

**DEGREE/PROGRAM CHANGE
FORM C
Form Number: C1064**

Fields marked with * are required

Name of Initiator: Gail Houston

Email:* ghouston@unm.edu

Date:* 06-29-12

Phone Number:* 505 277-6347

Initiator's Title* Chair, English Department

Associated Forms exist?*

No

Faculty Contact* Gail Houston

Department* English

Branch main

Administrative Contact* Linda Livingston

Admin Email* lsl@unm.edu

Admin Phone* 277-6347

Proposed effective term:

Semester

Fall

Year

2013

Course Information

Select Appropriate Program

Graduate Degree Program

Name of New or Existing Program

* MFA Creative Writing

Select Category

Major

Degree Type

MFA

Select Action

Revision

Exact Title and Requirements as they should appear in the catalog. If there is a change, upload current and proposed requirements.
See current catalog for format within the respective college (upload a doc/pdf file)

[Catalogue Copy MFA in English 9.19.12.rtf](#)

☒ **Does this change affect other departmental program/branch campuses? If yes, indicate below.**

Reason(s) for Request * (enter text below or upload a doc/pdf file)
We are responding to the APR Team's strong recommendation to streamline our curriculum without losing rigor. The current curriculum is out of date, inefficient, and does not reflect our faculty expertise.
[Rationale For Changes MFA 5.18.12.docx](#)

Upload a document that includes justification for the program, impact on long-range planning, detailed budget analysis and faculty workload implications. *
[Rationale For Changes MFA 5.18.12.docx](#)

Catalogue Copy MFA in English

9/19/12

M.F. A. in Creative Writing (54 hours)

The UNM Master of Fine Arts degree in Creative Writing is designed for students committed to pursuing the writing life. This three-year degree combines studio-based workshops in fiction, poetry and creative nonfiction with craft seminars and coursework in literature, teaching pedagogy, and professional writing. Students also spend each of their final two semesters working individually with a faculty mentor towards the development of a book-length manuscript suitable for publication. Our widely published creative writing faculty, Russo Visiting Professorship, Taos Summer Writing Conference, and a national literary magazine, all make for an exciting atmosphere for the study of writing.

Applicants to the M.F.A. program should already hold a Bachelor's degree. The program requires 48 hours of coursework (excluding dissertation hours); a comprehensive exam; and a creative dissertation. There is no foreign language requirement for the completion of the M.F.A.

The M.F.A.'s 48 hours of coursework are distributed over core requirements that include ENGL 501 (Introduction to the Profession for Writers); two ENGL 587 (Genre Studies); six writing workshops; two professional preparation courses; at least four courses distributed across different periods of literary history, theory, or rhetoric studies; and an additional 3 hours of electives. The program also requires 6 hours of

dissertation that do not count toward the 48-hour coursework requirement.

The M.F. A. program requires a comprehensive examination that serves also as the introduction to, or preface for, the student's creative dissertation. The M.F.A. degree is conferred when the dissertation is completed, defended, and approved.

Rationale For Changes in Number of Hours Required for MFA in English

(6/18/12)

1. The primary goal of the English Department's MFA is for students to obtain a robust foundation in literature courses that dovetail with the "studio" time they must have in order to write their creative dissertations.

2.) Over the past six years (the MFA was established in 2006), we've found that more than half of our students take four years, rather than the planned three years, to complete the degree because they cannot finish their 100-250 page creative "dissertations." We have tried different scenarios for removing this roadblock and proposed them to you.

At this point, in the spirit of #1 above, we believe the simplest and most rigorous way to handle this problem is to require more workshop hours. Currently students only take 12 hours of workshop. We believe that if we add two more workshops (6 hours) to the current requirement and reduce the inordinate amount of literature and electives courses, we will achieve the balance described in #1 above and the students will have a concentrated number of hours devoted to writing as praxis as well as writing towards completion of the dissertation.

Rationale for Changes to Specific Requirements

1.) 3 credits ENG 501: Introduction to the Profession for Creative Writers (*This class would include, in its syllabus, a unit on CW pedagogy, now taught as a separate class ENG 535*).

We have added the italicized section because it is appropriate to a course that introduces students to the field and what they might expect if they remain in academe. It also accommodates the department rule that students must take a pedagogy class on Creative Writing before they are approved for teaching the English 224 Intro to Creative Writing course

2.) Deletion of the requirement that students take a 4 hour seminar in Literature/Theory.

MFA students are now required to take 13 hours of Literature Courses. Creative Writing faculty are in support of the belief that MFA students must have a sense of the history and legacies of literature. But in the current set of requirements, literature study comprises a quarter of their course work. The proposed change would reduce this requirement to 9 hours, or three courses, which would allow them more time to give to their creative work and the production of a book-length manuscript.

In the current set of requirements students can add another 12 credits of literature to the required 13 by taking 9 hours in literature courses to fulfill the electives requirement and 3 hours of 592

(Teaching Literature) to fulfill the Professional preparation electives. Thus, an MFA student could conceivably take 25 credits in literature courses, half of the total required hours.

With the proposed changes, students could add 3 hours of literature to fulfill the electives requirement and another 3 hours of teaching literature to fulfill the professional preparation requirements, ending up with as many as 15 hours of literature courses. Furthermore, we believe that our graduate level literature courses are very rigorous and provide the historical, socio-cultural, and formalist approaches that are current in the field and that would strongly support the MFA student's studies.

3.) 3 credits Electives (these credits may be taken outside the English department)

Reducing the electives from 9 credit hours to 3 credit hours makes sense in a program whose chief elective must always be for students to spend their time writing and sharing their writing with others for critique, which is based on a strong literature foundation. As noted above, the literature requirements have overwhelmed the need for studio hours and thus we are seeking to calibrate requirements so as to balance studio time with foundational literature courses. We believe we have struck a happy medium with this proposal.

Information Regarding Workload, Long-term Planning, and Budget Analysis

The department does not foresee that this change will create a need for any new faculty, nor will it increase workload (rather, it will more accurately reflect the labor that faculty do in terms of mentoring students). It will allow students to complete their degrees one-semester sooner, get their work on the market sooner, and create a higher quality dissertation. There will be no foreseeable increase of the budget but rather a more efficient funding of courses.

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