

COURSE SUMMARY DOCUMENT

2023-24 ACADEMIC YEAR

COURSE TITLE: Master of Arts (MA) Drama Writing

DURATION OF COURSE: One Year (Full Time)

Entry Requirements:

Applicants will normally be expected to have an honours degree in a related subject area, and it is expected that all candidates will demonstrate some experience of dramatic writing. An example of drama writing will be required as part of the selection process.

Candidates will also be required to have **either** been working in the drama industry in another field (i.e. directing, performing, production, costume, technical, stage management) and now wish to develop their writing skills, **or** to evidence engagement with professional development as a writer outside HE (i.e. relevant industry training, fringe production, writers groups, self-produced work). Applicants should also have a clear understanding of theatre and their individual creative ambitions.

The selection process will seek candidates who have the best chance of finding a place in the professional industry after training, as evidenced through a combination of their submitted script, personal statement and interview.

For speakers of English as a second language an IELTS 7.0 (International English Language Testing System) is the minimum requirement with a minimum of 7.0 in each component of reading, writing, listening and speaking.

Applicants will be interviewed by two members of staff, including the Head of Course. There may be two rounds of interviews.

Course Outline:

This vocational course nurtures each student's unique creative approach as writers of drama for stage, screen, and radio. Professional writing practice is explored as craft and business across a range of mediums and in collaboration with professional artists and others in training at BOVTS. This allows writers to develop an exciting and diverse portfolio of short and full-length scripts, treatments, future projects, adaptable skills, freelance acumen and a bespoke post-graduation pathway for personal and professional development, rather than the course focusing on one single produced piece of work.

There is a particular emphasis on close personal mentoring, tailored feedback, collaboration with other writers and disciplines at the theatre school, and consistent weekly writing tasks throughout the year. The course structure encourages students to build a professional approach that balances creative freedom, high turnover of new ideas, writing to briefs and deadlines, and giving and receiving feedback.

The MA is delivered through masterclasses, workshops and seminars delivered by top industry professionals and experienced practitioners including the Course Leader. The course takes the students through four modules to unpack the basic principles of writing drama, adapting those principles to radio and screen, researching non-traditional writing practice, and developing a full-length play alongside additional portfolio pieces and a business plan for entering the industry after graduation.

Through collaboration students will gain an understanding of how directors and actors unpack text, having draft scripts and scenes examined in practice as actors bring their work to life at various points through the course. Students will have access to industry standard facilities including a dedicated writers' room, a radio drama studio and film department.

This course is delivered from a practitioners' perspective and the hands-on experience will ensure an excellent start to graduates' careers, preparing them for employment by providing a practical and critical understanding of commissioning and other industry processes.

The course runs alongside a busy BOVTS production schedule, which allows for the development of several specific features that will enhance the students' experience and learning:

- 1) Students will benefit from working within the context of an already meshed resource of expert tutors, visiting industry professionals, and students-in-training on different courses. These are in the related fields of acting, directing, design, stage management, costume, lighting and sound design, audio drama and film making. Students form particularly strong collaborations with the MA Drama Directors and collaborate with MA Performance Design students and MA Screen Actors. Bespoke writing training can also be accessed from a range of core staff in songwriting, writing and movement, writing voice/dialect, writing for stage combat and more
- 2) The School benefits from a very close relationship with the drama industry and this extends to MA Drama Writing students. On graduation, students will have a sophisticated practical understanding of the industry and have had the opportunity to make contacts within it
- 3) Students will develop a sophisticated understanding of the process of conceiving, drafting, redrafting a play and be given a toolkit of skills, enabling them to work confidently and appropriately in different styles and genres
- 4) Students will graduate as a creative, practical and confident writer who is capable of knowing which stories best fit each medium and be an excellent collaborator, able to articulate ideas and be sensitive to the values and creative contributions of others

Core Modules and any Optional Modules:

All modules are compulsory.

Module Name: The Dramatic Medium Part One (45 Credits)

Module Name: The Dramatic Medium Part Two (45 Credits)

Module Name: The Drama Writing Industry (30 Credits)

1 - 2 Downside Road, Clifton, Bristol, BS8 2XF (Address and Registered Office)
Admin: 0117 973 3535 E: enquiries@oldvic.ac.uk W: www.oldvic.ac.uk

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Registered as a Charity No: 900280 V.A.T. Reg. No: 520494954

An Associate School of the University of the West of England

Module Name: Writing a Signature Script (60 Credits)

Optional Modules: There are no optional modules.

Interim Award: There are no interim awards under this award scheme.

Credit requirements: MA Drama Writing – 180 credits

Method of study (for example, lectures, seminars, work placements) expected:

In the first term students will be learning in a group, exploring the basic principles of drama writing. They will read and reflect on a wide range of contemporary and classic plays, using them as inspiration for their own work week-by-week and learning alongside students of other disciplines: namely directors, designers and actors. Students will learn through seminars, workshops, masterclasses, and theoretical projects in a structured teaching environment.

As they progress through the course, under the guidance of teaching staff and visiting playwrights students will learn by reading, writing, and working on new ideas. In the first half of Term 1 students will develop their practice by creating short scenes in response to classic plays and attending weekly workshops on different elements of writing craft. Their scenes will be workshopped with the directors and actors through the second half of Term 1.

In Term 1 students will also begin group and tutorial work on their signature scripts, supported by visiting dramaturgs and the Course Leader. They will explore the principles of research and development on early ideas, and undertake a short presentation on their signature script idea. This will outline the key themes, structural ideas, world of the play and its core dramaturgy in preparation for early exploratory workshops with directors and actors.

Term 2 continues this learning approach with a combination of close one-to-one support, group workshops, visiting specialists and the undertaking of practical projects extending to the mediums of radio and screen. Students will also undertake a research project exploring contemporary writing practice, develop a notional project in a specific field e.g. verbatim, community theatre, puppetry, and complete a first draft of their signature script.

Term 3 takes the writers' entry to the industry and their signature script development as a key focus, developing a post-graduation business plan in response to visiting freelancers and venue / company / industry leads in theatre, TV and film, and preparing their signature scripts for an excerpt showcase of readings to the professional industry and the public.

By studying in a conservatoire drama school, students will be working in an environment in which the School's many courses share a common purpose: that of teaching professional practice for drama production. They will therefore be learning alongside different groups of students with a shared focus, learning their place in the creative team and learning how to interact purposefully within the group.

Students are expected to be able to work independently and develop leadership skills through the course as well as being taught through structured classes and workshops.

Much of the information and some of the content of the course is available via the School's Virtual Learning Environment on Google Classroom. Students will need their own personal computer and access to the internet to make the most of the course.

Workload including number of contact hours with School staff and expected self-study:

This is a full-time course, with the contact hours concentrated into 2-3 days a week (Wednesday-Friday) with approximately six intensive weeks. Contact time averages 15-16 hours per week. Monday and Tuesday are writing and research days.

Students should expect to undertake at least 15 hours per week of independent study. There will be some weeks where students will need to be in School all week – for example to record their radio plays, attend rehearsals of their signature scripts etc.

Students will need to be flexible as some rescheduling may be necessary.

The overall methods of assessment for the modules (for example exams, course work or practical assignments):

There is continuous feedback and assessment of students' playwriting skills, knowledge and understanding. All modules are assessed by coursework (meaning there are no exams). Students will receive extensive feedback – written and oral – from teaching staff and visiting industry professionals.

Students will be assessed on a portfolio of writing work and critical reflections from Term 1 including a ten-minute play, their signature script presentation, their audio play or film pitch and scene, their research project, their development plan, their complete signature script and a final critical reflection on their dramatic writing.

Students are assessed on a pass or fail basis (meaning that degrees are undifferentiated / not classified).

The award students will receive on successful completion of their Course:

MA Drama Writing validated by the University of the West of England, Bristol.

Where the course is taught:

Bristol Old Vic Theatre School: operating on two specialist teaching sites (Downside Road and Christchurch Studios)

Length of the Modules:

11-12 weeks each.

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Staff who are delivering the teaching:

Head of Course, BOVTS teaching staff and visiting industry professionals.

The fees which students can expect to pay:

Tuition fees for UK and Republic of Ireland students on the MA Drama Writing course will be £11,700.

Tuition fees for overseas students (non-UK) on the MA Drama Writing course will be £26,000.

Please see the Fees Policy at <https://www.uwe.ac.uk/courses/fees/tuition-fees-policy> for the most up-to-date information.

Any extra costs (in addition to fees) which students may have to pay to complete the course and estimated cost:

Increasingly, much of the information and some of the content of the course is available via the School's virtual learning environment and so you will need to have access to your own personal computer and the internet to make the most of your course. It is estimated that a suitable personal computer will cost £350.00.

You will need to research the most cost-effective way of accessing the internet away from School. The School has a number of means tested scholarship funds available to assist students with purchases of computer hardware and other essential costs which would otherwise cause financial hardship.

Course materials are provided, but students may have to allow funds to purchase their own copies of play texts and tickets / travel to professional productions (if outside Bristol). It is estimated that additional costs will be around £150.00. Students can apply for hardship funds if required.

For Overseas students only:

Student Visa if applying from outside the UK £348.00 Immigration Health Surcharge (with discount for Student Visa holders) £470.00