

Creative Writing: An Introduction to Writing Poetry

7.1 Module Overview								
Module Number		Module Title	Creative Writing: An Introduction to Writing Poetry					
Stage of Principal Programme		2	Semester	1	Duration. <i>(Weeks F/T)</i>	12	ECTS	5
Mandatory / Elective (M/E)	E	Hours of Learner Effort / Week	2					
Analysis of required hours of learning effort								
Teaching and Learning Modalities				✓if relevant to this module	Approx. proportion of total (hours)			
Contact Hours								
In person face-to-face				✓	24			
Synchronous								
Indirect/Non-Contact Hours								
Asynchronous								
Work Based								
Other:								
• Independent Reading				✓	10			
• Poetry Portfolio				✓	60			
• Exam Preparation				✓	31			
Total					125			

Pre-Requisite Module, if any. Module # and Title	N/A
Co-Requisite Module, if any. Module # and Title	N/A
Maximum number of learners per instance of the module	20
Specification of the qualifications (academic, pedagogical and professional/occupational) and experience required of staff working in this module.	
Role e.g., Tutor, Mentor, Lecturer, Research Supervisor, etc.	Qualifications & experience required
Lecturer	A lecturer with a level 9 qualification in Creative Writing or a good record of publication and demonstrable creative writing teaching experience.
	Staff - Learner Ratio X:Y
	1:20

Assessment Techniques – percentage contribution				
Continuous Assessment	70%	Proctored Exam – in person	30%	Practical Skills Based
Project		Proctored Exam - online		Work Based
Capstone (Y/N)?	N	If Yes, describe		

7.2 Minimum Intended Module Learning Outcomes (MIMLOs)

MIMLO On completion of this module a learner will be able to:	Related MIPLO #
1. Judge with confidence the achievement of a contemporary poet based on a close reading of a poem.	1, 2, 3
2. Demonstrate an ability to analyse the connections between form and theme in the close reading of a poem using the technical vocabulary of poetry: the poetic line, enjambment, line breaks, couplets, quatrains, and figurative language, for example.	1, 2, 3
3. Produce a body of original work that exhibits competence with the poetic line, enjambment, line breaks, free verse, couplets, the quatrain, and imagery, for example.	3, 4, 7
4. Organise a coherent literary argument based on the close reading of a poem to respond to a particular question that has been asked.	1, 3, 7

7.3 Indicative Module Content, Organisation and Structure

We will begin by looking at the contemporary poem. A good place to start is Paula Meehan's 'My Father Perceived as St Francis'; where we will examine the poetic line, line-breaks, enjambment, diction, listing, imagery, and cultural context.

We will proceed from there to other poems about family: grandparents, mothers and fathers, brothers and sisters. These will be poems of memory, of people and places. From the perspective of poetic technique, we will primarily focus on the basic unit of poetry: the line. In these readings we will have a close look at the line-break, enjambment, and some basic verse forms like couplets and quatrains.

Poems examined could include Michael Longley's 'The Balloon', Dermot Healey's 'Tongs', Edward Hirsch's 'Special Orders', Michael Crummy's 'Boys' and 'Girls'. Through a series of prompts learners will be invited to create their own poems about family.

We will also consider what is poetic voice, and the importance of the aural to poetry as an art – the music of poetry. We will look at Langston Hughes' 'Fire' and Liz Berry's 'Sow'. We will look at selections from Walt Whitman. Here we will pay particular attention to the language; its musicality and originality/freshness. Again, a series of prompts will focus in on the musicality of poetry and learners might incorporate this element into their poetry.

We will look at poems about objects; poems like Eamon Grennan's 'Dublin-Poughkeepsie: Bread Knife in Exile', Michael Longley's 'The Amish Rug', or Seamus Heaney's 'The Harvest Bow'. Cavafy's great poems 'The Afternoon Sun' and 'The Mirror in the Hallway' will be examined. These workshops will open learners' eyes to what's around them; and to seeing these objects as concrete ways into thinking and talking about abstract concepts like memories, relationships, death, love, etc.

We will consider ekphrastic poetry, poetry responding to art. We will look at poems about paintings, Thom Gunn's 'Painting by Vuillard', for example, or Edward Hirsch's 'Edward Hopper and the House by the Railroad.' Also, poems about art by Derek Mahon, Robin Robertson, Sujata Bhatt. Learners will all be given a postcard from an art gallery; a range of paintings will be presented, from the classic international masters like Caravaggio, Matisse, Picasso, Hopper, to less well-known artists, along with great Irish artists like Jack B. Yeats. Learners will create their own ekphrastic poem in response to these works.

We will look at poems in translation, the influence of Akhmatova on Irish poetry, Irish poets' versions of Cavafy poems, and the great Chinese masters, Du Fu, Li Bai, Wang Wei. Looking at different translations of the same poems, by Sean Dunne and W.S. Merwin or Stanley Kunitz, for example, learners begin to appreciate the valencies of particular words and the choices that poet's make. Learners will examine versions of other language poets by Kenneth Rexroth, his translations from the Chinese, alongside Derek Mahon and Michael Longley. They will be invited to do their own poems 'after' these masters.

Learners who take this module must enter the annual Carlow College Literary Awards and Creative Writing Showcase. This event happens every year in VISUAL, and it sees members of the Creative Writing classes showcase their work, as well as producing annual award winners. A high-level creative writing practitioner presents the literary awards every year, gives a reading from their work and answers questions about writing and publication over the evening. Through their participation in this competition learners will discover what is involved in entering a competition run along professional lines, develop the presentation skills expected of a professional writer, and know what is involved in turning up to an awards ceremony suitably prepared and ready to engage with the event.

Poems chosen for the workshops may draw on material from the following, but we are not restricted to it; from international poetry: Mahmoud Darwish, Mary Oliver, Derek Walcott, Mark Strand, Thom Gunn, Michael Crummy, Ruth Padel, Louise Glück, C.P. Cavafy, Li Bai, Du Fu, Wang Wei, Chu Shu Chen, Kenneth Rexroth; and from Ireland, poems by Paula Meehan, Michael Longley, Seamus Heaney, Justin Quinn, Dermot Healey, Eamon Grennan, Matthew Sweeney, Rita Ann Higgins.

7.4 Work-based learning and practice-placement *(if applicable)*

N/A

7.5 Specific module resources required *(if applicable)*

N/A

7.6 Application of programme teaching, learning and assessment strategies to this module

Workshops will consist of close reading of strong poems by leading national and international contemporaries, through which cornerstones of poetic craft will be examined and discussed. The core competency of close-reading will be cultivated through guided in-class close reading, analysis, and questioning.

After examining a model poem by a professional on the theme of mother/son relations, for example, a poem in which a musical phrase is used, in which a strikingly original image is used, or long and then short lines, thus creating tension, learners will be asked to produce their own poem incorporating some of these elements. A poem like Michael Longley's 'The Balloon' can be drawn upon usefully in this way. An in-class guided prompt will be used here to initiate a series of thoughts around the theme. So then, the basic plan of each workshop runs something like this:

1. Some initial writing on a theme, following a series of prompted or guided reflections;
2. The close examination of a model on the theme, considering and evaluating the use of poetic techniques within the piece;
3. Further prompts are given suggesting new dimensions in which the initial draft might be taken (this is now draft two);
4. The reading of these drafts, often just a selection, from class members to others, with some discussion as to what is strong in these second drafts, and a consideration of what might be jettisoned or reconsidered, with suggestions/input from the class tutor;
5. Learners are instructed to work on these drafts at home over the course of the coming week and to submit a version of this poem the following week for critique by the course tutor.

Thus, a poem is produced nearly every week of the course, working towards the portfolio submission. These poems build on earlier work and techniques, incorporating new elements and techniques, as well as benefitting from input by class members and the course tutor. We can see how the workshops are designed to teach basic elements of poetic technique and to invite the learners to practice them in a consistent and progressive way. That is, each workshop seeks to build on previous lessons.

The module assessments are designed to test various elements of poetic practice. Learners need to practice the craft regularly, which they are encouraged to do by the building up of their portfolio. This body of work is built up in an incremental way, allowing for the accumulation of skills and the application of considered reflection based on the increasing exposure to new poems and new techniques over the duration of the module period. Learners have the opportunity before final submission of the portfolio to review the entire body of work considering week-on-week comment on the work submitted by the learner to the course tutor, and in the light of new techniques and insights learned and gained over the duration of the module. Also, as informed by listening to comments and hearing the poetic practice of other course participants.

Given the intensive learning and assessment strategy this workshop can only work with low numbers. Therefore, a low tutor/learner ratio is essential. Class participation will be encouraged and pursued. In-class guided activities will be engaged with. Moodle support will be used; techniques and ideas regarding approaches to learning as well as module content specific to poetry and creative writing.

60% is available for a portfolio of poems produced during the term and submitted (the revised versions of the poems) by the end of term. In every workshop, learners will start work on a new poem, a version of which will be submitted to the course tutor at the next session for subsequent comment and analysis. This is handed back to the learner at the next session. In this way, work is continually being created and reviewed over the course of the module. This is how the poetry portfolio becomes a piece of formative and summative assessment. The portfolio will consist of 8 -10 poems that have been started in the workshop by the learner and which have then been subsequently revised in the light of comment from the course tutor, and further learning and practice during the series of workshops, and it is the core assessment feature of the module. It is submitted near the end of the module.

Finally, 30% for a final exam of 1 and a 1/2-hour duration where learners answer two questions in which they are asked to analyse two poems, one seen and one unseen. This is a form of summative assessment. The exam is a useful mode for approaching an unseen poem, where learners' skills in reading new poetry are tested. Attendance (10%) is vital for the success of the module.

7.7 Summative Assessment Strategy for this module		
MIMLOs	Technique(s)	Weighting
3	Poetry Portfolio Typically, ten original poems are presented in their final version. They will have been revised and rewritten in the light of comments made by the course tutor and in the light of further learning acquired during the module.	60%
1, 2, 4	Proctored Exam Learners will have to respond to two questions, one for a poem seen and studied during the module and one unseen, a poem where learners must demonstrate their ability to read a poem without any prior knowledge of it.	30%
	Attendance	10%

7.8 Sample Assessment Materials
<p>Exam: A typical exam question might look like:</p> <p>Critically evaluate how successful Eamon Grennan's formal choices and use of poetic techniques are in 'Dublin-Poughkeepsie: Bread Knife in Exile.' You might pay particular attention to the musicality he generates in the poem.</p> <p>Dublin-Poughkeepsie: Bread Knife in Exile</p> <p>Home from home again, the song of my mother's bread knife stops me mid-slice, tiny teeth of Sheffield steel making their own music that'd cut through the cackle and half-truths of our first kitchen</p>

as she'd sever the black crust of an elbow turnover
or slice into the burnt brown of the Vienna roll
she'd slather with country butter, its salty sweat
making our mouths water where we stood in the light
of the there-and-then world that has become the here and now
of the world as is: a few streaks of sunlight bringing in
fall flicker and stipple-shadow, leaves turning
amber, ginger, rust as the season beyond the window turns
and I settle a migrant heart again in this elsewhere,
hearing the persistent shrill stitching of one late September cricket,
which my mother, though only a ghost, cocks her one good ear to,
stopping the bread knife mid-slice to listen, stunned
to silence first, then turning to ask me what that strange insect
singing is – but before I can answer she's smiling anyway, saying
yes in her old way to it, to what's becoming, foreign as it is,
familiar as the music her bone-handled bread knife goes on making,
which long ago, now, and far away, she stopped noticing.

Eamon Grennan

Marking of assessments will be in line with the Marking Assessment Guidelines as outlined in Section 3.3 of the College's [Regulations in Relation to Assessment and Standards](#) unless otherwise indicated.

7.9 Indicative reading lists and other information resources

Indicative Core Reading:

A very broad range of poems will be explored in class via handouts.

Indicative Other Reading / Resources:

Addonizio, Kim, *Ordinary Genius: A Guide for the Poet Within* (New York: Norton, 2012)

Bryant Voight, Ellen, *The Art of Syntax* (Minneapolis: Graywolf Press, 2009)

Drury, John, *The Poetry Dictionary* (Cincinnati: Writer's Digest, 2006)

Herbert, W.N., *Writing Poetry* (Oxford: Routledge, 2009)

Kooser, Ted, *The Poetry Home Repair Manual: Practical Advice for Beginning Poets* (Lincoln, Nebraska: Bison Books, 2007)

Kowitz, Steve, *In the Palm of Your Hand: The Poet's Portable Workshop*, 2nd edn (Thomaston, Maine: Tilbury House, 2017)

Longenbach, James, *The Art of the Poetic Line* (Minneapolis: Graywolf Press, 2008)

Oliver, Mary, *A Poetry Handbook* (Orlando: Harcourt Books, 1994)

Irish Poetry Reading Archive (UCD Digital Collection): <https://digital.ucd.ie/view/ucdlib:38488>

The Poetry Foundation: <https://www.poetryfoundation.org/>