



*Creative Writing Research Statement:
Guidelines and Definitions*

*Creative Writing Studies
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Introduction

This Creative Writing Research Statement is provided to assist those engaging with Creative Writing as writers, scholars and teacher-writers. In this regard, these can be considered as research guidelines and definitions in the burgeoning field of Creative Writing Studies.

The undertaking, exploration and investigation of Creative Writing can be approached from a wide variety of perspectives and for a great many reasons: personal, cultural, economic and pedagogic. We acknowledge here the importance of diversity, equity and inclusion, as general principles, and offer this Research Statement with these general principles in mind.

The purpose of this Research Statement might include its application in informing graduate programs in Creative Writing where critical exploration of writing practice is foregrounded. It might also assist in considering the nature of any Creative Writing projects where a critical response is required.

This Research Statement could assist in tenure review where a committee might wonder about the range of work undertaken by faculty engaged both with the practice of Creative Writing and its critical investigation. Similarly, research sponsors seeking guidance on the nature of investigative work in the field of Creative Writing Studies could use this Research Statement as a guide, and it could be used in the development of conferences, programs and degrees. The intentions and application of this statement are not limited to these alone.

The field of Creative Writing Studies is actively engaged with the relationship between critically investigating Creative Writing and the teaching of Creative Writing. These research guidelines, principles and definitions can therefore be read in conjunction with other CWSO statements on program creation, directing and development, and in relation to pedagogic practices, strategies and opportunities.



1. Definitions and Types

1.1 Creative Writing research can involve investigations and explorations through creative practice as well as those through critical analysis. These investigations and explorations can be largely practical in nature, critical or theoretical in nature, or a combination of these approaches. In plain terms, Creative Writing research can therefore be empirical or theoretical. Here in Higher Education, activities in Creative Writing Studies often move between what is defined by institutions as “research” and frequently defined as “creative activities.” In both instances, Creative Writing Studies researchers are often seeking to make an original contribution to knowledge;

1.2 Primarily, critical research in Creative Writing—where Creative Writing is investigated via textual analysis, action or observation studies, historical or cultural analyses, socio-economic or pedagogic explorations—is distinctive from critical research in disciplines sometimes regarded as closely cognate (e.g. the study of literature) by being focused specifically on the practices of creative writing as well as its many outcomes. These often varied practices might or might not result in completed published or performed works;

1.3 Primarily, creative research in Creative Writing, where Creative Writing is investigated via creative practices of one, a few or many types, might, for example, consider questions about technique or theme or genre, to note just some examples, and these topics are in this instance approached primarily via the practice of Creative Writing. The texts produced in this sense might not be recognizable as critical analyses in disciplines where original creative materials are not the focus of action; however, they form the basis not only of the creative writer/researcher’s understanding but also of explanatory narratives;

1.4 Given it has both creative and critical routes, sometimes combining these, and that it can be focused on the action-based, the textual, the psychological, the cultural, and the pedagogic, just to name a few possible avenues of investigation, examples of Creative Writing research are many. They might include: a fiction writer using creative practice to consider narrative structure, comparing and contrasting structural strategies investigated through and documented during drafting; a screenwriter exploring aspects of cultural representation through a consideration of the generative nature of visual image in film; a poet putting their contemporary metrical verse in context by exploring historical influences on formal poetry; a group of creative writers collaborating on a research project exploring how place informs the teaching of descriptive technique; a playwright working with a games designer to investigate the nature of movement when writing a virtual theatre piece; a creative writer contributing to ecology research, working with biology, anthropology and sociology researchers to document the yearly changes along the stretch of a particular river;

1.5 Creative Writing research can involve a consideration of materials produced during writing, and those available after writing. The status and significance of these materials, whether those examined while “in compositional motion” or those remaining when writing has stopped, is determined by the creative writer/researcher, who might at these points be considering their own materials, or they might be considering the materials of other creative writers, or both. Such materials being considered might include: their own drafts of creative works; yours or another creative writer’s correspondence; completed works; workshop notes; or a diary or memoirs. Material evidence of Creative Writing, yours or that of others, is sometimes extensive and often heterogeneous and can include materials not usually regarded as “literary” or even “writerly” (for example, visual and aural materials, correspondence not directly related to Creative Writing, or material evidence of a creative writer’s personal interests);

1.6 A Creative Writing researcher, whether using primarily critical approaches or primarily creative techniques, or a combination of these, can take a comparative approach, comparing and contrasting their current creative work-in-progress with their previous work/s undertaken and completed or with the work/s of other creative writers. In some instances comparative analysis of this type can extend beyond Creative Writing itself to encompass comparative work across the arts, or work related to subjects or themes approached via other disciplinary avenues (for example, a creative writer taking a comparative approach to nature writing by reading a work of Environmental Science research);

1.7 Subject and theme research in Creative Writing, in the pursuit of creative or critical results, is as wide-ranging as there are subjects and themes in the world. In some cases, it is to such subject and theme research that someone is referring when they define “research in Creative Writing.” That definition of Creative Writing research is not incorrect; however, subject and theme research is merely one research choice for the creative writer-researcher. While it might be pursued, it is just as important to recognize the role of the imagination in Creative Writing, whereby subject and theme are internally considered by the creative writer rather than the result of conscious external empirical research practices;

1.8 “Process” is a key word and concept in Creative Writing research. Because Creative Writing involves action, and because that action has to be organized in some way, whether consciously or unconsciously, process research offers opportunities for creative writers to better understand how they create as well as what they create;

1.9 Along with reference to the “imagination,” “creativity” and “invention” are words and concepts frequently referenced in our consideration of Creative Writing and therefore in Creative Writing research. An interest in these elements means that Creative Writing researchers share many of their curiosities with

those in other creative arts fields. For the same reason, such concepts as “originality,” “authenticity,” and “novelty” can be referenced and are also part of the discourse of Creative Writing research. Investigation of the elements here can sometimes take the Creative Writing research into such fields as Psychology, Neuroscience and Aesthetics, to name just a few responsive fields;

1.20 In Higher Education, where teaching and learning are core to the daily lives of both Creative Writing professors and their students, Creative Writing research that may aim to produce knowledge applicable to the classroom, the undergraduate or graduate student, the Creative Writing program, or the unit in which the Creative Writing program is based.



2. Reasons for Creative Writing Research

2.1 A creative writer can undertake Creative Writing research to further their knowledge in order to assist with a specific Creative Writing project or projects. The results of this research can therefore be localized and be of significance primarily to that individual creative writer and to an individual Creative Writing project or small number of projects;

2.2 A creative writer can accumulate knowledge and build on their understanding in order to apply this knowledge to their Creative Writing generally. Any specific research questions or projects might therefore form part of a continuum of research, aimed at informing the creative writer in a more general sense. For example, consider the novelist who in writing a novel not only discovers aspects applicable to that single novel project but also adds to their knowledge of novel writing, built up over several projects and over a length of time;

2.3 The reason for some creative writers to pursue Creative Writing research is related to their place in Higher Education, and the contributions they make to the knowledge base form in institutions of such higher learning. With this in mind, Creative Writing research can be incorporated into the plans of various academic units with regard to research and creative practice outcomes, and form the basis of the unit's and the institution's research and creative activities strategy, and the impact of this on the institution and on communities with which it engages;

2.4 Creative writers can pursue Creative Writing pedagogic research to improve their teaching and, ultimately, their students' learning;

2.5 Cross-disciplinary Creative Writing research might be undertaken because the themes and/or subjects involved are relevant for more than one human pursuit. Such cross-disciplinary or inter-disciplinary research can have multifarious outcomes, not all of which are identifiable works of Creative Writing

– for example, Creative Writing employed as part of a social science project engaging with a local community in order to map the history and character of that community;

2.6 While Creative Writing can be a professional pursuit, and a subject of teaching and learning in formal education, it is also a highly personal human endeavor, imbued with individual significance and cultural significance. With this in mind, Creative Writing research can sometimes be pursued for the personal pleasure gained by the individual creative writer who seeks to learn more about their practice and/or the practices of other creative writers. Emotional and psychological satisfaction, as well intellectual satisfaction therefore can form reasons for pursuing Creative Writing research;

2.7 Although it is incorporated into our thinking on the general reasons for pursuing Creative Writing research, nevertheless Creative Writing research can sometimes be pursued primarily because it is a formal requirement of a particular Creative Writing program, particularly at graduate level. This identity for Creative Writing research as a formal educational practice references its connection to advancing knowledge and understanding in the pursuit and understanding of Creative Writing.

3. Outcomes of Creative Writing Research

3.1 Published or performed creative works, of a great many kinds;

3.2 Published critical works concerned with the philosophy, methodologies and/or critical theories of Creative Writing;

3.3 Unpublished works of many kinds, forming the bases of works not completed, or works still in progress, or ideas for future works; notes and “scraps,” barely forming drafts but still recognizable as material outputs; and other items of seeming ephemera that have been gathered with a Creative Writing project or projects in mind;

3.4 Pedagogic materials for Creative Writing courses of various kinds, these materials being informed by discoveries made and produced with the aim of transmitting these discoveries to Creative Writing learners;

3.4 Clearly as research involves the pursuit of new knowledge or the challenge of current knowledge, one outcome of Creative Writing research aims to be an evolution in human knowledge. Related to this, Creative Writing research also can improve a creative writer’s own understanding. While knowledge is an accumulation of information and an awareness of facts or perceived facts, understanding is interpretative and often attaches itself to a sense of causation and meaning;

3.5

Creative Writing research often produces reflection (or reflexive) moments, whereby the creative writer (or in some instances, groups of creative writers) consider the results of their creative and/or critical practices. To make the most of this reflection, a second stage is involved, and that is the stage most accurately called “response”, whereby the creative writer responds to their investigations by producing more creative writing that is informed by their discoveries, or by exploring the validity of these discoveries through their creative practice or by presenting their discoveries as a critical examination (say, a paper or conference presentation) or by incorporating their discoveries into a pedagogic practice.



4. Creative Writing Research and the Teaching of Creative Writing

4.1 Because Creative Writing involves the accumulation, application, updating and transferring of human knowledge, Creative Writing research is directly related to the pursuit and advancement of Creative Writing teaching and learning;

4.2 Much as with any other disciplinary area in Higher Education, the requirement to keep up with and contribute to knowledge and understanding in our particular field is part of necessary scholarship and could be said to contribute a key element to our responsible Higher Education teaching practice;

4.3 Creative Writing, as a pursuit involving the participation of human agents (both the creative writer and the reader or audience) draws from and contributes to the agency also inherent in teaching;

4.4 Cognate and associated subjects – such as the study of Literature, Composition Studies, Media, Theatre, Music, to name a few areas - often incorporate elements of Creative Writing in some form or in some part of their teaching and learning. Creative Writing research can therefore add collaboratively to the work of educators in these fields;

4.5 Creative Writing research often involves a consideration of elements of form and function, whether individualized to a researcher/creative writer's needs or more generally conceived. Such form and function considerations can also inform pedagogic practices because form and function are useful concepts in the construction of courses and lessons of all kinds.

5. Assessing Creative Writing Research

5.1 Creative Writing research can be assessed by considering what new knowledge or what viable challenges to established knowledge it has produced;

5.2 When assessing the result of Creative Writing research, it has to be recognized that different levels of such research exist, meaning it is possible to pursue a personal project that is localized and significant only in one instance or a small number of instances, and for an individual creative writer. It is also possible to produce a project that has wider implications for Creative Writing and other creative writers. Both are valid if their parameters are well articulated;

5.3 To assess outcomes of particular pieces of Creative Writing research, we require an outline of the creative writer's aims and objectives (that is the what of their research and the why of their research). The validity of approaches taken and the outcomes produced can then be considered against these aims and objectives. Outcomes do not necessarily have to be completed or professionally disseminated works of Creative Writing;

5.4 Because Creative Writing research can involve practical as well as critical and theoretical knowledge and understanding, assessment of the results of Creative Writing research might refer directly to technical competencies and capabilities in writing as well as to ideas and arguments;

5.5 Creative Writing research pursued for an undergraduate or, more likely, a graduate degree should be assessed according to rubrics made clear to the student. Creative Writing always references in some way a culture and society (that is holistic entities) and the individual creative writer (that is, the creative writer's individualism). Therefore, rubrics for the assessment of a student's Creative Writing research will best combine a holistic sense of what Creative Writing research can contribute to disciplinary knowledge and understanding and an individualistic sense of how a project pursued by the student plans to contribute to their own knowledge and understanding of Creative Writing.

6. Links

www.creativewritingstudies.com

Relevant journals edited here in the United States include:

Journal of Creative Writing Studies, the online journal of the Creative Writing Studies Organization (CWSO)- <http://creativewritingstudies.com/content/journal>

New Writing: the International Journal for the Practice and Theory of Creative Writing, published independently online and in paper by Taylor and Francis- <http://www.tandfonline.com/toc/rmnw20/current>

Relevant journals edited outside the United States include:

Writing in Practice: the Journal of Creative Writing Research, the online journal of Great Britain's National Association of Writers in Education (NAWE) - <http://www.nawe.co.uk/writing-in-education/writing-at-university/writing-in-practice.html>

TEXT: Journal of Writing and Writing Courses, the online journal of the Australasian Association of Writing Programs- <http://www.textjournal.com.au/>

Twitter: [@cwstudies](https://twitter.com/cwstudies)

FB: facebook.com/CreativeWritingStudies
facebook.com/groups/JournalofCreativeWritingStudies

This report was written by the Creative Writing Studies Organization Research Development Committee and approved by the Board of Directors.

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