University of BRISTOL

Mastering English Literature

Application Pack
January – April 2027

English Part-Time Courses, School of Humanities, 11 Woodland Road, Bristol BS8 1TB
english-lifelong@bristol.ac.uk www.bristol.ac.uk/english/study/part-time/short-courses/ 0117 455 8271

How to Apply

Please complete an online application form on our web page.

https://www.bristol.ac.uk/english/study/part-time/short-courses/mastering-english-literature/

The deadline is **5pm, Monday 4 January 2027.** We recommend applying as soon as you are able, to avoid disappointment.

Admission is based on your application form and personal statement. You can prepare a personal statement and then paste it into the online application form. Alternatively, you can enter your information directly. There is an option to *finish later*.

Information and advice

Please read all the information in this pack thoroughly before completing your online application form. If you have any questions or would like an informal chat about the course, please email **english-lifelong@bristol.ac.uk.**

Who can apply?

This course is open to anyone who already holds an undergraduate degree in any discipline. It is aimed primarily at mature students from the local area who wish to refresh their study skills and explore a wide range of texts. This course is also designed to support students who are considering an MA level in English Literature.

Course fee

The course fee for Mastering English Literature is **£530.00**

A request to pay in two instalments can be considered.
Please email **english-lifelong@bristol.ac.uk**

What does the course aim to achieve?

There will be opportunities to sharpen study skills, read a wide range of texts, and gain a taste of the University's expertise in Medieval Literature, Shakespeare, Writing of the 19th-century, Modernist works by authors such as T.S. Eliot and Katherine Mansfield, Literature and the Environment and Black British Writing. We hope the seminar discussions will be enjoyable and will help students build their confidence in discussing literary texts at this level.

Guidance is given to those who are considering an MA in English Literature or further study. There is an emphasis on the core subjects studied in the University of Bristol MA. This course aims to help students produce written work of a standard appropriate to submit as a writing sample with an application to the MA at Bristol.

When and where do the classes take place?

There will be 10 meetings on Wednesday evenings, 20 January to 21 April 2027 from 6pm to 8pm.

The course dates are: 20 January, 27 January, 3 February, 10 February, 24 February, 3 March, 10 March, 17 March, 14 April, 21 April 2027.

Please email English-lifelong@bristol.ac.uk for further details.

What will we read?

We will read a range of texts relevant to the pathways and units available within the MA in English Literature. A full course outline will be sent to you in advance.

Example topics:

Medieval Literature
Shakespeare
Writing of the 19th-century
Modernist works by authors such as T.S. Eliot and Katherine Mansfield
Literature and the Environment
Black British Writing

This course gives a taste of a range of Masters level (MA) programmes at Bristol including:

- *MA English with Black Humanities*
- *MA Creative Writing*
- *MA English Literature:*
    - *Shakespeare and Renaissance Literature pathway*
    - *Romantic and Victorian Literature pathway*
    - *Modern and Contemporary Literature pathway*
    - *Literature and the Environment pathway*

How is the course marked?

Students will be required to complete two formative assignments of 2000 words. These assignments will not count towards the final mark for the course. In addition, students will be required to submit one summative assignment of 3000 words which will form the final mark.

What happens after the course?

Advice will be offered on the pathways to further study. Over the past decade, several students have progressed to an MA at Bristol. Please note that progression to the MA English Literature is not automatic upon completion of the MEL course. Students will be required to submit a separate application and students will be supported and guided through the application process.

You can read more about Bristol's MA in English Literature at https://www.bristol.ac.uk/study/postgraduate/taught/ma-english-literature/

Thank you for interest in this course

Mastering English Literature

A student's perspective: Harriet's story

What background did you have in education before doing the MEL course?
I did a degree in Linguistics and German at Sussex University in 1988. I then worked in publishing for 10 years in book production. I stopped work to have my family and worked part-time for my husband's business as a bookkeeper. The children got to an age where it became imperative that I do something else because I was going a bit frantic!

What made you apply for the MEL course?
I had always wanted to do a literature degree. I was too scared to go straight for an MA because I didn't have confidence after so many years out of education. So when I looked at MEL, it seemed a very good level. I liked the subject matter it was going to cover – drama, a novel and poetry – and the fact that it was not just one period.

What was the course like?
It was fantastic. It was very unthreatening and welcoming. We were all different ages and stages and we were made to feel you could say anything you wanted without fear of ridicule. You could say what you thought and have it discussed. The tutor, Stephen Derry, is very entertaining and witty but incredibly well read – so he made it fun as well. I learnt a lot about essay writing and about close reading. I'd never done that before: unpacking paragraphs and seeing other ways of reading books than as a straightforward form of entertainment, which was crucial before going on to the MA. And I discovered that I liked poetry!

You're now studying part-time on the MA in English Literature?
Yes, I had to apply for the MA and got accepted. It's been great. I could enthuse forever. Again, it's been supportive. You get the confidence from MEL to open your mouth in a seminar. It's incredibly well taught and I think it encourages you to be independent in your thinking but at the same time you're not left on your own. I took a module on Dickens. It was a huge amount of reading but I absolutely loved it.

What are you planning to do next?
I'm quite interested in archive work or research in that area and the MA is going to give me the confidence to pursue that. Society gives you some sense of status if you're in employment. If you choose not to be, to raise a family, then you do feel as if you've stepped into oblivion. Coming back to do an MA has made me feel I have something to say that is of value and has given me the confidence to go back into work.

What would your advice be to anyone thinking of applying for the MEL course?
Do it! Without hesitation, whether you want to go on to MA or not – because it opens your eyes to literature in a way you may not have looked at it before.

James' Story

In 2017, I became interested in doing an English Literature MA. I had been working in publishing as a copy editor for about seven years, but I had no formal qualifications above A levels, so I wasn't sure if I could be admitted to an MA course. I contacted the English Department at the University of Bristol to find out if it was possible to get onto the MA without a first degree, and the course director, Dr Theo Savvas, recommended Mastering English Literature.

MEL turned out to be a good way to bolster my MA application as well as a practical preparation for graduate study. But it was also enjoyable and worthwhile of itself. I loved rediscovering writers such as Jane Austen and Philip Larkin from a new, critical perspective. The teaching on MEL was excellent, and the tutor, Stephen Derry, fostered a welcoming atmosphere, taking all contributions seriously. I found his efforts to connect the concerns of normal, non-academic readers with academic research particularly valuable. It became clear, from Stephen's example, that treating literary texts as objects of analysis need not entail losing sight of them as sources of pleasure and meaning. The course also proved useful when I later came to negotiate the bureaucratic issues that arise in applying for a postgraduate course without a first degree, such as requirements for transcripts, certificates and academic references.

After completing MEL, I moved onto the MA. The step up was challenging, but thanks to the assignments and discussions that I'd engaged with on MEL, I didn't feel entirely out of my depth. Once I was immersed in a full-time postgraduate programme, I felt doubly grateful for the knowledge and confidence I'd already gained from MEL, without which I think I would've found the seminars intimidating and the assignments daunting. I completed the MA in September 2018. Since finishing the MA, I've begun a PhD in the Department of English focusing on the poetry of William Morris and the origins of Victorian aestheticism.

Ed's Story

For someone coming from a non-academic background, the MEL course offered a vital steppingstone between my undergraduate degree in Jazz performance towards a postgraduate in Musicology. The well-structured course helped me to improve my academic essay writing skills and produce suitable writing samples for postgraduate applications.

The course offered a great chance to practice academic writing: working with the MHRA system, structuring arguments, and refining research into clear, well presented, ideas. The regular group discussions on the large variety of content explored over the 12 weeks provided a space to build confidence, express ideas, and respond to feedback.

I found the detailed line by line essay feedback particularly useful, as well as the one-to-one sessions with professors. Having access to the online resources such as JSTOR and the Bristol university library was an amazingly useful tool that allowed me to gain further insight into the world of academia. Through further study I aim to explore the musicological and ethno-musicological intersections between music, literature, and ecology. I want to continue with my life as a performing musician, and ultimately to synthesise and develop a career from all of these elements, with an additional focus on environmental activism.