

1. Introduction

1.1. Overview of the Program

Program Under Review

The Creative Writing department is an undergraduate program that is part of the Faculty of Arts at KPU. KPU is a polytechnic university located in the metro Vancouver region of British Columbia, an area which overlaps with the unceded traditional and ancestral lands of the Kwantlen, Musqueam, Katzie, Semiahmoo, Tsawwassen, Qayqayt and Kwikwetlem peoples. The university has five campuses: two located in Surrey, and one each in Richmond, Langley, and Cloverdale. Designated as a polytechnic in 2008, KPU offers bachelor's degrees, associate degrees, diplomas, certificates and citations in more than 140 programs serving close to 20,000 learners each year. As a polytechnic, part of KPU's mission involves integrating theory, critical insight, and practice.

Creative Writing courses have been taught at Kwantlen Polytechnic University since 1981 when the institution was founded as Kwantlen College. At that time two first- and two second-year courses were offered. Over the intervening four decades, the institution has expanded (first through being granted university college status in 1995, and then university status in 2008) and the Creative Writing department has grown with it, implementing a BA Major in Creative Writing in 2011 and graduating our first Creative Writing BA major in 2013.

The Creative Writing department's growth over the last 40 years has occurred in a variety of areas: we now have 33 unique course offerings (running 38 sections each year), several online and mixed mode delivery options, a Bachelor of Arts major (54 credits) and minor (36 credits), and an Associates of Arts degree (15 credits). Our courses are transferrable to other institutions with writing programs in the Lower Mainland and the province, including Douglas College, the University of the Fraser Valley, the University of Victoria, and UBC.

The Creative Writing department is a home for those who love creativity, imagination and critical thinking about the self, about others, and the world we share. As this self-study will demonstrate the department is known for fostering a strong sense of community which supports emerging writers to discover their voice, develop their craft, and express their vision. The department embraces an environment that is collaborative, creative, and respectful. Our teaching methods are based on the principle of mentorship, and support an innovative, interdisciplinary classroom experience that facilitates critical awareness, cultural sensitivity, social responsibility, civic engagement, and global citizenship.

Admission Requirements

Admission to the Creative Writing program is classified as open intake – there is no set limit to the number of students admitted. In terms of admission requirements, all applicants to undergraduate studies in the Faculty of Arts must satisfy the Faculty of Art’s undergraduate admission requirement, which includes KPU’s undergraduate English proficiency requirement. There are no additional admission requirements to study in the Creative Writing program, however, students wanting to take our introductory course, CRWR 1100, must have English 12 with a B or above (which is higher than the undergraduate admission requirement) or be waived in based on a portfolio or other instructor-based assessment. The portfolio/prior learning assessment option is especially important for our mature student applicants who may have degrees in other fields, or work/life experience that demonstrates a strong proficiency in the English language. Generally, new KPU students with less than a B grade in English 12 wait to take CRWR 1100 in their 2nd term, after they’ve taken their ENGL 1100 which allows them to take Creative Writing 1100, 1200, or 1240 while still in their first year.

Credential and Curricular Requirements

Currently, in addition to the Bachelor of Arts general framework criteria, students must meet the following minimum requirements to graduate with a BA Major in Creative Writing:

Completion of the four core CRWR courses:

- CRWR 1100
- CRWR 1200
- CRWR 3303
- CRWR 4150

as well as

- ENGL 1100
- 3 additional credits from ENGL at the 1200-level
- 9 additional credits in CRWR at the 1000 / 2000 level
- 24 credits from CRWR at the 3000 / 4000 level (with a minimum of 3 credits being at the 4000 level)

(54 credits total)

Please see Appendix A for a full list of the course requirements for the CRWR BA program. Please see Appendix B for KPU’s BA Framework.

All KPU students intending to graduate with a Bachelor’s degree from the Faculty of Arts in Creative Writing must declare the credential by the time they complete 60 credits of undergraduate coursework. At the time of declaration, the student must:

- be in good academic standing with the University

- have completed of a minimum of 18 credits of undergraduate coursework including the following with a minimum grade of C:
 - 3 credits of ENGL at the 1100 level or higher
 - 6 credits at the 1100 level or higher in the Major area

Transferability

KPU is a member of the BC Council on Admissions and Transfer (BCCAT) an organization that oversees articulation agreements across institutions in the province. A KPU Creative Writing department representative also attends annual CRWR articulation meetings hosted at different institutions throughout the province and attended by representatives of most of the province's 2-4 year Writing degree programs. As mentioned earlier, KPU CRWR courses are transferrable to a number of institutions including UFV, UBC, UBCO, SFU and UVic. Originally, when we only offered two years of Creative Writing classes, KPU was considered a 'sending institution' (an institution offering only two years of writing courses which required our dedicated writing students to transfer *out* to other institutions offering full degree Creative Writing programs for their third and fourth years). We are now a 'receiving institution' offering advanced classes to students from Douglas College, Langara College, and other distant colleges or universities who do not have four-year writing programs. To this end, the Creative Writing department at KPU has fostered and/or formalized articulation agreements with other institutions to develop clear pathways for students hoping to transfer to KPU to continue in Creative Writing. These pathways range from formal transfer agreements with Douglas College and The Vancouver Film School which (as of 2023) will offer a KPU Creative Writing BA pathway for Film School writers, to advanced placement opportunities in CRWR 1100 for grade 12 writing students at the Langley Fine Arts School (an arts-based secondary school in our catchment).

1.2. Program Department

The Creative Writing department has eight permanent faculty members who teach a range of genres, including poetry, fiction, creative nonfiction, writing for new media, hybrid forms, screenwriting, and playwriting. We also have a roster of sessional instructors with various specializations who are employed when course work becomes available. The majority of our face-to-face and hybrid classes are offered on the Surrey campus, though before the pandemic, we regularly offered first-year classes on the Richmond and Langley campuses.

Our faculty are practicing writers/practitioners who have published numerous works and have received many accolades including winning provincial and international literary awards, receiving competitive grants for research and/or the creation of their works, having dramatic productions of their work staged in Canada and the United States, and having their writing adapted into other creative forms such as film, dance, and visual art. The department's faculty are respected among their literary and academic peers and are rated highly by students in student survey assessments.

Since the Dean of Arts Teaching Award inception, a number of the faculty have been nominated for, or have won, Dean of Arts Teaching Awards.

The Creative Writing department Chair position is a two- or three-year term. The Chair, or Co-Chairs, are elected by faculty. The Chair position is given a two-course time-release per calendar year. If there are two Co-Chairs the time releases are divided (each Chair receiving one course time-release). The Chair attends monthly Chairs meetings and works with an Associate Dean (assigned to Creative Writing) and the Dean of Arts. The Creative Writing department also has a Departmental Administrative Assistant whom we share with Journalism and Communication Studies.

1.3. Program Purpose

The purpose of the program is to provide learners with a dynamic, engaging, and relevant curriculum taught in a variety of modes and genres, and to cultivate and celebrate creativity, diversity, and curiosity. While writing and reading critically are both fundamental to literacy, our program develops and expands on basic literacy skills to explore and engage with language as a nuanced, malleable, and powerful tool for expression and art-making. The Creative Writing program supports KPU's mandate to provide excellent educational opportunities to learners in our catchment areas, and to provide learners with the knowledge, core competencies, and skills characteristic of traditional Bachelor of Arts programs. Our program also reflects the institution's mandate to provide learners with a polytechnic and interdisciplinary curriculum — one that celebrates imagination, innovation, applied skill-sets, and craft.

Changes Since Program Launch

After our first program review and self-study the department de-laddered many of the prerequisite pairings and streams students were expected to adhere to in order to progress through the program. This self-study is intended to offer an opportunity for faculty to evaluate the success of that de-laddering in terms of our students' ability to graduate in a reasonable period of time, our students' overall satisfaction with their educational outcomes, and faculty members' satisfaction with the new curriculum.

1.4. Issues for Program Review

The following program-specific issues are addressed in this self-study.

1. Curriculum

In this program review, the Creative Writing department seeks to find out if the major curriculum changes that we made in 2016 as a result of data gathered from our last program review have benefitted our students in terms of learning outcomes and progression through the program. The results of our last program review indicated that the Creative Writing department program pathway was too rigid for our students, causing them to take longer to graduate because they had to wait to take certain required courses during the semesters they were offered. As stated above, in our curriculum revision, we de-laddered our courses, making it easier for students to move through our

pathway in a timely fashion. Students also expressed in the surveys conducted for our last program review that they wanted more diversity of course offerings. To meet this need, we developed our 2nd and 3rd year Special Topic courses (2900 and 3400), which we now run every semester either as genre courses (Writing Young Adult Narratives, Graphic Narratives, Speculative Fiction, Horror, Fantasy, etc.) or as multi-genre themed courses (Research Methodologies for Writers, Writing as Witness, Writing Hybrid Forms, Writing and Nature, Writing and Wellness, and so on). The Special Topics courses have been very popular with students and have excellent fill rates. From this program review, the Creative Writing department hopes to discover if our students are satisfied with the level and type of instruction they are receiving in our program, and if the current course offerings meet their needs.

2. Equity and Ethics

Since our last program review, there has been a deepened focus on social justice issues and equity for our students. This has resulted in some consultation work with the faculty as a whole and some voluntary/individual or group training for faculty around issues of equity and diversity. In 2020, a group of Creative Writing faculty formed an anti-oppression reading group to further educate ourselves so that we can better serve BIPOC students, trans and non-binary students, neuroatypical students, and students from other demographics. While this work is ongoing, we hope that our student survey will further our understanding of students' experiences and needs.

3. Community-Building and Professional Development

Another aspect of the program we would like to assess is community-building and professional development. Most creative writers, regardless of the form they practice in, end up working in community, whether via the traditional writer/editor or writer/publisher relationships or through collaborative projects or installations or in workshop spaces. With this in mind, and in light of the difficulties of fostering community in the early stages of the pandemic, our department would like to further assess the kinds of peer-support networks we foster, the kinds of professional opportunities we provide students with, and the modes of interaction we facilitate between professional/visiting writers and our students. New initiatives across the institution such as the Service Learning Student Assistant Program (utilized by Creative Writing for the first time in the Summer 2022 semester) and the ARTS 3991, 3992 and 3993 Undergraduate Research courses are, and may, present further opportunities for students to develop skills and relationships that will benefit them after graduation. The department is also hoping to undertake a review and re-visioning of our reading series model in order to ensure excellent experiences for our visiting writers and for KPU students both within and without the Creative Writing department.

4. Enrollment and Promotion

Creative Writing classes have excellent fill-rates and our first-year classes are a popular elective. Mature students who make their way to our program have said they feel welcome and supported in their creative pursuits. However, the majority of our majors didn't come to KPU and take Creative Writing intending to major in the program – they only discovered, as they continued in the program, that a writing degree aligned with their sense of vocation. Identifying ways to recruit potential writing majors to KPU would allow the program to grow. While the faculty may have ideas around

ways to do this, our faculty (the majority of whom are part-time) already offer so much service in other ways (in terms of committee work and extra-curricular initiatives) that a well-constructed marketing campaign seems beyond our reach. We would like to grow our program, or at least become a destination for aspiring writers in our catchment areas – especially given the quality of the program and student satisfaction rates.