College of Arts and Sciences, University of Oregon (Fall, 2018)

**Graduate Degree Assessment Plan**

Creative Writing Program

The MFA in Creative Writing at the University of Oregon consists in a rigorous curriculum of coursework, exams, and a terminal creative project (Masters thesis), extending over two years. During the first year, the coursework comprises literature seminars, writing workshops, and independent conferences with individual faculty. The second year also involves seminars and workshops, but culminates with a comprehensive exam in the early spring and a terminal creative project at the end of the quarter. Below is a more specific description of the various means of assessment for the learning outcomes envisioned for each component of the Master of Fine Arts degree.

Literature seminars in the craft of fiction and poetry, usually specific to one or the other genre, require students to become familiar with a range of authors, literary styles, historical periods, and literary movements, and to demonstrate knowledge through oral presentations and written work. Such work can be in the form of analytic papers or creative writing—poems or fiction—that serve to assess students’ understanding of the literary craft of their genre, their acquisition of a critical lexicon, their proficiency as readers, and their development as writers.

Workshops in fiction or poetry focus more exclusively on student writing. Through the careful, close, imaginative reading of and commentary on one another’s work, students further evolve as creative writers. One-on-one meetings between students and faculty, following the workshopping of student work in class, are one means of assessing the development of student writing skills. Final assessment in such courses measures the quality and depth of the written critiques of fellow students’ work, the quality of submissions of student work itself, and the quality of revisions consequent on the one-on-one meetings. In particular, the end-of-quarter creative submissions allow for assessment of students’ mastery of the formal elements of craft in either genre.

Assessment in independent conferences (605s), one-on-one tutorials that MFA students take with individual faculty during their first year, consists in accountable dialogue about a reading list accompanied by short analytic papers or creative responses.

The MFA Exam at the beginning of the spring quarter of the second year provides the first *synthesizing* assessment of a student’s development as a reader and writer of fiction or poetry. Based on an individualized reading list of 20-30 books compiled at the end of the first year, MFA students write essays in response to one to five questions (with the number dependent on the genre of poetry or fiction) over the course of four days. The exam gives two primary challenges to undertake within the context of the reading list: first, to discuss one’s development as a writer and the literary and historical context in which students view their work; and second, to discuss work that has been read critically, with a view to craft, tradition, historical period, and literary movement, etc. This exam serves therefore to assess MFA student-candidates’ degree of command over the texts that they have encountered over the course of their two years of study, along with the multitude of aesthetic concepts, compositional possibilities, and artistic concerns to which they have been exposed.

The culminating assessment of a student’s literary evolution as a poet or writer of fiction is the Terminal Creative Project. This consists of a portfolio of poems or works of fiction that students produce over the course of the winter and spring quarters of their second year. In consultation with their TCP advisors, students execute many drafts or revisions of their creative work until the project has met the standards of the program.

The numerous publications, awards, fellowships, and literary prizes garnered by MFA graduates in Creative Writing from the University of Oregon serve as the most reliable post-graduate assessment of the program’s success.