

Synopsis - Comprehensive Creative Writing Diploma Course

Module 1 – Welcome to The Writers Bureau

Your first and most important steps to becoming a published writer – how to build on your natural talent – how to enjoy your course – how to approach your studies – working with your tutor – completing your assignments.

Module 2 – Making a Writer Out of You

Deciding where and when to write – how to start your writing – writer's block and how to overcome it – the tools you must work with – keeping a cuttings file – how to organise yourself – the writer's approach to life – developing your imagination – the benefits of reading widely – how to develop your powers of observation – what the trained writer looks for – personal qualities every writer needs: perseverance, determination, self-organisation, resilience, confidence – how to use rejections to improve your writing – using your specialist knowledge – the door to quick success – finding more writing ideas – what editors are looking for.

Module 3 – Developing Your Writing Style

Getting the basics right – 11 rules to develop a good style and avoid common mistakes – constructing clear sentences and paragraphs – using active and passive tenses – link words and sign posts – how to say exactly what you mean – dangers to avoid: verbosity, circumlocution, clichés, repetition etc – dealing with slang and obscenities – how to use adjectives, similes and metaphors – comparing different styles.

Module 4 – How to Develop Your Writer's Craft

How to write opening sentences and paragraphs that captivate editors and readers – titles – the article's body – planning your writing – the closing paragraph – checking your facts – the importance of revision – three stages of revision – examples of a well-planned article – research and how to go about it.

Module 5 – How to Sell Your Writing

Avoid the common mistakes that untrained writers make – the value of market research – the large number of markets you can sell to – where to find them – analysing your markets – article analysis: length, paragraph and sentence length, titles, the closing paragraph – analysing the fiction market – short stories and where to sell them – good opportunities in TV and radio – the market for books – writing for newspapers – selling to the world – why America, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, Singapore etc can be good markets for writers – how to approach overseas editors and publishers – syndication and press agencies – kill fees.

Module 6 – Presenting Your Work

How to present your work – advice on the equipment you need – layout of your manuscript – cover sheets – submitting work electronically – how to safeguard your interests – word counts – covering letters – submitting your work – don't double deal – preparing an outline – query letters to editors – sending reminders – selling rights – the Internet.

Module 7 – Essential Legal Aspects

Copyright, plagiarism and how to avoid it – why your good name is important – the dangers of libel and how to avoid them – contracts, what to look for and how to safeguard your position – the Minimum Terms Agreement – literary agents and how to obtain one – royalties – Public Lending Right – vanity publishing and its snags – self publishing – tax and VAT – using a pen name or pseudonym.

Module 8 – Readers' Letters and Fillers

Opportunities for a regular income – who publishes readers' letters – turning your experiences into cash – personal anecdote letters, further comment letters and controversial letters explained – how to start – the value of market research and how to tackle it – assessing the competition – tips on writing a successful reader's letter – developing your

writing style – how long to wait for publication – tips on increasing your chances of publication. What makes a filler – targeting your subjects – quizzes – the importance of humour – Reader's Digest and how to approach it – how to submit fillers – multiple submissions – payment.

Module 9 – Articles for Women's and Men's Magazines

Section 1: Writing for Women – Opportunities for the freelance – market research is vital – what editors want – the changing face of women's magazines – front page teasers – men writing for women's titles – how to tackle the triumph over tragedy article – how to write the confessional article – celebrity profiles – how to contact celebrities – the interview, how to approach it and what questions to ask – the importance of preparation – how to get an original quote – 'Happy Days' articles – health articles – writing your preliminary letter – who to send it to and what to say.

Section 2: Writing for Men – the new contents of magazines for men – speaking the lingo – market research is essential – the big six subjects – what editors will pay for – adopting the right attitude.

Module 10 – How to Write General Interest Articles

Targeting your markets – articles versus features – subjects to avoid – opportunities for the freelance – researching the market – finding a 'peg' – seasonal articles and when to submit them – how to look for different angles for different markets – multiple sales – more sources for ideas – making your hobby or pastime pay – writing for the colour supplements – writing from your own experience – keep on writing!

Module 11 – Travel Writing

The reality uncovered – huge opportunities for freelancers – what a travel editor is looking for – what to avoid – the secret of a good travel piece – tips on finding a fresh angle – the importance of knowing your market – getting free or reduced travel – the value of preparation before travelling – how to gather your information on location and how to use it – tips on how to sell to more than one market – the importance of taking your own photographs – how to write the travel article – what to include and what to leave out – gripping introductions – sidebars – an example – using your locality to your advantage – where to find information – writing for the top travel markets – opportunities in the overseas markets and in-flight magazines – subjects to write about and those to avoid – photo essays and travel books.

Module 12 – Writing for the Trade Press

Another huge market – the importance of market research – the stories editors are looking for – the importance of in-depth research and accuracy – your writing style – avoid jargon – expanding into features – getting started – becoming a local correspondent – making your contacts – where to find ideas – how to cash in on trade fairs – in-house magazines – sponsored magazines.

Module 13 – Writing for Children's and Teenage Publications

What children read – why write for youngsters – markets to target – getting started – what to write about – language matters – style and presentation – the value of talking to children – selling your work – what not to write – what to include in activity articles. The teenage market and opportunities for the freelance – youth culture – using humour – the boy/girl divide – true confession stories – some taboos in writing for the teen markets.

Module 14 – How to Write Humorous Articles

Where to find humour – using humour effectively in your writing – finding your niche – different types of humorous writing: personal experiences, irony, satire, strange but true stories and general interest – using humour in fillers and readers' letters – how to find humorous ideas – your humour file – funny quizzes – subjects to avoid.

Module 15 – Religious and Inspirational Writing

Who can write for this market – faith and facts – understanding the market is vital – be sincere – subjects to cover: news, people, places, practical advice, humour, anniversaries, devotional/spiritual, personal opinion, reviews, personal experiences, readers' pages,

homes/gardens/cookery, writing for children – payment – inspirational articles – the New Age market – dos and don'ts – the American market – finding markets.

Module 16 – Writing Reviews

The reviewer's role and responsibilities – what you should include in your review – your attitude – how much you can expect to be paid – building your portfolio – how to review and write up stage shows including: plays, musicals, concerts, opera, ballet and comedy – reviewing amateur dramatics – reviewing books – a checklist of what to include in your review – tips on reviewing CDs, films, TV and computer games – eating out reviews – the pitfalls – key points to include – an example of a fact file – reviewing cars – example of an auto file.

Module 17 – On the Editor's Desk

What happens in a magazine office – what editors want – titles – envelopes – rejections – the importance of new angles – mistakes to avoid – how long should an editor hold onto your work? – withdrawing work – what's your work worth? – chasing overdue payment – keep writing.

Module 18 – Journalism

Different types of newspapers – the qualities you need to be a journalist – vital equipment – making the break into journalism – building up your contacts – submitting your copy – putting together a story – getting the most from a story: previews, the actual event and follow ups – story structure – interview techniques – stories to avoid – starting out – tip offs.

Module 19 – Planning and Preparation of Non-fiction Books

The possibilities for non-fiction books – how to find suitable publishers – the value of research – how to plan your book – why a synopsis is important – the writing style required – how to deal with illustrations – text books – market research is still important – the value of a good synopsis – research – vocabulary – assignments – illustrations – quotes – reference books and series – considerations of age and development – translations – ghost writing – writing biographies and memoirs – interviewing people – follow a logical sequence – planning your memoirs – finding a publisher – doing it yourself.

Module 20 – Profit from your Photography

How providing pictures can enhance your chances of acceptance – sources of free or inexpensive photos – working with other people – going it alone – which camera/s to choose – using a 35mm camera – what film speed to use – the best film – processing – the advantages of digital imaging – learning to manipulate images – printing your photos – learn to think visually – the sort of projects you should consider – the P I C S formula for success – marketing your work – submitting photos – useful names, addresses and books.

Module 21 – Writing a Novel – Preparation

Everyone has a novel in them – what type of novel to tackle – the advantages of writing for a specific genre – action story or reflective story? – the right mental attitude – technical preparation – market research – length – creating a project file – getting into good writing habits – don't get discouraged – finding story ideas – making sure your idea is strong enough – research – the basic ingredients – conflict – jeopardy – action – tension – your novel's theme – choosing the right viewpoint: first person or third person.

Module 22 – Plotting

Plan your novel – the synopsis – writing to a formula – drawing up the story-line – adding texture – flashbacks – foreshadowing – subplots – coincidence – drawing up a 'treatment' – the three act drama – the beginning – get your story moving swiftly – the middle – develop your theme – the ending – the final show-down – tying up loose ends.

Module 23 – Characterisation and Dialogue

Creating vivid characters – make them larger than life – the believability factor – bringing your characters to life – names – mannerisms – motivations – building composite characters – contrast your characters – introducing your characters – the advantages of keeping the 'cast' small – avoiding stereotypes – creating a memorable main character – the sympathetic enemy – dialogue – making it plausible and interesting – the functions of dialogue: pushing on

the plot, increasing excitement, characterisation – pace – creating emotional change – direct or indirect speech? – dialogue tags – slang and swear words – dialect – presentation.

Module 24 – Setting and Atmosphere, Revising and Selling Your Novel

Finding a suitable setting – building the right mood – using the weather to good effect – drawing on all five senses – choosing the best viewpoint – revising your first draft – seeking feedback from others – your own checklist to use – selling your novel – make full use of your synopsis – manuscript presentation – the covering letter – sending your work to publishers – getting an agent – the end!

Module 25 – Writing Specialist Fiction

Recent changes to the market – Romance – Historical: realistic stories or 'bodice rippers'? – Detective Stories – Thrillers: fact or fiction? – War – Humour: misadventure, satire, sci-fi/fantasy, parody – Children's fiction – Science fiction: the differences between traditional sci-fi and fantasy – Male Interest – Women's Interest – Horror – Westerns – Erotica – market research is vital.

Module 26 – Writing the Short Story

Why short story writing is not an easy option – using your critical faculties when reading – learning to be self-critical – the markets for short stories: literary magazines, small press magazines, competitions, the mass market, the Internet – ideas for plots – types of short story: women's magazine stories, twist-enders, true life stories, horror stories, science fiction, children's stories – making sure there's conflict in your plot – making your style fit the publication you are targeting – choosing the right viewpoint to use – openings that hook your reader – the story's 'body' – satisfying endings – using dialogue to aid characterisation, to give information and to move the story forward – making your characters believable – making the reader empathise with your main characters – physical descriptions – titles – taboos – selling your work – the covering letter – coping with rejection – success!

Module 27 – Short Stories for Radio

Doing your market research – a tough nut to crack – writing to the right length – what makes a winner – the differences between writing for radio and magazines – making it appeal to the ear – choosing the best viewpoint – monologues – example of a typical radio story – getting on the right wavelength.

Module 28 – Writing Radio Drama

Learning to estimate running time – layout of your script – giving directions – how to do your research – how to capitalise on your listener's imagination – the switch off danger time – opening your radio play – how many characters? – avoiding stereotypes – making your characters believable – where to begin your story – making dialogue work for you – preparing the first draft – editing your work – dramatising a short story – avoiding awkward silences.

Module 29 – Writing for Television

A growing market – cost constraints – doing your market research – know the medium – different types of drama – the importance of ideas – preparing a synopsis – telling the story in pictures and words – background and mood – exposition – suspense – conflict – dialogue – characterisation – the character mix – structure: beats, scenes and sequences – visualising your material – layout and length – camera tricks and effects – deciding what to write about. Series – breaking into the genre – reading the format – the treatment – how payment is made. Situation comedy – have an original premise – character driven plots – doing the 'postcard test' – making the humour work – learning the craft.

Module 30 – Writing for the Stage

How to acquire theatrical knowledge – sources of ideas – how to select a theme – what kind of play? – setting your stage – deciding on characters – the importance of entrances and exits – developing your characters – the structure of your play – how many acts? – how many scenes? – planning – dialogue – how to carry the action forward – using dialogue to create character – introducing drama and conflict – the dramatic climax – when to end – developing your stagecraft – directions – know your stage – working with the actors – improving your work – doing your market research – useful contacts – additional reading.

Looking ahead – good luck for the future

Getting The Most From Interviews

Iain Pattison

Iain has interviewed thousands of people, from all walks of life. Here he gives you excellent advice on how to develop your interview technique and takes you step-by-step from setting up the interview to the final written piece.

Punctuation And Spelling

Diana Nadin

This is a guide and reference for those who have ever had doubts about their ability to spell and punctuate correctly. This is an excellent little reference book to help you.

The Internet – Making It Work For You

Nicola Taylor

Nicola provides a quick guide to writing for online publishers, finding markets and contacting them. She then looks at using the Internet for both research and to publicise yourself