

University of Victoria

MFA in Writing Handbook

How do I register?

You can register for most of your classes online at [UVic MyPage](#). You will be notified via email when registration dates open up for each term.

Some classes are registered through the department secretary such as [WRIT 590](#) or [WRIT 591](#) directed studies courses. These require a completed [Proposal for Pro Forma Course registration form](#).

Students who are interested in taking courses in another department must contact that department to ensure they have the necessary prerequisites and receive email permission from the instructor before enrolling. That email, along with a statement of support from their supervisor and completion of a manual "Add Course" form are sent to [Graduate Admissions and Records](#) for hand registration.

Can I withdraw for a term?

Continuous registration is required but you may formally request a withdrawal or leave of absence, with permission. Refer to the [UVic Calendar](#) for descriptions of the various types of withdrawals and leaves, or refer to [UVic Graduate Studies Registration](#). Leaves of less than one term can usually be managed within the department.

Why is my tuition so high when I'm not taking courses?

Technically you will register for courses in every term of study. Three terms of [WRIT 598](#) in the second year are required, and enrollment triggers the standard graduate tuition amount per term. One way to reduce fees in the second year is to register as an "off-campus" student. But bear in mind this option assumes that you will not be on campus and therefore revokes access to the U-Pass transit pass and other services. Refer to the current [schedule of tuition and fees](#).

How do I get paid?

A graduate fellowship is offered to MFA students with the requisite GPA in their first year. There are also a limited number of graduate scholarships available through the department, based on both academic standing and submission of written work. Students will be informed of upcoming deadlines for these awards.

All second year students who have completed [WRIT 509](#) with an A- or better mark and a B+ average or higher in their first year courses, are invited to apply for a TAship in their second year of study. Successful applicants will have aptitude for online teaching platforms like Coursespaces, strong interpersonal skills, an ability to deal with student conflicts and a proven track record of attending classes and meetings on time.

More postings for positions in other classes may appear throughout the year, in writing as well as other departments.

Which other scholarships should I apply to?

The Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC) offers the [Canada Graduate Scholarship](#), providing \$17,500 in funding to successful applicants. Applications from fine arts students are generally accepted, as long as you meet the eligibility criteria. UVic writing MFA alumni have seen a 30% success rate with SSHRC funding. The Faculty of Graduate Studies provides [scholarship application resources](#) and access to a grantscrafter for assistance with the SSHRC application, and offers invaluable [grantscrafting workshops](#) in each fall term.

The Faculty of Fine Arts also has a Research, Creative Activity, and Scholarship Coordinator available to work with you on SSHRC and other grant applications, Dr. Lytton McDonnell. He can be contacted at fineartsrscordinator@uvic.ca.

Full-time grad students may apply for one [travel grant](#) per year through the Faculty of Graduate Studies. This fund provides financial assistance to attend conferences, research, and presentations.

The BC Arts Council also offers [Scholarship Awards](#) for study in fine arts.

[Federal](#) and [provincial](#) student loans are available to students who demonstrate financial need.

Who is in charge? Who do I contact?

Generally the first point of communication is the department secretary (currently Valerie Tenning) via email writing@uvic.ca, or at the Department of Writing office in room FIA 251. Your supervisor will mainly provide guidance in regards to your research, study, thesis writing and defense. For more administrative matters, the Graduate Advisor is the next point of contact (currently Maureen Bradley), followed by the Department Chair (currently David Leach). Additionally, a Teaching Assistant Consultant (TAC) is usually hired each year by the Learning and Teaching Centre, to provide expertise and guidance to TAs working within

fine arts.

How does my committee get created?

A supervisor will be assigned based on your discipline within the department. Your committee is composed of two to three members of the teaching faculty, plus an additional chairperson for the oral defense. It is your supervisor's responsibility to form a committee with members from the department.

Where can I get some work done?

A graduate student office is provided in room FIA 226. If necessary, check with a second-year student about available desks, then settle in and make yourself comfortable.

[McPherson Library](#) provides a vibrant but quiet study atmosphere and various types of workspaces for almost any preference, including private multimedia editing suites at the [Music & Media Commons](#), and dedicated [study carrels](#) available to UVic graduate students (assigned annually from September to August on a first-come first-served basis).

What do I need to do to prepare for my defense?

Write, revise, rehearse, and then relax. You will need a strong piece of writing to defend. The second year of study is intended to be a period of intensive writing, so use it wisely and schedule time management well in advance. Once you have draft(s) submitted, study your own work to the point of confidently discussing or defending any aspect of it. With such a large project, there could be aspects of it that you haven't thought about in a while – don't be caught off guard by your committee.

What are the deadlines for first and subsequent drafts of my Major Writing Portfolio?

See "Timelines for MFA Oral Defense and Preparation" on page 8. Be sure to include all required elements and adhere to proper formatting by utilizing this [thesis template](#), provided by UVic Libraries.

Are there social events run by the Department of Writing?

A casual orientation lunch is planned each September for incoming and second-

year MFA students, who will be paired up as contacts for the rest of the year.

There is typically a “Grad at Home” social mixer and reading held in both the fall and spring terms (November and January). These events take place in the homes of writing department faculty, who will present readings on one of the evenings, reserving the other for readings by grad students. Attendance at these events is intended for grad students and faculty.

There are also other faculty readings that are open to the public and held in lecture theatres on campus, with presenters comprised of both faculty and grad students.

Keep an eye out for posters that advertise readings, launches, and other events throughout the year, and by all means organize gatherings amongst your fellow cohort. Most likely you will see your cohort in class or in the grad student office. Since these spaces are more conducive to work than socializing, it is wise to initiate a social connection beyond campus.

Where can I submit works of writing?

Watch for submission calls from:

- [The Martlet](#) – The University of Victoria’s Independent Newspaper.
- [The Malahat Review](#) – A locally published literary journal featuring works of poetry, fiction, and creative nonfiction as well as reviews.
- [The Ring](#) – UVic’s source of news about the campus community.
- [Sunscreen](#) – UVic Student Film Festival, held in the spring of each year.

Where can I get help finding a job?

Refer to [UVic Career Services](#) for help with job search and postings for both on- and off-campus positions. The [Learning and Teaching Centre](#) provides free access to several professional development opportunities throughout the year, including an intensive TA Conference. These look great on a resume, CV, or teaching dossier!

Where do writers hang out?

- [Open Space](#) artist-run centre on Fort St. usually has a show, opening, reading, or party going on. Open Space co-hosts a reading series with UVic.
- [Russell Books](#) has a reading series that runs quite often, and other great bookstores include [Munro’s](#), [Renaissance](#), [Chronicles of Crime](#), and Beacon Books if you find yourself in Sidney.
- [Tongues of Fire](#), a local poetry community

- [Vic Slam](#) (Victoria Poetry Slam) puts on an annual season, whittling down to a Slam Champion.
- [Moka House](#) in Cook Street Village is a favourite, relaxed coffee shop.
- [Victoria Spoken Word Festival](#) runs in the early part of each year.
- [Greater Victoria Public Library](#) has branches around the city.
- [Art Gallery of Greater Victoria](#) has an Urbanite event series and a super-cheap student pass.
- [Cinecenta](#) is a good spot to catch classic, arthouse, and populous movies without going to the suburbs.
- [Open Cinema](#) is a film screening series with food and discussion.
- [Movie Monday](#) shows free/pay what you can movies every Monday night
- [CineVic](#) is a filmmakers co-op and holds several events throughout the year.
- [Monday Magazine](#) has an extensive monthly calendar of local events.
- And remember, the grad student lounge in room FIA 226 isn't just for studying.

Where can I eat on campus? Where should I eat on campus?

- [Arts Place](#) café located in the foyer of the Fine Arts Building is incredibly convenient and carries a wide selection, but does suffer from lineups in peak periods and an early closing time of 3 pm.
- [Mac's](#) in the MacLaurin Building (just inside the ring from Fine Arts) has fresh and amazing made-to-order sandwiches, wraps, soups, and snacks with gluten-free options.
- [The Grad House](#) (located near the campus bus terminal and Cinecenta) has great prices for pub-style food with local beers on tap, as well as a coffee shop. Remember to stop by after your defense for a complimentary beer served in a silver stein, and to get a Polaroid photo taken for the Wall of Defenders.
- Perhaps the best coffee or chai on campus can be found at [The Munchie Bar](#) in Cinecenta, or [Finnerty Express](#) under the Bookstore.
- Refer to [UVic Food Services](#) for a dining guide and map of other eateries on campus.

Where can I eat near campus?

East of campus:

- [Smuggler's Cove Pub](#) near the Cadboro Bay waterfront.
- West of campus:
- [Maude Hunter's Pub](#) on Shelbourne St.
- [Fujiya Sushi](#) on Shelbourne St. carries sushi to go, as well as groceries.
- Booster Juice on Shelbourne St.
- [Little Thai Place](#) on Shelbourne St.

What's the best place to buy groceries?

East of campus:

- [Peppers Grocery](#) on Cadboro Bay Rd.

West of campus:

- [Thrifty Foods](#) on McKenzie Ave.
- [Fairway Market](#) on Shelbourne Ave.
- [The Root Cellar](#) on McKenzie Ave.

Downtown:

- [The Market on Yates](#)
- [Victoria Public Market](#), [James Bay Market](#), or [Moss Street Market](#).
- [Lifestyle Market](#) or [Mother Nature's Market](#) in Cook Street Village.

Where can I buy inexpensive goods?

Victoria has an abundance of thrift stores (take a walk around and you will likely spot many more than just these):

- [WIN](#) (Victoria Women in Need Community Cooperative) operates three shop locations around town.
- [Beacon Community Services](#) also has several locations in the region.
- [The Patch](#) downtown carries quality second-hand clothing, but prices may be higher than thrift.
- There is always the standard Salvation Army and Value Village.

Where can I get outside?

On campus:

- [Finnerty Gardens](#) is a well-manicured spot with trees, shrubs, and flowers just south of Fine Arts Building.
- [UVic Campus Community Garden](#) is on the north side of campus, and offers plots to students and faculty.
- Alumni Chip Trails surrounding campus are good for a run or a breath of fresh air.

Elsewhere around town:

- PKOLS (Mount Doug)
- Mount Tolmie
- Cadboro Bay
- Uplands Park
- Swan Lake Nature Sanctuary

- Beacon Hill Park
- Dallas Road waterfront
- Downtown Inner Harbour
- Several day-trip destinations, camping, and regional parks in the [Capital Regional District](#)

Anything else I should know? Tips from current and former MFA students:

- Don't wait to start your SSHRC application! The summer before you begin the program is not too early.
- Remember to periodically check the grad student mailbox in the writing department office.
- If you are the holder of a financial award that is administered through graduate studies, be sure to register for all terms (especially summer) well in advance so as not to delay any award payments.
- Winters are not too cold (it rarely snows), but are grey and wet. Consider a sun lamp, plants, and capitalizing on any sunny days to keep away [seasonal affective disorder \(SAD\)](#).
- Writing can be lonely work, and chances are the other writers are feeling as isolated as you are. Be forward and ask them out for coffee/tea/beer. More than once if you have to. Undergraduate writing students are always quite social and you will likely become familiar with many of them.
- Keep in touch, during and after the program.

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Timelines for MFA Oral Defense and Preparation:

If your last term is Jan. – Apr.:

Oct. 1	1 st draft due to your supervisor
Dec. 1	Apply to graduate (spring convocation)
Feb. 1	2 nd draft due to your committee
Feb. 15	If your committee approves, apply to graduate studies for an oral examination.
Mar. 15	Last possible date for an oral examination (defense)
Apr. 16	Revisions completed, submitted and approved
Apr. 30	All requirements signed and submitted to graduate studies
In May	Convocation

If your last term is May – Aug.:

- Apr. 1 1st draft due to your supervisor
- Jun. 1 2nd draft due to your committee
- Jun. 15 If your committee approves, apply to graduate studies for an oral examination
- Jul. 1 Apply to graduate (fall convocation)
- Jul. 15 Last possible date for an oral examination (defense)
- Aug. 16 Revisions completed, submitted and approved
- Aug. 30 All requirements signed and submitted to graduate studies
- In November Convocation

If your last term is Sept. – Dec.:

- Aug. 1 1st draft due to your supervisor
- Oct. 1 2nd draft due to your committee
- Oct. 15 If your committee approves, apply to graduate studies for an oral examination
- Nov. 15 Last possible date for an oral examination (defense)
- Dec. 15 Revisions completed, submitted and approved
- Dec. 1 Apply to graduate (spring convocation)
- Dec. 22 All requirements signed and submitted to Graduate Studies
- In May Convocation