.

c. Successful presentation of a Critical Thesis, a Creative Thesis in the primary genre, and a Creative Thesis in the secondary genre.

d. No class graded at less than a B (3.0) may count toward completion of the MFA.

Course Descriptions

CWR 610: Residency I (2 credits)

Description: An intensive residency with members of the creative writing community. Includes an orientation to the Alma College MFA program, and assignment of a mentor for the initial term. Additional activities typically include workshops; professional readings; lectures in literature, theory, and the craft of writing; and discussions of the professional aspects of a writing life.

Course Designation: Graduate Credit, Master of Fine Arts in Creative Writing.

Prerequisite: admission to the MFA in Creative Writing program.

CWR 611: Mentored Studies I: Fiction. (11 credits)

Description: Mentored readings and practice in the writing of fiction. The course will situate these studies in relevant social, literary, and interpretative contexts.

Prerequisite: CWR 610

CWR 612: Mentored Studies I: Creative Nonfiction. (11 credits)

Description: Mentored readings and practice in the writing of creative nonfiction. The course will situate these studies in relevant social, literary, and interpretative contexts.

Prerequisite: CWR 610

CWR 613: Mentored Studies I: Poetry. (11 credits)

Description: Mentored readings and practice in the writing of poetry. The course will situate these studies in relevant social, literary, and interpretative contexts.

Prerequisite: CWR 610

CWR 620: Residency II (2 credits)

Description: An intensive residency with members of the creative writing community. Activities typically include workshops; professional readings; lectures in literature, theory, and the craft of writing; and discussions of the professional aspects of a writing life, and assignment of a mentor for the second term of MFA study.

Course Designation: Graduate Credit, Master of Fine Arts in Creative Writing.

Prerequisite: CWR 610

CWR 621: Mentored Studies II: Fiction. (11 credits)

Description: Continued readings and practice in the writing of fiction, and initial planning for the Critical Thesis.

Prerequisite: CWR 611

CWR 622: Mentored Studies II: Creative Nonfiction. (11 credits)

Description: Continued readings and practice in the writing of creative nonfiction, and initial planning for the Critical Thesis.

Prerequisite: CWR 612

CWR 623: Mentored Studies II: Poetry. (11 credits)

Description: Continued readings and practice in the writing of poetry, and initial planning for the Critical Thesis.

Prerequisite: CWR 613

CWR 710: Residency III (2 credits)

Description: An intensive residency with members of the creative writing community. Activities typically include workshops; professional readings; lectures in literature, theory, and the craft of writing; and discussions of the professional aspects of a writing life, and assignment of a mentor for the second year of MFA study.

Course Designation: Graduate Credit, Master of Fine Arts in Creative Writing.

Prerequisite: CRW 620

CWR 711: Mentored Studies III: Fiction (11 credits)

Description: Continued readings and practice in the writing of fiction. Completion of the Critical Thesis, and initial planning for the Creative Thesis.

Prerequisite: CWR 621 or, for students with a mixed or dual genre concentration, CWR 611 and 11 credits of mentored studies in a second genre.

CWR 712: Mentored Studies III: Creative Nonfiction (11 credits)

Description: Continued readings and practice in the writing of creative nonfiction. Completion of the Critical Thesis, and initial planning for the Creative Thesis.

Prerequisite: CWR 622 or, for students with a mixed or dual genre concentration, CWR 612 and 11 credits of mentored studies in a second genre.

CWR 713: Mentored Studies III: Poetry (11 credits)

Description: Continued readings and practice in the writing of poetry. Completion of the Critical Thesis, and initial planning for the Creative Thesis.

Prerequisite: CWR 623 or, for students with a mixed or dual genre concentration, CWR 613 and 11 credits of mentored studies in a second genre.

CWR 720: Residency IV (2 credits)

Description: An intensive residency with members of the creative writing community. Activities typically include workshops; professional readings; lectures in literature, theory, and the craft of writing; and discussions of the professional aspects of a writing life. Students in a single or mixed genre concentration will present their Critical Thesis.

Course Designation: Graduate Credit, Master of Fine Arts in Creative Writing.

Prerequisite: CRW 710

CWR 721: Mentored Studies IV: Fiction (11 credits)

Description: Culminating studies in the writing of fiction, including completion of the Creative Thesis.

Prerequisite: CWR 711

CWR 722: Mentored Studies IV: Creative Nonfiction (11 credits)

Description: Culminating studies in the writing of creative nonfiction, including completion of the Creative Thesis.

Prerequisite: CWR 712

CWR 723: Mentored Studies IV: Poetry (11 credits)

Description: Culminating studies in the writing of poetry, including completion of the Creative Thesis.

Prerequisite: CWR 713

CWR 730: Residency V (2 credits)

Description: An intensive residency with members of the creative writing community. Activities typically include workshops; professional readings; lectures in literature, theory, and the craft of writing; discussions of the professional aspects of a writing life; and recognition ceremonies for graduating students. Students in a single or mixed genre concentration will present their Creative Thesis; students in a dual genre concentration will present their Critical Thesis.

Prerequisite: CRW 720

CWR 740: Residency VI (2 credits)

Description: An intensive residency with members of the creative writing community. Activities typically include workshops; professional readings; lectures in literature, theory, and the craft of writing; discussions of the professional aspects of a writing life; and recognition ceremonies for graduating students. Students will present their Creative Thesis.

Prerequisite: CRW 730 and enrollment in a dual genre concentration.

The Critical Thesis

The critical thesis, completed in the third term, has both written and in person components. The finished thesis will be presented by the student as a lecture during the fourth residency. The manuscript will be planned and completed with direct input from the faculty mentor. It is expected that the mentor will review at least two drafts of the critical thesis prior to final approval. A first draft must be submitted to the mentor by the mid-term date.

There are many topics and approaches that are possible for the critical thesis. The possibilities include a discussion of some aspect of the craft of writing, an exploration of a particular literary form or genre, a survey of trends in a specific literary period, or an analysis of a particular author's work. The student is encouraged to work with their mentor to select a topic and approach that will most aid their progress as a writer.

The critical thesis must fulfill the following requirements:

- A critical thesis will contain a minimum of 5000 words, **excluding quotations**.
- The thesis will include a bibliography in scholarly form (refer to MLA Style Book or the Chicago Manual of Style). The bibliography will include both primary sources and books on literary criticism and/or craft.
- The thesis will include a 150-300 word abstract or summary of the paper.
- The title page will include the following: critical thesis title, student's name, name of faculty mentor, term date (i.e., Spring 2012) and the following statement: Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the Master of Fine Arts in Creative Writing Program at Alma College. The title page should not be paginated.
- The thesis must be submitted as a clean copy (with no hand corrections) with margins of 1 inch, in Times New Roman, 12 pt. font. The pages must be double-spaced, excluding any long quotations. It should be paginated in either the upper right corner or bottom right corner.
- The thesis must be submitted by the end-of-term date as a pdf file (sent via Canvas).
- At the fourth residency (the residency following completion of the critical thesis), the student will present the thesis to the Alma MFA community in a lecture format.

Critical Thesis Grading Rubric

The **A or AB** paper addresses the discourse thoroughly and originally while creating insightful, thought provoking ideas toward a clearly defined thesis/lens/theoretical view. Evidence comes from a variety of excellent source materials. The writer's ideas are well-developed in terms of the paper's discussion, analysis, and argument. The structure reflects a logical progression of ideas. The paper is thoroughly revised, edited, and proofread, with correct citation.

The **B** paper sufficiently addresses the discourse while creating thought-provoking ideas toward a somewhat defined thesis/lens/theoretical view. Evidence comes from a variety of credible source materials. The writer's ideas may need more development in terms of the paper's discussion, analysis, and argument. The structure mostly reflects a logical progression of ideas. The paper is revised, edited, and proofread with correct citation; there are some, mostly isolated, errors.

The **C** paper has difficulty addressing the discourse thoroughly and insightfully. The thesis/lens/theoretical view needs more development. The paper's evidence relies too much on unreliable source material, and/or the paper's discussion, analysis, and argument are unsubstantiated. The structure needs a logical progression of ideas. The paper has too many distractions: not thoroughly revised, edited, or proofread, with many citation errors.

The Creative Thesis Final Manuscript

The Creative Thesis Final Manuscript is a volume of the student's best creative work produced in the MFA program, reflecting proportionally the genre(s) the student has studied under the supervision of his/her/their mentors during each independent study period.

For students who concentrate in a **single genre**, the minimum page requirements are as follows:

- Creative Nonfiction: At least 125 manuscript pages
- Fiction: At least 125 manuscript pages
- Poetry: At least 45 manuscript pages

For students who pursue a **mixed genre concentration** (3 terms in a primary genre, 1 in a secondary genre), the minimum page requirements are listed below.

Note: Creative Nonfiction and Fiction are considered “prose.”

- Poetry (primary) and prose (secondary): 30 pages of poems, 25 pages of prose
- Prose (primary) and Poetry (secondary): 75 pages of prose, 10 pages of poems
- Prose (primary) and different genre of prose (secondary): 75 pages of primary genre, 25 pages of secondary genre

For students who pursue a **dual genre concentration** (3 terms in a primary genre, 2 in a secondary genre), the minimum page requirements are as follows:

- Poetry (primary) and prose (secondary): 30 pages of poems, 50 pages of prose
- Prose (primary) and Poetry (secondary): 75 pages of prose, 20 pages of poems
- Prose (primary) and different genre of prose (secondary): 75 pages of primary genre, 50 pages of secondary genre

Creative Thesis Grading Rubric

The **A or AB** manuscript: The manuscript is 125-250 pages of polished fiction or nonfiction, or 45-80 pages of polished poetry. The work demonstrates originality by showing an advanced awareness of its literary tradition (form, genre, style) and by adding to the discourse of that tradition. The writer has taken risks with the writing and demonstrates considerable growth since the start of the program, taking into account feedback from mentors on early drafts. The manuscript is thoroughly revised, edited, and proofread.

The **B** manuscript: The manuscript is 125-250 pages of polished fiction or nonfiction, or 45-80 pages of polished poetry. The work demonstrates some originality by showing adequate awareness of its literary tradition (form, genre, style) and by adding to the discourse of that tradition. The writer has taken some risks and demonstrates some growth since the start of the program, taking into account some feedback from mentors on early drafts. The manuscript is revised, edited, and proofread, but with errors still present.

The **C** manuscript: The manuscript is comprised of fewer than 125 pages of fiction or nonfiction, or 45 pages of poetry. The work minimally demonstrates originality by showing limited awareness of its literary tradition (form, genre, style) and by adding to the discourse of that tradition. The writer has taken few risks with the writing, demonstrates little growth since the start of the program, and has not sufficiently taken into account feedback from mentors on early drafts. The manuscript has many distractions (typos, etc.) and is not sufficiently revised, edited, or proofread.

The E manuscript: The manuscript is incomplete or unacceptable.

Final Bibliography

Before graduation students will submit an annotated MFA Bibliography, a list of books read during students' time in the MFA program. These works will include those assigned to students by their faculty mentors and those students read on their own. The annotated bibliography, when completed, will contain at least 24 books. Annotations should be arranged in alphabetical order by authors' last names, in current MLA formatting.

Reflection on Program Work with Publishing Assessment

Before graduation students will submit a 2–3-page document reflecting on their learning, their work in the program, and providing an assessment of how they will continue writing and where they might publish their work.

Academic Probation

A student may be placed on academic probation by the Alma Provost if the student has earned a C or below in any given term. The student will remain on probation throughout the remainder of the program. If the student earns a second C their enrollment will be discontinued.

Federal regulations require that students make Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP) towards the completion of their degree and maintain good academic standing. Students who fall behind in their coursework or fail to achieve minimum standards for grade point average and completion of classes, risk losing their eligibility for federal and state financial aid and external scholarships/grants/loans. A student can consult the full Satisfactory Academic Progress policy at <https://www.alma.edu/financial-aid/policies-forms-and-resources/>.

Attendance Policy

It is the policy of the Alma MFA Program that students are required to attend all workshop meetings, at least eight craft lectures, and at least six faculty/visiting writer readings, not counting the informal evening student readings. Students are required to sign in by the scheduled start time for each event. Repeated lateness will negatively affect the student's evaluation for that residency session.

Emergency Leave

For documented family, medical, or travel emergencies, students should contact their mentor immediately to discuss a plan for completion of the required coursework.

Extension Policy

A student unable to complete a term's study may petition for a one-month extension. An extension is granted only in extenuating circumstances, upon recommendation of the faculty mentor, and with the approval of the program director. All academic extensions begin the day after the residency ends. Requests for an extension must be made in writing to the program director at least two weeks before the end-of-term date. A Work in Progress grade "IP" will be given until the term's work is completed.

Students granted an extension may not enroll for a new term. After the extension period is complete, the student will be on a withdrawn status until the beginning of the next term.

Students and faculty will submit end-of-term evaluations and students will submit end-of-term work to the MFA office within ten days of the end of the extension period.

A student who is completing their final term on an extension may not receive a diploma until they have completed the extension and met all degree requirements. In this circumstance, the student will return for the next residency period to complete the final residency requirements and receive the diploma.

For purposes of financial aid certification or student loan deferment, students on extension status shall not be considered enrolled. No federal, state or institutional aid shall be awarded by the institution for an extension period.

Longer extension periods for Work in Progress may only be granted, by petition to the program director, in the case of extreme medical or personal circumstances. In such circumstances appropriate documentation is required by a healthcare professional. The petition and accompanying documentation will be reviewed by the student's faculty mentor and the program director to see if a longer extension period is warranted and, if so, what time period may be deemed appropriate.

Leave of Absence (Temporary Withdrawal)

Enrolled students may request up to two consecutive temporary withdrawals from the program without jeopardizing their enrollment or their standing in the program. Students must submit a written request for withdrawal from the program no later than a term date published and communicated to all enrolled students. ***Additionally, students not attending for a term must complete the withdrawal process by contacting the Center for Student Opportunity. Upon returning to Alma, please contact the Registrar's Office.***

Temporary Withdrawal status entitles the student to:

- Inclusion in program mailing lists and receipt of program materials;
- Return to full participation in the Program upon request of the student no later than three months prior to the residency which initiates the next term.

Students may place in their records any documents, reports or examples of work completed during the leave period. Such material will be considered in decisions about degree candidacy and graduation date but will not be taken in lieu of program requirements or granted credit.

Students on withdrawal status are welcome to return to the residency for an end-of-term review with their faculty mentor or the program director will suggest a telephone conference between the student and their mentor. Students on leave who choose to attend the entire residency period may participate in all residency events with the exception of workshops. We cannot, however, guarantee a room on campus. Occasionally, students going on a leave-of-absence may request to attend the residency following their current term in lieu of the residency beginning the next term for which they enroll. If the request is approved, the student is expected to attend the entire residency period and participate in workshops.

Students who wish to extend the withdrawal for a second term must submit a second request in writing to the program office as detailed above. Students who take more than two consecutive leaves of absence are automatically separated from the program. Students thus separated from the program must apply for readmission by contacting the program director.

A student readmitted within five years of being separated from the program will receive credit for previous work done in the program. If a student separated from the program for more than five years reapplies and is accepted into the program, credit for work previously completed will be granted at the discretion of the program.

IMPORTANT: Leave of Absence status as described above does NOT constitute an “Approved Leave of Absence” as defined by federal financial aid regulations. Recipients of federal Title IV financial aid must be aware of the implications of a leave on their financial aid situation, the 180-day grace period, and repayment schedule. Students contemplating a leave of absence should discuss their individual situations with Alma’s financial aid counselor and consult the “Graduate School” area of the financial aid pages at alma.edu.

Withdrawal

Complete policies for withdrawal and tuition refund may be found online at <https://www.alma.edu/financial-aid/policies-forms-and-resources/>.

Graduation

Graduation requires both academic and financial clearance. The program director and registrar will certify that all academic degree requirements have been fulfilled. The financial office will audit financial accounts. If academic and/or financial clearance is not granted, a hold will be placed on the graduation process until the academic deficiency and/or the financial obligation is cleared.

Commencement

Alma College's commencement ceremony takes place each spring. All graduating MFA students are encouraged to attend, dressed in full regalia, and participate in the festivities. Students graduating in the summer should attend commencement prior to their final residency in June. They will receive their diplomas at that residency. Students graduating in the winter should attend commencement after they have received their diplomas at their final residency in January.

Diplomas and Transcripts

Students who have not fulfilled their financial obligations with the college will not receive diplomas or transcripts until all amounts due to the college have been paid.

Student Standards of Conduct

Alma MFA students and faculty share responsibility for maintaining an appropriate learning environment. This includes using information technology responsibly in online and other courses. In order for faculty members to provide, and for students to receive, effective instruction in classrooms, online courses, and other learning areas, the Alma MFA Program and the faculty expect students to conduct themselves in an orderly and cooperative manner and not to engage in disruptive behavior, disorderly conduct, or intentionally interfere in the freedom of expression of others.

"Disruptive Behavior" or "Disorderly Conduct" as applied in all academic settings and formats (i.e., classroom, online, independent study, etc.) means behavior that a reasonable faculty member or student would view as intentionally or recklessly interfering with normal academic functions, college events, or college-sponsored activities.

Students who fail to fulfill the requirements for the residencies or writing terms, or who fail to display good citizenship and abide by the guidelines outlined in this handbook, may be placed on probation. Such students will receive a warning from the program director, following which any further violations may result in expulsion from the program.

Dismissal

Occasionally, a student may be dismissed from the College by the program director, on the recommendation of the faculty, with approval of the Academic Provost if the student has consistently failed to do the minimum amount of work required, has goals and working methods which are inconsistent with the program design and purposes, refuses to participate fully in the residency, or is abusive of faculty and other students. If the work of a student is found to be below the standard of performance reasonably expected at the graduate level, his or her continuation in the program can be denied. Approved dismissals will take effect at the end of the term in which such recommendation is initiated and granted. Only in rare and extreme circumstances may a dismissal take place during the course of an enrolled term.

Details can be found in the Alma College Student Handbook at <https://www.alma.edu/wp-content/uploads/2023/07/student-handbook-2023-2024-publish.pdf>.

Failure to comply with any of the rules or regulations in this Handbook and the Alma College policies posted in the online Student Handbook is grounds for dismissal from the program.

Plagiarism Policy

Plagiarism is the unacknowledged use of another's work, and the person who plagiarizes does so with the clear intent to pass off the work of another as his or her own.

As a program in creative writing, we are well aware of the various and important ways that artists are influenced and inspired by the work of others. The literary imitation is a genre with a long and distinguished tradition, one that explicitly acknowledges the ways in which writers learn from writers. Moreover, we all know, cherish, and have ourselves written poetry and prose that quote from, allude to, or are suffused by the atmosphere of other creative works. But we also value respect for authorship. Please note our plagiarism policy is posted not to induce fear or to inhibit the free exchange of ideas, but to protect the work of all writers, including each student who matriculates in our program.

In most instances, a case of suspected plagiarism will be handled in the following way: A faculty member will report the suspected plagiarism to the program director. It may result in failure of the course involved. All infractions and actions will be reported to and recorded in the Provost's Office. Repeated evidence of plagiarism is review by the program director and the Provost and may involve more severe penalties.

Academic Appeals

Students dissatisfied with some aspect of the program are encouraged to seek a resolution to the problem. The review and appeal process can be found in the Alma

College Student Handbook at https://www.alma.edu/wp-content/uploads/2023/07/student-handbook-2023_2024-publish.pdf.

Copyright Policy

At each residency we may record lectures by both faculty, graduating students, and visiting writers, with their permission, and make these available to students on the portal. It is expected that these recordings are for personal use only. They may not be distributed, quoted, or used in any manner beyond this without written permission of the author. The same is true of the poetry and prose submitted for workshop discussion, term work, as well as correspondence between students and faculty. We expect everyone in our community to act responsibly within the confines of copyright law and to serve as guardians of our creative and critical work.

Media Use Policy

Alma College reserves the right to use any photograph or video taken on campus or at an event sponsored by the college as well as any photo provided to the college. A student who wishes to be excluded from campus photography must contact the Associate Vice President of Communications in writing within the first two weeks of the first day of a residency. Requests for non-disclosure will be honored by the institution for only the current academic year, therefore, the request must be filed annually with the Communication and Marketing Office. By failing to provide such notification, you agree that the college may use your likeness. No person or organization may use, copy, alter or modify Alma College photographs, graphics, videography or other similar reproductions or recordings without the advance written permission of an authorized designee in the Communication and Marketing Office at Alma College.

Alma College reserves the right to change any provision, requirement, statement of policy or procedure, service or facility detailed in this handbook. This handbook does not constitute a contractual agreement between the student and Alma College.