



photo by Rik Panganiban

**THE QUEENS COLLEGE-CUNY
MFA IN CREATIVE WRITING
& LITERARY TRANSLATION
STUDENT HANDBOOK
2020**

**ENGLISH DEPARTMENT
QUEENS COLLEGE
THE CITY UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK**

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INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the Queens College MFA Program! You are here because the creative writing and translation faculty was impressed by the strength of your writing and your potential to grow and thrive as a writer in our new program. All of us on the faculty are excited to work with you.

What follows is a tool for planning your course of study and a summary of useful information about our program, but not a substitute for regular conversations with the MFA Director, and the rest of the creative writing faculty. We are all available to talk with you about your course selection and your progress through our program.

The Queens College MFA has two tracks, one in creative writing (poetry, fiction, nonfiction) and one in literary translation.

For both tracks you will:

- Complete a total of 36 credits, which include workshops, craft classes and literature electives
- Take the following courses: 4 workshops, 2 craft classes, 3 literature electives, 1 literary criticism course, and 1 year of thesis work
- Produce a thesis in your genre of focus
- Present your thesis and process paper and take an oral exam

A. COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND COURSE LOAD

The MFA requires 36 credits. Each of our courses is three credits. Our program emphasizes classes on literary craft and requires you to take at least one workshop outside your genre of focus. You are also required to take English 636, a course on the history of literary criticism.

The chart below explains the basic requirements for each track:

Creative Writing Track	Translation Track
4 Creative Writing Workshops: English 751, 753, or 757—i.e., three in your genre of focus, one in another genre	4 Creative Writing Workshops: 2 Translation Workshops, English 757; and 2 CW Workshops: English 751, 753 or 757
1 Literary Theory class, English 636	1 Literary Theory class, English 636
2 Craft/Form Classes: English 760, 761, 762 and 763	2 Craft/Form Classes: English 760, 761, 762 and 763
Thesis Sequence: English 758 - Thesis Workshop, and English 759 - Advanced Writing Project	Thesis Sequence: English 758 - Thesis Workshop, and English 759 - Advanced Writing Project
3 Electives: 600 or 700 level courses, either from the English Literature M.A. program, or from participating departments with departmental approval.	3 Electives: 600 or 700 level courses, either from the English Literature M.A. program, or from participating departments with departmental approval.

Students complete the program in either two or three years. If you complete the program in two years, you take three classes per semester. If you complete the program in three years, you take two classes per semester, with a final thesis year in which you take one course each semester.

Also, note that summer MFA courses are not offered, so you should plan to complete your course work, especially your workshops and craft classes, during the academic year.

With an e-permit and permission of the instructor, you may also take elective classes at other CUNY campuses, including the Graduate Center.

Courses

Our courses are offered in the late afternoons and evenings (primarily at 6:30 pm with occasional electives at 4:30), and it is possible to work in the daytime and take classes at night.

Only students in the MFA program take our MFA classes. Literature classes are comprised of MFA and MA in English students.

Pre-registration

Each semester, the MFA Director will announce pre-registration and help you to register for courses. While we do hold spaces in our MFA classes so that all students can register for the courses they want, literature electives—especially English 636—are also taken by MA students and may fill up quickly.

Transfer Credits

The MFA program allows you to transfer credits for literature electives only, not for workshops or craft classes, provided you have taken graduate level courses at another university within the past 8 years. You may transfer up to 12 credits.

Both the MFA Director and Graduate Admissions must approve transfer credits. If you wish to transfer credits, please consult with the MFA Director and bring a copy of your official transcript listing the course(s) you wish to transfer as well as a course description.

B. MFA THESIS

Your thesis represents the culmination of your graduate work and is completed over your last two semesters of the program.

In the fall of your final year in the program, you will take the thesis workshop (English 758), a multi-genre course in which everyone presents a portion of his or her thesis to the workshop. Students also meet in conference with the instructor of the thesis workshop. In the spring, you will sign up for English 759 and work directly with your thesis advisor.

Thesis Parameters and Advising

For poetry, your thesis will be 25-35 pages. Prose should be 65-75 pages. For translation projects, students should work with their advisor to determine the appropriate length of the project.

The MFA Director can help you choose both the advisor and a second reader who will also comment and grade your final project. It is possible for a literature faculty member to be a second reader on your thesis, but if so, you should choose someone with whom you have taken a literature course.

The Process Paper

The process paper is a critical exploration of your work that accompanies your thesis and your reading list when the project is due in April. It should be approximately ten pages long and can follow or precede your thesis project but is part of your completed thesis.

The process paper allows you to reflect on the decisions you make as you write your thesis and to situate your work in terms of literary traditions. In effect, you are positioning yourself as a writer in this essay. It is a chance for you to look closely at how you have developed as a writer in the process of writing your thesis and working on your MFA. It should be written as an academic essay but should focus on your own artistic decisions.

The Oral Exam

In your final semester of the program, you will also take your MFA oral exam. This combination presentation, question-and-answer, and thesis-defense (about an hour) is an opportunity to talk about your manuscript with your advisor and a second reader, situate your project in a literary tradition and discuss the texts that have been influential to you. Questions will be based on the MFA reading list and the categories you have chosen from that list. Both your advisor and your second reader will be in charge of the exam.

Submitting Your Thesis

After your exam, you will have the chance to make any revisions to your thesis and then prepare it for submission to the college.

The title page of the thesis must bear your signature, both of your readers' signatures and the following statement:

“Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Fine Arts in the Department of English in the Graduate Division of Queens College of the City University of New York, [date].”

After your committee has approved your thesis, your thesis director will submit two copies of a Thesis Approval Form to the Office of Graduate Studies. Then the thesis must be bound. To arrange for binding, you must pay a \$25 binding fee at the Bursar's Office, for which a receipt will be issued. The receipt and two copies of the thesis manuscript must be taken to the Catalog Department of Rosenthal Library (Room 201). One bound copy is retained by the library and becomes part of its collection. A second bound copy is sent to the English department. If desired, a third copy may be submitted for binding, with no extra fee; the third copy will be given to you.

C. MFA READING LIST

In the spring of their first year, each student should meet with an MFA faculty member in their genre to draft their own reading list of thirty texts, **twenty in their genre of focus, five in another genre(s), and five in critical/theoretical work.** Using the official MFA reading list from our MFA website as a guide, each student's list should be personalized and decided upon by the student in consultation with the faculty member. Texts can be drawn from the list or from other sources.

C. MFA TEACHING OPPORTUNITIES

The MFA Program is pleased to announce that second and third year students will now have the opportunity to teach as adjuncts in the English Department.

The call for teaching applications will go out to everyone in December of the academic year for courses the following fall. Second and third year MFA students may apply for adjunct teaching slots. For the first semester in which they are assigned teaching, MFA students will teach English 110 (Intro to Composition). For the second semester, courses available will vary, but may include "Introduction to Creative Writing" (English 210) and "Introduction to Non-Fiction" (English 211). Students will submit materials (CV, letter expressing interest, sample lesson plan/s) to a committee composed of faculty from the MFA program and the English Department. Decisions are NOT based on student writing but on the quality of the submitted teaching materials and the committee's view of success in the classroom.

Although availability of courses depends on the university budget, students who are awarded courses in the fall semester will have priority for teaching courses in the spring.

All students who teach in the English Department must take English 793, a class which serves as a teaching practicum and which counts as one of the three required electives.

Once students have received their MFAs, they will no longer receive priority for adjunct teaching in the English Department because space must be reserved for current students.

D. THE ADVANCED CERTIFICATE IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING

Queens College is located in one of the most linguistically diverse places on the planet. Our MFA program is one of the rare programs to offer *both* a degree in Creative Writing and Literary Translation. Students now have the option of earning an Advanced Certificate in Teaching English as a Second Language (TESOL). Students apply to this program at Queens College in their final semester of the MFA program.

In an increasingly competitive job market, where an MFA alone is often not sufficient to teach on the college-level, this Advanced Certificate in English Language Teaching will enhance the degree and give graduates other options. (Note: This certificate does *not* fulfill the State Education requirements for certification in elementary or secondary schools.)

E. THE LOUIS ARMSTRONG HOUSE AND MUSEUM RESIDIENCIES

In collaboration with the Louis Armstrong House and Museum, each spring, we offer several residencies for MFA students to conduct research in the Armstrong archive. Students work in the archive to create original works based on Armstrong's life and work and then present them in the garden at the Armstrong house in Corona during a public reading. This is a wonderful opportunity to utilize the resources of Queens College and the borough of Queens.

F. MFA READINGS AND EVENTS

On the Same Page Discussion Series

We begin each academic year with an evening of lively discussion about the craft of writing. Based on a packet of texts sent to students during the summer, and led by MFA faculty members, the discussions are designed to engage everyone in the MFA program, and to explore matters of craft, form and language in the texts.

A Partnership with The Poetry Society of America

We are thrilled to have an ongoing partnership with the Poetry Society of America, the nation's oldest poetry organization that is based in NYC. The two series we work on with the PSA bring internationally renowned poets to campus for large public readings involving the entire campus community. Recently, we brought poet Patricia Smith to campus to read in this series.

A Partnership with Cave Canem

Our partnership with the nation's foremost organization supporting African American poets, this series brings renowned writers to campus to read and engage in conversation. Most recently, Nicole Sealey and Tracie Morris read in this series.

A Partnership with Kundiman

Our partnership with the first organization in the country to support Asian American poets, this series brings writers to campus to read and engage in conversation. Most recently, we brought Patrick Rosal and Jennifer Chang to read in this series.

Trends in Translation Series

Each year we invite several esteemed literary translators to campus to speak about the theory and practice of translation. These events range from presentations to just a handful of our translation students, to a recent roundtable discussion on the correspondence between Paul Blackburn and Julio Cortazar.

Writers Read at Queens College

Each semester, on a series of evenings, writers come to read and talk about their most recent book with our students. Some of our most fascinating and still ongoing discussions have been generated during these conversations. We have hosted readings by poets, novelists, non-fiction writers, translators, and writers of graphic narratives as well.

Talks by Agents and Editors

At least once a year, we invite an editor and/or an agent to come speak with students about the practical matters involved in writing. These talks are a great way to learn about the nuts and bolts of publishing.

Queens College Evening Reading Series

Sponsored by Queens College and the Kupferberg Center for the Arts, this renowned series brings many notable writers to campus, including, in the past, Valeria Luiselli, Jamaica Kincaid and Robert Pinsky.

G. *ARMSTRONG LITERARY: A JOURNAL OF NEW WRITING:*

<https://armstronglit.org/>

In the first year of our program, the MFA students launched a national journal in which all MFA students are welcome to participate.

Armstrong Literary is a biannual online journal of new writing publishing Fiction, Poetry, Creative Nonfiction, Plays and Translation from emerging and established writers. *AL* is edited and designed by graduate students in the Queens College MFA program in Creative Writing and Translation.

The journal holds launch readings for each new issue in NYC.

H. OUR LITERARY PARTNERS ACROSS CUNY

As part of a larger university system, The City University of New York, our students are part of a network of graduate programs: three other MFA programs and the Graduate Center. Although we are distinct academic programs, in the interest of community building *across* the system, we plan a number of joint events that engage the larger CUNY community.

Each spring, the four CUNY MFA programs meet at the Graduate Center in NYC for the Turnstyle Reading Series where graduating MFA students read with MFA faculty. This wonderful public reading series allows MFA students from different programs to meet one another and present their work.

As in years past, as well, the CUNY MFA programs will co-sponsor A Celebration of the Chapbook this spring.

I. HELPFUL LINKS FOR COMMON QUESTIONS

*****Updated to reflect new procedures during COVID-19 pandemic*****

How do I contact the Office of Graduate Admissions?

Due to current circumstances, the Graduate Admissions Office is working remotely. Our virtual office hours are Monday-Friday, 9am-5pm. The best way to reach the office is via email (listed below).

Email: grad@qc.cuny.edu

You may also want to utilize our Live Chat link to speak to an admission representative. The link can be found [here](#) (in the upper right hand corner labeled “Live Support”)

The Graduate Admissions Office is located at:
Queens College
65-30 Kissena Blvd
Jefferson Hall, Welcome Center
Flushing, NY 11367

How do I contact the Health Services Office and where can I find the Immunization Form?

Effective March 19, 2020, the office of Health Services will be providing services to students via e-mail, telephone and other modalities. If you have general questions or need assistance please call 718-997-2760 or e-mail healthquestions@qc.cuny.edu.

For the most up-to-date information, please visit the [Health Service](#) website.

Immunization Forms can be found [here](#) and must be completed and returned to the Health Services Office prior to class registration. Forms may be e-mailed to healthquestions@qc.cuny.edu. ***Students who were previously enrolled at Queens College do not need to submit new forms.***

Out-of-state students who are experiencing difficulty in obtaining their health records are encouraged to contact previous institutions attended (even high schools) to retrieve records.

*****New York State/NYC residents who are experiencing difficulty in obtaining health records should contact Terri Calhoun, RN for Queens College. She has access to the NYS health database and can assist to locate your records. She can be reached at terri.calhoun@qc.cuny.edu or 917.309.4583.***

Where can I find out more about Financial Aid and Loan options?

Information regarding Financial Aid and Loans may be found by visiting [here](#).

Financial Aid processes are serviced by the QC Hub. You may find out more information by visiting the link above. The QC Hub also offers a Live Chat feature, as listed on their website.

How can I pay my Commitment Tuition Deposit?

Typically, all **accepted** students are required to pay a non-refundable \$250 Commitment Tuition Deposit. The Commitment Tuition Deposit enables each student to confirm enrollment to the program to which s/he has been offered admission and will be applied to the first semester tuition charges.

****However, due to COVID-19, the Graduate Admissions Office is waiving the \$250 deposit.** Simply log into your application account and follow the steps to accept your enrollment offer, as outlined in your decision letter -- you will **not** be required to pay the commitment fee upfront or mail in your enrollment form. The amount will simply be applied to your first semester tuition charges.

Once you have accepted the offer to enroll, we will work on granting you the ability to claim your Queens College accounts via e-mail. Once you have accepted your offer, it will usually take a few days for you to receive your follow-up email.

In the meantime, you may contact your Graduate Faculty Advisor, as indicated in your decision letter, to discuss your course of study and registration plans.

How can I find Bursar-related information?

For more information about the Bursar, please visit its [website](#). The Bursar's Office is located in Jefferson Hall 200.

How do I set up my CUNYfirst and QC email accounts? How do I get a QCard (ID card)?

In order to receive your CUNYfirst and QC email accounts, you will first have to accept your offer to enroll, as indicated in your decision letter. Once you have accepted the offer to enroll, the Office of Graduate Admissions will work on granting you the ability to claim your Queens College accounts via e-mail. Once you have accepted your offer, it will usually take a few days for you to receive your follow-up email. Please allow for sufficient turnaround time.

How do I get my QCard (Queens College ID card)?

To obtain a QCard, you must have a CAMS (College Account Management System) account. If you do not have one, visit <https://cams.qc.cuny.edu>. After activating your CAMS account, you can get your QCard on the next business day when the ITS QCard Office is open.

QCards are issued in the ITS QCard Office, located in Dining Hall, Room DH-116A. You must bring two photo IDs as proof of identification (e.g., your old college ID, a driver's license, a state-issued non-driver ID, or a passport).

If you lose your QCard, you must go to the Bursar's Office in Jefferson Hall 200 to pay the \$10 fee. Then visit the ITS QCard Office to obtain a new QCard. Make sure to bring the receipt and a picture ID.

For more information about the QCard, please click [here](#).

How do I apply for a parking decal?

Parking decals are offered through the Public Safety Office. For instructions on how to apply for a decal, please visit its [website](#).

I am an out-of-state student. What is the process for me to become eligible for in-state tuition?

To be eligible for in-state tuition as an out-of-state student, you will have to meet certain requirements. For exact criteria, please click [here](#).