



CWL: Twenty Questions

1. What makes UNO's Low Residency Program different?

In most Low Residency programs, students are paired with a single faculty member for the duration of their studies. By contrast, UNO's Low Residency Creative Writing Workshop is organized into standard semesters, providing the benefit of exposure to a variety of writers, as well as rigorous interaction with peers, over the course of a student's experience. This approach allows for the development of strong, often life-long writing relationships, so that students leave the program with an established community to support their growth after graduation. As part of the program, students also participate in a Summer Residency in Europe. UNO's CWL was the first low residency MFA program in the United States to combine online classes with study abroad.

2. How do low residency programs compare with full residency programs?

There is less difference than you might think. Our online workshops are surprisingly similar in format to those found in the full residency program, and during Summer Residency, workshops abroad are identical to those experienced by our full residency students. Although the online format might seem unusual at first, the flexibility of distance learning allows our faculty to accommodate any schedule. Whether you are a traditional student fresh from your undergraduate degree, or a non-traditional student returning to graduate school after some time, our faculty members are seasoned pros at designing curricula to challenge and engage students from a diversity of backgrounds, and fostering the unique kind of community we value in the CWL.

3. What programs or genres are available?

The University of New Orleans Low Residency Creative Writing Workshop offers an MFA in Fiction, Nonfiction, and Poetry.

4. How many students are in the CWL?

Every year we admit between 5 and 7 graduate writers in each genre. Our full cohort is fewer than 50 students. Additionally, a few students from the full residency Creative Writing Workshop will sometimes participate in online classes and Summer Residency.

5. What are the workshops like?

We are committed to keeping our classes small. A workshop consists of a maximum of 12 students, though it's usually closer to 8, allowing our teachers to tailor their approaches to the individual needs of each writer. Online courses require weekly participation, but they are not held in real time. We use an

online learning environment called Moodle to allow students the freedom to attend class at their convenience. In the writing workshops, for instance, students read and critique each other's work, submitting three short stories per semester. During our Summer Residency Abroad, workshops function in much the same way as our on-campus workshops do, with students turning in stories, writing critiques and discussing the work around a big table.

6. How long does it take to complete the degree?

Depending upon the course load a student prefers, the program takes between 2 and 3 years.

7. Can I transfer credit from another program?

Yes. Once students accrue 9 hours of UNO credit, they may transfer up to credit 9 hours from other universities that meet the requirements of the degree.

8. What kind of students are you looking for?

We've found that the Low Residency format works best for students who are self-driven, independent workers, possessing plenty of initiative and a commitment to the rigors of graduate-level study. Ideally, students should be:

- Able to demonstrate their potential to work at the graduate level
- Already deeply engaged in a writing practice
- Excited about and committed to the rigorous study and practice of the writing craft
- Comfortable with online communication and technology

9. How do the program's residencies work?

Residencies are held for a month every summer semester each year, usually in late June or early July, at one of our famous summer programs in Europe. During the residencies, students take the same number of classes as they would during an ordinary semester. Locations change, but the workshops are always held abroad, currently in Cork, Ireland with an optional residency at Brunnenburg Castle in Italy. For more specific information about a typical residency experience, including courses offered, the cost, and possible itineraries, please refer to our website's Residency page.

10. Does UNO's program have mentors?

Yes. Because of the close-knit nature of the program, there is an ongoing mentorship by students who are farther along in the program as well as guidance by the professional writers who teach in the program.

11. What will my MFA degree prepare me for?

Our graduates often go on to careers in university teaching, editing, publishing, and, of course, writing. Our program enjoys a disproportionately high rate of publication among its graduates.

12. Do I need to be a computer genius to study online?

Not at all. You will need a relatively late-model computer and a fast, reliable Internet connection. You will also need an up-to-date word processing program, such as Microsoft Word. The online workshops utilize Moodle, a distance-learning program that is easy to use and available at no cost students.

13. Does UNO require a thesis?

Yes. We require a creative thesis, which is a book-length work – a collection of short stories, for instance – that generally derives from manuscripts produced in workshops during a student’s matriculation. A thesis committee of three faculty members will help the student hone the work and guide the thesis to completion. Many of our students have gone on to publish their theses—books of short stories or essay or poetry—with major publishers.

14. What is the cost and is financial support available?

Newsweek named the University of New Orleans as among the “25 Most Affordable Colleges,” and we have a commitment to working with students to fund their education. The cost of online classes through our low residency program is identical to the university’s standard tuition, which can be found online at University Admissions. Our Low residency students are also able to attend UNO for the in-state tuition rates, and are not subject to “non-resident” fees.

Fees for Summer Residency Abroad programs vary a little every year based on location. There are never out-of-state fees for Summer Residencies, and the tuition is a flat fee, the same whether a student takes one course or three. Previous year example costs can be found on the Summer Residency Information page.

15. What are the academic prerequisites for entering the program?

All applicants must have undergraduate degrees.

16. Am I too old to be considered for admission into your program?

Low-residency MFAs are perfect for so-called "mature" students. We welcome students of every age and find that a diverse age group makes for a lively workshop. So, no, there is no age limit for applying to our program.

17. Speaking of age, I have been out of school for a while. Do I still need to get letters of recommendation from college professors?

We are looking for letters from people who can speak knowledgeably about your writing and your potential for success as a graduate student. While that doesn’t necessarily need to be a college professor, it should be someone who can speak from a position of authority on the topic. This might be a teacher from 20 years ago, or it might be your boss at the nonprofit where you work. What it should NOT be is a friend, especially a friend who has not been your supervisor or your teacher.

18. My previous degrees were not in literature or creative writing. Will that hurt my application?

Nope. Your previous majors or specializations are not relevant. Writers come from extremely diverse backgrounds. The most important part of your application is the creative writing sample.

19. I haven't published anything. Will that make my application less competitive?

No. While we are interested in people who have demonstrated a serious commitment to writing, we do not use publication as a criterion in evaluating applications. We are looking for talent and passion, not for expertise. We are looking for someone who can be and wants to be taught.

20. Can I talk to a real person about this program?

Certainly. Feel free to email us at lowresmfa@uno.edu. You may also call **504-280-6276** during business hours.