



## COURSE INFORMATION 2023

*If you are interested in applying for admission to our course, please read this document thoroughly. You may also wish to go directly to the FAQs on page 4.*

Rhodes University's MA in Creative Writing is committed to innovative approaches to literary production that expand the possibilities of writing. At once, critical and creative, the programme emphasises the essential relationship between reading and writing. For 2023, there is a full time course on offer. All full time students must be resident in Makhanda

(preferably in university postgraduate accommodation) from the last week of January to the end of November.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, all students undertake to have, or to be in the position of acquiring at very short notice, reliable internet connectivity – preferably fibre or adsl should a national lockdown prohibiting physical space sharing be instituted. This is why we strongly recommend university residence for all Full Time students because they provide excellent internet connectivity. *Mobile phone connectivity is usually not sufficient – you must be able to connect to the internet using a laptop, pc or mac/ipad, and it is obligatory to use a headset with an attached microphone (similar to this diagram - not inline or built into the computer).* Exceptions for high-end Macs/iMacs will be made.



### APPLICATIONS

Applications should be made ONLINE: <https://ross.ru.ac.za/ugadmissions> which then gives you this: New Undergraduate, Honours and **Postgraduate** applications are now available on [ROSS](#) Faculty: “Humanities”;

Department: “School of Languages and Literatures”.

Supervisors (isiXhosa and Poetry all languages): Dr Hleze Kunju;

Mr Paul Wessels for Prose (English, Afrikaans, Kaaps) and other (e.g., Graphic Novel).

*Please ensure all supporting documents required by the University are included in your application. See FAQs 6-9 below for more on the Application Portfolio.*

**Note:** if the online application does not appear as outlined above, please adapt/improvise accordingly.

Candidates must submit an **Application Portfolio** of creative work as part of their application (30-35 pages, 11 or 12 point font, normal line spacing). The portfolio should be an indication of the kind of writing we can expect from you. Even if you are unsure of your writing, it should always reflect your true intentions. This can be previously published or unpublished writing – as long as it is written by you. In terms of **genre and language**, again, show us what you want to do or where you want to go (prose, poetry, hybrid genres, graphic novels/comics, non-fiction, and so forth). For **Graphic novels/comics/photo comics**: 10 relevant still images must be provided in addition to the writing portfolio. These can be conceptual art, comic pages or photographs sent as a pdf. The Graphic Novel component allows candidates to work on a creative project where both literary and visual narrative is used.

Once you have uploaded all documents to <https://ross.ru.ac.za/pgadmissions> please also send your Application Portfolio and a CV or some information about you directly to the department (any other documents welcome too): [macw@ru.ac.za](mailto:macw@ru.ac.za) This is just a courtesy – a way of introducing

yourself to us.

All problems with online applications must be reported to [acadmin@ru.ac.za](mailto:acadmin@ru.ac.za) and please cc the department [macw@ru.ac.za](mailto:macw@ru.ac.za)

### **APPLICATION DEADLINE**

The sooner you apply, the better. We will continue to accept applications until late in the year (say, 29 September 2022), but you should be aware that it can sometimes take a very long time to process an application. Furthermore, we as a course do not process your applications – we only read your application portfolio of creative work. The longer you leave it, the later you apply, the greater the chance of there being too many applicants already. We can only accept an absolute maximum of 12 Full Time students.

### **QUALIFICATION TRANSCRIPTS**

Make sure these are included in your application. If you are currently concluding a four year degree, please make this fact clearly via the online ROSS application process, as well as to us at [macw@ru.ac.za](mailto:macw@ru.ac.za)

### **ADMISSION REQUIREMENTS**

Students need an Honours degree in *any discipline* or the NQF equivalent (e.g. a 4-year B. Journ degree).

*You are responsible for checking with the University's Academic Administration office [acadmin@ru.ac.za](mailto:acadmin@ru.ac.za) that your application is complete and has been received. No applications will be considered after 29 September 2022. We will try to announce the list of successful candidates by November. In the case of unsuccessful applications, we can provide commentary on your portfolio should you so wish.*

### **USEFUL CONTACT INFORMATION**

- Rhodes University Fees office: 046 603 8743
- Rhodes University PG (postgraduate) Funding (Mellon Bursaries): 046 603 8755
- Student Bureau (Residences, Tuition, Registration, etc.): (046) 603 8276
- Vaccination Clearance: [vaxreg@ru.ac.za](mailto:vaxreg@ru.ac.za) (send your Vaccination Certificate to this email address)
- For Mellon Bursary info, please phone (046) 603 8276 or write to [macw@ru.ac.za](mailto:macw@ru.ac.za)
- For Mellon Bursary Application enquiries contact Sibule at [pgfunding@ru.ac.za](mailto:pgfunding@ru.ac.za) or even better 046 603 8755

### **TUITION FEES**

These change every year, and can be found at [www.ru.ac.za/applying/fees/](http://www.ru.ac.za/applying/fees/) within the fees booklet under the first general heading of "All Faculties other than as specified below". Part time students pay the full fee for each of the two years. If a student drops out or fails to fulfil the programme requirements, fees are not refundable.

### **COURSE MATERIALS**

There is a non-refundable fee of R200 for course materials deducted from your student account (full time and part time students).

### **BURSARIES AND FUNDING**

There are a limited number of bursaries *for full time students* covering both tuition fees and living expenses, provided by the Mellon Foundation. *Bursary allocations are based on financial need, equity, and genre development.* Contact the Rhodes office of Postgraduate Funding ([pgfunding@ru.ac.za](mailto:pgfunding@ru.ac.za)) for an application form (cc [macw@ru.ac.za](mailto:macw@ru.ac.za)).

Please note:

1. Potential Bursary recipients must apply for postgraduate residence when they apply for the course
2. Bursary recipients must reside in any of the university postgraduate residences.
3. Bursary applicants must inform us of their intention to apply before or after the fact, or as soon as possible via [macw@ru.ac.za](mailto:macw@ru.ac.za)

**National Arts Council:** Postgraduate bursaries in creative fields including creative writing are offered by the NAC, [www.nac.org.za](http://www.nac.org.za) or 011 838 1383. These are offered for a brief period in **September** (best to check by phone exactly when this will be). However, the NAC allows bursary applications to be submitted before confirmation of acceptance into the MACW. Please be advised that the NAC can take a very long time to acknowledge successful applicants (March/April). You will need money before then, and you will also need to prepare yourself in the event that your application is turned down.

**Rhodes Postgraduate Funding:** The Rhodes Postgraduate Funding office provides loans, normally covering fees only, and only for full time students. Contact: [pgfunding@ru.ac.za](mailto:pgfunding@ru.ac.za)

### **COURSE REQUIREMENTS**

Upon acceptance to the course, students are provided with a short reading list which they have to investigate over the months before the course begins. *You are not expected to buy these books.*

**Reading:** At the start of the course proper, students are given an extensive modular reading list to map out potential reading trajectories. Students will write books reviews in addition to their regular assignments. There may well be some light preparatory work to do in December/January.

**Reflective Journaling:** Students are required to record their ongoing learning experience in a reflective journal. In the journal, they reflect critically on their learning experiences, comment on the coursework assignments, and discuss their reading research. The ability to reflect on one's learning is a crucial component of postgraduate studies, and an invaluable process for writers to engage with. This will be explained during the Orientation Week.

### **COURSE STRUCTURE (Full Time)**

The full time course is divided into two semesters each comprising two terms. In the first semester, the seminar programme takes place over roughly 16 weeks, with an emphasis on exploration through various coursework assignments, intensive reading, finding a writing discipline and rhythm, and participation in weekly reading groups. Halfway through the first semester students choose a coursework stream in their preferred genre (prose, poetry or graphic novels).

The seminar programme is structured by each teacher's creative interests and expertise. Each weekly cycle starts with a Monday seminar and culminates in an assignment set for Friday. Feedback sessions to discuss the assignments in detail occur on Fridays. The student has the weekend to re-write the assignment in response to feedback and resubmit it online on Sunday evening.

In the second semester, students begin their theses without coursework but with regular one on one supervisory contact. The thesis has to be a minimum of 30 000 words for a prose project, approx. 35-40 poems for a poetry project. No thesis may exceed 80 000 words. Requirements for Graphic Novels will be broadly determined on a case by case basis in consultation with your supervisor.

### **ASSESSMENT**

Formative assessment is ongoing via lecturer and peer feedback, as well as an anonymous reader report of the draft thesis in August/September. Summative or final assessment to award the degree is done by two

external examiners per student (four in the case of dual language theses). The weighting of the assessment is 70% for the thesis and 30% for the final portfolio of reflective journal extracts, coursework assignments, essays and book reviews. The MA final mark is awarded in three categories: pass, fail or pass with distinction. For single language theses two anonymous, external examiners conduct the final, summative assessment and provide detailed reports. For dual language theses there are four examiners (two per language).

### **ABSENTEEISM**

The MACW takes absenteeism very seriously. All course activities are compulsory. In the event of utterly exceptional circumstances Rhodes University has a standard procedure and form to complete should you wish to request a leave of absence

[<https://www.ru.ac.za/media/rhodesuniversity/content/registrar/documents/forms/LeaveofAbsenceApplicationForm.pdf>]. Please note: a leave of absence is requested ***before the fact***. Only in extreme circumstances will LOAs be granted after the fact (acts of God, acute medical emergencies, etc.).

**Not being able to participate in online sessions due to problems with connectivity, your headset or any other equipment you use for these sessions constitutes absenteeism. It is your responsibility to ensure that your participation in online sessions is as technically flawless as possible. This means extensive testing before any designated online session. It is never permissible to “just listen in on a session” because you cannot get your microphone working.**

### **COURSE DATES**

The MACW course dates do not always coincide with the university terms and holidays. *Exact dates will be supplied closer to the time.*

**Orientation week: Week 4, 23-29 January, 2023.**

**Full Time course starts: Monday 30 January, 2023.**

The Orientation is compulsory and non-negotiable. Failure to attend the full five day programme, if even only one day, may result in your suspension from the course.

### **FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS [FAQs]**

#### **1. What does “innovative” mean?**

innovative adj. /'ɪn-ə'veɪ-tɪv/ 1. being or producing something like nothing done or experienced or created before. 2. ahead of the times. 3. (of ideas and methods) new and different; fresh, clever, having/using or showing new methods or ideas; original, modern, new, novel, innovational.

#### **2. What is the application deadline?**

The application deadline is 29 September 2022 *Be sure to apply as soon as possible. Do not leave it to the last minute.*

#### **3. When will I know whether or not my application was successful?**

You will be informed by email in November or before.

#### **4. Is there any appeal process if my application is not accepted?**

No. We suggest that you apply again the following year and make sure that your application portfolio fulfils the necessary criteria as laid out in this FAQ.

#### **5. What must I pay?**

You must pay a registration fee of R100 to Rhodes University; your course fees, also to Rhodes University; and a course materials fee of R200 deducted from your student account.

#### **6. Can my application portfolio be a combination of different genres, say prose and poetry? Is there a**

**minimum or maximum length?**

Yes, it can be a combination, but you are strongly advised to weight it in favour of your preferred genre. For Graphic novels/comics/photo comics: 10 relevant still images must be provided in addition to the writing portfolio. These can be conceptual art, comic pages or photographs sent as a pdf.

**7. What if I apply with an application portfolio of only isiXhosa poetry and later on in the year I want to write English flash fiction?**

Unless you have been producing English flash fiction for most of your assignments you will not be permitted to switch.

**8. Is there a preferred style (font and spacing) for the portfolio?**

For readability, we prefer a 12 point font and single to 1.5 line spacing. Preferably start each piece of writing on a new page.

**9. I have written a 30-35 page short story. Can I send this as my full portfolio?**

Yes, but it would improve your chances if you demonstrated some variety. Rather send an excerpt from your story together with other pieces of writing.

**10. Is the course for writers in English only?**

The 16 week coursework section is taught in English, but the assignments can be written in English, isiXhosa, Afrikaans or Kaaps. The extended creative writing project can be written in either English, Afrikaans, isiXhosa or Kaaps and will be supervised in that language. We will discuss language options with you in February.

**11. Can I send in writing in different languages in my portfolio?**

Yes, English or isiXhosa or Afrikaans or Kaaps or combinations thereof.

**12. I have not done any creative writing, but would my journalistic writing be eligible for the portfolio?**

Creative non-fiction or narrative journalism is considered creative, i.e. writing which incorporates the techniques of fiction such as character, dialogue, description, narrative. You may submit poetry, fiction (composed of one or several stories, a portion of a novel, or a combination of these), creative non-fiction or hybrid texts.

**13. I have been working on a novel for the past two years. Would I be able to get guidance on it from my supervisors and finish it as my thesis project?**

No. All writing submitted for the course must be written while on the course. We would expect you to write a new work as your thesis project. When the course is over, we would advise you to go back to your earlier manuscript and apply the new skills and insights you have learned on the course.

**14. I have taken some creative writing courses in the past and I have written and published two books. Could these be considered as credits so that I do not have to do the coursework part of the MA?**

No. We consider the coursework to be absolutely essential, even for experienced writers. Every teacher brings a different approach and at least some of these approaches will be new to you. The coursework assignments will bring you feedback from your teachers and fellow students which will give you fresh insights into your writing.

**15. What does 'full time' actually mean? Would I be able to do the full time course if I lived in Pretoria?**

No, full time means studying full time and based in Makhanda (beginning of February to end of November). You will have to attend seminars, feedback groups, reading groups and sometimes meetings with teachers and supervisors every week.

**16. What does 'part time' actually mean? [there is no Part Time intake for 2023]**

Part time students complete the programme over two years, working mainly from home. They attend two week-long contact sessions in Makhanda in the first year (January and July), and one in the second year (April). Teaching is done through audio recordings, and course assignments are submitted electronically, followed by online comments and audio interaction in small groups.

**17. Are there any conditions attached to part time study? [Applicable to Full Time Students under adverse Covid-19 conditions] [there is no Part Time intake for 2023]**

Yes. In addition to the above, if you are accepted onto the part-time course you agree that you will connect to the internet via an ADSL or better connection; that you will make use of a headset with microphone attached; that you will participate in the online sessions from within a quiet environment, and that you will attend contact sessions in Makhanda (or virtually, depending on Covid-19).

**18. What bursaries or financial assistance is offered?**

We have a limited number of full scholarships courtesy of the Mellon Foundation. Mellon MA in Creative Writing Scholarships are limited to full time study by South African applicants only. They are awarded on the basis of financial need, creative writing ability, and equity considerations. Contact the Rhodes office of Postgraduate Funding ([pgfunding@ru.ac.za](mailto:pgfunding@ru.ac.za)) for an application form. Your writing ability will be assessed from the writing portfolio that you send with your application. The value of each scholarship is approx. R105,000.00.

**NB: See current info about scholarships, loans and NAC bursaries on p3.**

**19. If I am a part time student, what happens if I cannot attend the intensive writing weeks in Makhanda? [there is no Part Time intake for 2023]**

Attendance during intensive/contact weeks in Makhanda is obligatory – no exceptions. Besides the teaching done in those weeks, they are essential for meeting and engaging with your teachers and fellow students, and potential supervisors. *Students are required to attend from Monday 9am to Friday night, that is, to be in Makhanda by Sunday and to leave on Saturday.* [NB: this FAQ depends on the status of the Covid-19 pandemic as well as the vaccination programme and will/can- be amended at short notice.]

**20. Orientation week: Week 4, 23-29 January, 2023.**

**Full Time course starts:** Monday 30 January, 2023.

The Orientation is compulsory and non-negotiable. Failure to attend the full five day programme, if even only one day, will result in your immediate suspension from the course.

**21. If I am a part time student, will the course pay for my accommodation and travel for the Makhanda intensive weeks? [there is no Part Time intake for 2023]**

No. We will try to help you to find reasonably priced accommodation and transport, but you will have to organise and pay for accommodation and travel yourself.

**22. Is there anywhere I can see the work produced by previous students?**

Yes, you can buy past editions of our magazine Tyhini, which features work from all students taking the course in any particular year. Available from the course administrator ([macw@ru.ac.za](mailto:macw@ru.ac.za)) for approx. R200 (price may vary, and will include postage if required). **Please note that Tyhini is on an extended hiatus.**

**23. I have always wanted to read and discuss with others the great books of literature such as *War and Peace*. Will I be able to read any of these during the course, and will we have discussion sessions on them?**

No. If you wish to focus on the great texts, you should rather apply to the English Department where texts are studied for their general reception. Creative writing focusses on the production of texts and so we tend to make use of shorter, more contemporary works, most of which no one has ever heard of. When we discuss them, we do so as writers outside of any literary culture, asking what the text does and how it does it rather than what it means.

**24. I would like to brush up on blockbuster and commercial, contemporary literature. Will I be able to do so during this course?**

Probably not. We prefer shorter, innovative and experimental work, but we are always open to mixed and mutant genres.

*There's many a best-seller that could have been prevented by a good teacher.*  
**Flannery O'Connor**

*I think I am the doppelgänger whom, until I appeared, African literature had not yet met. And in some sense I would question anyone calling me an African writer. Either you are a writer or you are not. If you are a writer for a specific nation or a specific race, then fuck you. In other words, the direct international experience of every single living entity is, for me, the inspiration to write.*

**Dambudzo Marechera**

*Reading is complicity in the creative process.*  
**Marina Tsvetaeva**