**Writers’ Program Instructor Expectations**

Updated July 2021

Thank you for your commitment to helping Writers’ Program students achieve their writing goals. The following guidelines have been developed using a best practices/core expectations philosophy to craft clear directives for instructors in executing their quarterly course contract. If you have any questions about the content of this document, contact Charlie Jensen at [cjensen@unex.ucla.edu](mailto:cjensen@unex.ucla.edu).

For more than 50 years, the Writers’ Program has been one of the most prestigious and accessible creative writing and screenwriting training programs in the nation and the world. We take pride in our ability to help students achieve their writing goals and find creative success, however they define that. We accomplish this goal through the work of our dedicated instructor corps.

Even as we set out specific expectations for how instruction gets done, we agree it is essential instructors establish reasonable and respectful boundaries with students to ensure their personal time, creative work, and other livelihoods are not affected by teaching with us.

***Commitments from Program Staff Working with Instructors***

* We take our commitment to equity, inclusion, access, and justice with the utmost sincerity. If at any time you want to discuss the ways we express this commitment, or fail to meet your standards, we welcome your guidance.
* We will be there to respond to your requests for assistance within 24 hours for urgent matters, and within 72 hours for casual requests. Often we respond sooner, and our intention is to prioritize instructor needs. On weekends, staff may not be available to respond immediately.
* We will provide training and support so that you feel you have the tools, knowledge, and resources to focus on your subject matter expertise. We understand our processes are often cumbersome, opaque, and frustrating. Please know they are for us too. We are in this together.
* We will work as transparently as possible with you at all times. We believe open and honest communication is a core building block of trust.
* There are two key factors to the Writers’ Program success and reputation. One is the high-touch service model we employ on the program side to help students make their way. The other is the quality and impact of our instructors. We strive to keep our relationship symbiotic and—whenever possible—fun.

***Basic Employment Expectations of All Instructors***

**Course Development and Instructor Contracts**

* Keep track of your account log ins.
* Notify your Program Rep if any contact information changes—mailing address, phone, email.
* Inform staff at time of hire if you are employed by another UC campus or if at any time you take a job with another UC campus.
* Acknowledge receipt of course offer emails and if you cannot respond yes or no at that time, let the Rep know when you will follow up.
* Provide required course materials to your Program Rep by their established deadlines. If deadlines cannot be met, work with your Rep to craft a solution.
* Make final textbook decisions at least two months prior to the start of the quarter. If you need more time, contact your Program Rep to discuss the best way forward.
* Complete and upload your syllabus in Canvas per your Program Rep’s deadline.
* Respond to emails from your Program Rep within a week of receipt, unless the message is marked more urgent. When your class is in session, strive to respond in 48 hours.
* Sign your contract via DocuSign each quarter you teach. Review it for accuracy.
* Teach from the course description you are assigned, and ensure your class meets any established course outcome, especially if your course is part of a sequence.

**Active Teaching and Classroom Management**

* Follow the curriculum you outlined in your syllabus, including textbooks and other course materials. Notify students at least 1 week in advance if a change will be made to the syllabus.
* Maintain a professional demeanor at all times as a representative of the Writers’ Program and UCLA. Keep sensitive information about program and course operations confidential from students. If you have feedback, discuss it with your Program Rep.
* Familiarize yourself with the basic laws of the Family Education Rights and Privacy Act, including the legal prohibition from revealing student contact or enrollment information to anyone except program staff.
* If you need to cancel a class meeting or reschedule, contact your Program Rep.
* If you want to arrange for a substitute to cover an absence, contact your Program Rep. We will compensate whomever steps in.
* Report unusual student behavior to your Program Rep as soon as possible, even if you think a) it wasn’t a big deal, b) you handled it, c) you don’t want us to think you can’t handle teaching, d) you weren’t sure if you handled it right. We are committed to helping you in every circumstance. Early and frequent communication ensures we can collaborate with you on solutions and provide support to help you thrive.
* Manage your classroom in a way that creates a supportive community among you and your students. Ensure student communication is respectful.
* Do your best to meet your students where they are at. If students are underprepared for your course, discuss that with them, and with staff to help them get into the right course (such as a prerequisite or course that suits their skill level). If students need extra support from you, within reason, provide it.
* Complete your Instructor Course Evaluation at the end of every quarter you teach.
* Read your Course Evaluations every quarter. Identify feedback that can help you improve course delivery.

**Student Grades**

* Keep a gradebook and record efforts by every student. Students may alter their grading preference at any time before class ends, so even a student who selects “Do Not Record” can suddenly require a letter grade.
* Enter final grades by the Rep’s established deadline, or communicate with your Program Rep if for some reason you cannot meet the deadline.
* Assign a letter grade to all students unless students have made the formal request to change their grading status with Student Services. Informal requests made to the program or instructor directly cannot be accepted.
* Students requesting a grade of Incomplete must make the request directly to you. They must have a “substantial portion of the course completed” and their work prior to the request should be of passing quality. If students do not meet these qualifications, do not approve the request no matter what they say. If you have questions, contact your Program Rep immediately. Incompletes require you to do unpaid work after the course end date, and should only be used in legitimate circumstances. Grades of “Incomplete” must be coordinated with the Writers’ Program and you should understand the unpaid responsibility that comes with it. An Incomplete grade can only be assigned to a student who is passing at the time of the request, so maintaining grades is essential for this reason.
* All final grades are considered final after you enter them. This means we will reject student grade grievances on your behalf. The exceptions to the policy are: when a grade is incorrect due to a mathematical error in calculation of the grade, or when the student believes the instructor used criteria outside the graded work itself to assign the final grade (such as bias, personal feelings, etc). If a student asks you to change a grade for any other reason, please **do not change the grade no matter what they say.**

**Policies**

* Remember that you cannot approve or deny refund requests. All requests must be sent through Student Services or Writers’ Program. Know the refund deadline for your course (14 days after your start date; no refunds for advanced courses, Writers Studio, or multiquarter courses).
* Have a Late Work Policy in your syllabus that protects you from undue labor.

**Pausing or Ending Your Service**

* Inform staff when you decide to pause or end your teaching at UCLA Extension.

***Students Requesting Accommodations***

* As instructors, you may approve **temporary** and **fixed** accommodations for students experiencing a sudden, temporary illness (such as cold, flu, fever, etc). This would include extensions on assignment deadlines, excusing them from attendance/participation points for a limited number of class meetings.
* If a student requests an accommodation due to a self-described disability, chronic illness or injury, learning or cognitive disability, or mental/emotional illness, you **may not approve** accommodations. In this instance, students must submit documentation of their disability to the Disability Services Office, which can take up to three weeks prior to a course to review and approve. Even if the student has not done this and shows you proof of a disability, you may not approve any accommodations and they should be expected to complete the course in the same manner as all other students, with the exception of the scenarios outlined in the first bullet.

***Basic Employment Expectations of Live Instruction (Remote or Classroom)***

* Ensure you are prepared to use class-related technology at least two weeks prior to the start of each course. This includes activating Zoom, uploading materials or adding assignments in Canvas, accessing your UCLA inbox, and beyond.
* If teaching via Zoom, set up Zoom meetings in Canvas at least one week prior to the start date of the course.
* Act in good faith to arrive at scheduled class meetings on or before the appointed start time, in a manner that you arrive prepared and ready to begin teaching at the start of the class meeting.
* End class meetings at their scheduled times. Ending class early can frustrate students who feel they aren’t getting what they paid for. Ending class late can frustrate students who have set aside the required time to attend class.
* At the first class meeting, discuss syllabus policies with students. Answer clarifying questions for them. Remind them their success in the course depends on abiding by these policies.
* Set clear expectations for what your class will and will not do for students. Identify the course outcome. Highlight primary course activities and what a typical class meeting will entail.
* Respond to emails from students within 48 hours, unless you have notified them you need more time due to work-life balance.
* Inform staff any time your class deviates from your published class time, day/date, published schedule, or location. Inform staff when you plan to take students on a field trip and follow required procedures to facilitate that. Field trips are any class meeting held in a non-regular class space.

***Basic Employment Expectations of Online Instruction (Asynchronous on Canvas)***

* Build your online class modules prior to two days before your start date, and preferably by your Program Rep’s deadline.
* Monitor your online class regularly. Log in several times for short bursts throughout the week to ensure students consider you “present” and actively engaged in course activity. Identify the specific days you are sure to log into class (such as Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Saturdays).
* Monitor your Canvas inbox and reply to student queries within 48 hours, unless you have notified them you need more time due to work-life balance.