

PROGRAM GUIDELINES FOR BENNINGTON WRITING SEMINARS (PDF version)

(updated 2/21)

The Bennington Writing Seminars (BWS) was founded in January 1994 by Liam Rector, working with Bennington College and with a core faculty of writer/teachers. In 2019 the Seminars celebrated its 25th Anniversary.

Bennington College has long been a home to the practitioner/teacher and to writers including Bernard Malamud, Theodore Roethke, W.H. Auden, Mary Oliver, Kenneth Burke, Hortense Calisher, John Gardner, Edward Hoagland, Stanley Kunitz, Ben Bellitt, Nicholas Delbanco, and Stephen Sandy among others.

In the winter of 1996 the Writing Seminars graduated its first class, conferring the Master of Fine Arts (M.F.A.) degree in Writing and Literature to twenty students. The poet Donald Hall was the program's first graduation speaker and continued to be engaged with the Writing Seminars until his death in 2018. We now offer a full scholarship for poets in his name.

Faculty who conduct workshops at Bennington during residency act as mentors to students during periods of correspondence off-campus. At Bennington we place as great an emphasis upon reading as we do upon writing—seeing the two, for the writer, as part of the same intertwining process.

The low-residency format is especially well-suited for the education of the writer. Periods of solitude, in tutorial correspondence with mentors, culminate in residencies at Bennington that are, in effect, intense symposia. The Seminars offer concentrations in fiction, nonfiction, poetry, as well as a dual-genre option to study across disciplines.

In keeping with Bennington's progressive tradition, the course of study in the Seminars is generated largely by the student. Students confer closely with their faculty members to form their own reading lists, and submit original work—fiction, nonfiction, and poetry—for critique at regular intervals throughout the term. The tutorial development of student work is at the heart of the Seminars, as it is at the heart of Bennington College and its other programs in drama, dance, music, the visual arts, and in the humanities, languages and sciences.

The Seminars maintains a maximum student-to-faculty ratio of five to one in order to provide individual attention to each student.

THE LOW-RESIDENCY FORMAT

The low-residency format is a response of the literary sensibility to the realities of modern life. It offers considerable freedom to the student, but the student must be self-disciplined and self-reliant.

During the correspondence period students are expected to devote at least 25 hours each week to their writing and reading.

Once accepted into the Seminars in a particular genre (fiction, nonfiction, poetry, or in the dual-genre), the student is committed to five residency periods and four correspondence terms. Students who elect and have been approved for the dual-genre option, commit to six residencies and five correspondence terms. Over the course of the correspondence terms, each student will have four (five for dual-genre students) different teachers. We believe strongly that intense exposure to different sensibilities is, in the long run, one of the bounties of the Seminars.

To a student who elects it, we do offer a "the third-term switch." This is a chance to pursue one term of instruction in a second genre. A fiction writer may request to work in nonfiction to explore memoir, say, or essays; a nonfiction writer may request to study with a poet; and so on. Such a request must be approved by the student's second-term teacher and be reviewed and approved by the Director. We do specify this is only a third-term option, to be taken up once the primary genre track has been firmly established, and before the final term. Work done during a third-term switch may be included in the final thesis/portfolio.

The final term is more or less devoted to completing the required thesis: a portfolio of stories or a novel, or a combination of the two, for the fiction writer; a collection of a nonfiction work for the nonfiction writer; a manuscript of poems for the poet; or a mixed-genre portfolio, for students who have done a third-term genre switch or have completed a dual-genre option, that reflects the course of study. Students will also submit a revised critical essay as part of their thesis and give a reading from their work during their final residency.

The work for which the M.F.A. is awarded must be generated while enrolled in the Seminars.

REQUIREMENTS

Sixteen credits are conferred per term, upon successful completion of all required work, and 64 credits are required for the M.F.A. degree, 80 for the dual-genre option.

The Seminars are designed, over four terms and five residencies, to develop a steady engagement with the processes of composition of new work, revision, reading, and critical thinking. The Seminars aim, by stages, to prepare students to bring their work to readers and to the public through a final portfolio/thesis, a final critical essay, and a final reading of a student's original work.

SUMMARY OF REQUIREMENTS BY TERM

First Term & Second Term (and Third Term for Dual-Genre Students)

1. Ongoing original work, including revisions
2. 20 to 30 books read
3. Selected critical responses to readings
4. 10-page essay based on readings
5. 4 or 5 packet exchanges (depending on the term) with their teacher, at regular intervals

Third Term (Fourth Term for Dual-Genre Students)

1. Ongoing original work, including revisions
2. 20 to 30 books read
3. Selected critical responses to readings
4. 20-25 page critical essay based on readings
5. 4 or 5 packet exchanges with teacher, at regular intervals

Fourth Term (Fifth Term for Dual-Genre Students)

1. Ongoing original work directed towards completion of a thesis, critical paper, and reading
2. Minimum of 10 books read
3. Selected critical responses to readings
4. 4 or 5 packet exchanges with teacher, at regular intervals
5. Revision of a critical essay written in their third term, to include faculty feedback received after conferring with a faculty panel

6. Preparation of a formal twenty-minute reading of one's work to be given at the parting residency, with a mandatory 5-10 minute Q & A following the reading
7. Submission of a thesis and critical paper, to two faculty readers
8. Submission of a thesis and critical paper to Crossett Library

Students must also attend two 10-day residency periods each year during the course of study, one in January and one in June, plus a final residency to mark the completion of the course of study. These are high-energy and high-demand sessions and we require full participation. Students must arrive the day before and leave no earlier than after the final scheduled academic event of the residency, being in residence the entire 10 days and planning travel arrangements and other commitments to ensure no break in the 10-day concentration. The residencies are meant to be a retreat from the routines and affiliations of daily life.

DURING RESIDENCY, STUDENTS CAN EXPECT:

- To have work discussed in workshop sessions with other students in the genre or, where the opportunity presents itself, to participate in a mixed-genre workshop. Students will send their work in advance of the workshop, as directed by our mailings, so that students will have ample time to read and fully comment on one another's work prior to coming to the residencies.
- To confer privately with the new teacher. The purpose of the one-on-one meeting is to discuss the term's project, to develop a reading list, and to explain the format of the critical component of the work. The student is expected to read between 20 and 30 books each term for the first three terms (four terms for dual-genre students), a minimum of 10 books in the last term, and students should arrive at each residency with a first draft of their upcoming term's reading list, to be discussed with their teacher as a part of the contract for that term's work.
- To meet with their teacher from the previous correspondence term, to talk about that term's work, and consider the connection to the work going forward.
- To attend the lectures, Genre Seminars and Master Classes presented and taught by visiting writers and faculty, to attend the nightly readings of visiting writers and faculty, and to take advantage of informal opportunities for exchange throughout the day.

The visiting-writer and faculty lectures are a crucial part of the educational mission of the residency, creating a community of learning for students and faculty alike. Unlike workshops and Master Classes which are primarily centered on matters of craft, visiting-writer and faculty lectures are meant to model the writer at work as they think about literature.

In the Writing Seminars we recognize the inter-relatedness of all literary genres. A fiction writer could never graduate from the Writing Seminars without a grasp of poetry, and no poet can escape the demands and beauties of good prose. The tension between the line and the sentence is a music by which we live, study, and write.

Nearly every night of the residency period, faculty and guests will read from their work. The evening readings are a time for the whole Writing Seminars community to come together; lectures, readings and classes offered during the residency are crucial features of the program, and should be attended by all students. Students also organize a reading series of their own, in which every student is encouraged to participate.

There are also various discussions and panels organized on subjects of pressing interest to all serious writers: publication, reviewing, employment, diversity, censorship, etc. which can be crucial for a writer's professional and artistic development.

Some useful definitions:

- **Lectures** take place in Tishman for the whole BWS community. These are (almost always) a written text delivered on a literary, life-of-letters or craft subject. They last about an hour, with a half-hour for questions and discussion.
- **Master Classes** take place (usually) in the Symposium Room of CAPA, and are for students only (faculty do not attend). Some are literature seminars with reading to be done in advance. Others have been more craft-focused or generative. Handouts—or pre-assigned texts—are usual.
- **Genre Seminars** take place on the first Thursday of the residency in regular classrooms and are short (one-hour) talks on a craft subject, for students only. The three genres are scheduled simultaneously, with the expectation that students enrolled in fiction will attend the fiction Genre Seminar, etc.

THE CORRESPONDENCE EXCHANGES THROUGHOUT EACH TERM

The Writing Seminars has two terms of slightly uneven length. During the shorter spring term beginning in January, students are required to complete four packets of work, though individual teachers may schedule and request five. In the longer term beginning in June, students are required to complete five packets of work.

The packets will consist of written responses to readings and a comprehensive amount of work in the genre as decided between the student and teacher during their one-on-one meeting.

Punctuality between students and teachers in exchanging packets is not only essential, it is integral to the nature of the low-residency educative process itself. Teachers will announce at each residency the deadlines for receiving packets from their students, and teachers will have their responses to packets in student hands no later than **10 days** after those deadlines. Most teachers will request to use email as the primary method of exchange of work, and we require that all students and faculty correspond via their Bennington College email account. If corresponding via US mail, students will supply teachers with self-addressed, stamped, priority-post envelopes for the return of their packets. Where teachers elect for speedier mailings for returning packets, teachers are required to take up that expense themselves.

The responses by teachers will be thorough, taking up both detailed matters, writing style, the inner logic of the sequence, etc., and the larger perspectives. However, students should expect each teacher to work differently within a fixed framework of expectations and requirements for each term's study.

Midterm evaluations by teachers will be written only if they find sufficient concerns regarding the student's progress. Midterm evaluations are not made part of the student's transcript, but are used to assess strengths and address any problems.

This is a low-residency program—for teachers as well as students—and we believe in the model of one exchange per month for either four or five months. While more frequent contact is generally discouraged, there are always contingencies, and teachers and students are free to make arrangements that are mutually acceptable.

By the same token, students are encouraged to interact with each other throughout the term. We encourage students to create communities—real and virtual—that will outlast their two years in the Seminars.

Our teachers expect to read only work-in-progress, work of the present. Past work, through substantive revision with a teacher, can become work of the present. Only work done in or revised while in the

Seminars can be included in the final portfolio/thesis. Reading of other past work is left to the discretion of each teacher.

After the correspondence period the student and the teacher have a final meeting at the following residency. This is the time for both to reflect upon the collaboration, take care of any unfinished business, and consult about the transition and the upcoming project work.

DUAL-GENRE GUIDELINES

The dual-genre option is a five-term program of study reserved for students who are judged advanced enough in two genres to produce a satisfactory thesis that includes work from both genres. Students will study three terms in the major genre and two terms in the minor genre. Dual-genre students are not required to produce more writing or submit more packets per term than single-genre students.

To be considered for a dual-genre degree, applicants must apply in two different genres. If the applicant's manuscripts are accepted in both genres, the applicant will study three terms in the major genre (the one they applied in primarily) and two terms in the minor genre, successfully completing 80 graduate-credit hours over five terms. Dual-genre students will work with three different teachers in the major genre and two different teachers in the minor genre and will attend a total of six residencies. The sequence of study will be: terms 1 and 2: major genre, terms 3 and 4: minor genre, term 5: major genre.

Students who do not initially apply in more than one genre may, in the second term, apply to study in a second genre. Application deadlines are September 1 for the upcoming winter term, and March 1 for the upcoming summer term. Though dual-genre students will complete a mandatory five-term course of study, students accepted into this option late in their tenure may be required to complete a longer course of study. The decision to approve or deny students into this option will be made by the Program Director, Associate Director, and a Faculty Advisory Committee.

Any changes over the course of the dual-genre student's study, including, in particular, any change in the designation of major and minor genres, may be made only in consultation with the Program Director, Associate Director, and the student's immediate and most recent faculty advisors.

Dual-genre students may not submit work in more than one genre per term, with one exception: in the student's final term, the student must submit for the teacher's approval a creative portfolio thesis that contains work in both major and minor genres. A faculty second reader will also evaluate the work of the entire thesis.

Page requirement for dual-genre theses: 3/5 of the thesis must be dedicated to the major genre and 2/5 must be dedicated to the minor genre. Manuscript length for prose: 125-150 total pages, which includes 40-50 pages of poetry.

SECTION I

Rules and Policies

***Please note:** The following rules and policies and all other provisions of these guidelines supersede any previous guidelines. By enrolling in the Writing Seminars, students automatically accept the rules and policies and acknowledge the right of the Writing Seminars to impose penalties and to take disciplinary action.*

After each residency, student residency evaluations are to be written by the students and received by the Associate Director by the deadline specified in our mailings.

Students are also responsible for course evaluations at the end of each term. These will be sent via email to all students via the Associate Director.

No partial credit can be given for the term's work. Credit will not be awarded if the student has not completed the term's work to the teacher's satisfaction and if they receive a failing grade. Failure of a term results in dismissal from the program.

A student who receives a Marginal Pass for a term if their work was unfinished or was not up to graduate level standards, will be put on Academic Probation in the coming term.

An Incomplete may be considered when extenuating circumstances such as illness or death in the family arise. In such a case, the teacher may, at their discretion, recommend an Incomplete for the term, if material is of insufficient quality, quantity, unacceptably late, or simply not finished. All Incompletes will be reviewed by the Associate Director and the Director, who will make the final decision to confer the Incomplete and will also define a written plan for completion of work. If work is not completed by the date specified in the plan the student will be denied credit for the term and will receive a failing grade.

Students who have received a Marginal Pass for the term or are carrying an Incomplete or are on Academic Probation are no longer considered in Good Academic Standing and will be allowed only one subsequent term to get back in good standing.

If a student elects to withdraw from the Seminars during the correspondence term, a letter of withdrawal (an email is fine) must be submitted to the Associate Director and Program Coordinator.

Note: A student who withdraws from the Seminars any time before its completion will be assessed fees according to the schedule in effect and published by the Business Office at the time of withdrawal. (See "Withdrawal" and "Refund" sections.)

If any student's correspondence packet is **more than seven days late**, the teacher will notify the Associate Director. Late packets may be cause for dismissal. For students who are receiving federal financial aid or scholarships, late-packet arrivals may jeopardize their eligibility for said aid/scholarship monies.

After midterm but before the residency, students are asked to submit a ranked list of preferences for the next term's teacher. Every effort is made to honor those requests, but this is not always possible. Students who do not receive one of their top preferences one term will be given priority in their requests the following term. It is important to note that we cannot guarantee students will receive their top choice. The program administration assigns faculty for first-term students.

Students cannot change teachers once the term has begun.

In the third-term, as noted, the student is eligible to apply for a one-term genre switch. Notification of the intent to switch must come by either Sept. 1 or March 1 in the term preceding, as stated in the Academic Calendar, and will not be considered after that date.

As previously noted, students who qualify may apply to be accepted into the dual-genre option. Guidelines are detailed above.

Thesis Guidelines

The final term is the "thesis term," a period of concentrated focus during which the student, in consultation with the teacher, completes the portfolio/thesis and the revised critical essay required for graduation. For fiction writers this is a collection of stories or a novel, or a combination of the two, 100 to 120 pages; for nonfiction writers a manuscript of either a collection of essays or a single topic book, 100 to 120 pages; and

for poets a manuscript of poems, 48 to 64 pages. For dual-genre students, 3/5 of the thesis must be dedicated to the major genre and 2/5 must be dedicated to the minor genre, 120 to 150 pages of prose for nonfiction and fiction; 40 to 50 pages of poetry.

Any exceptions to the length requirements must be approved in advance by the teacher. The decision of the faculty member is final. Due dates, established by the Seminars, will be strictly observed. A mixed-genre portfolio, dictated by the student's course of study—work done during a third-term switch or done by dual-genre students, of course—will be allowed.

A final panel (consisting of the final term teacher and a second reader) will be established for each student, for approval of the thesis manuscript. The final-term teacher will act as the student's primary thesis advisor and first reader.

The second reader's responsibility is to approve (pass or fail) and write an evaluation of the thesis, which will be made a part of the final record; second readers do not meet and confer with students about their thesis and are chosen by the program administration. Students receive short written feedback from their second reader after their final residency.

The panel will submit its recommendation for approval to the Director of the Seminars and the Associate Director. The final course credit and graduation eligibility cannot be established until the thesis manuscript has been received and approved. In addition to the copies submitted to the final-term teacher and second reader, each student will submit one e-file copy of the thesis for archival purposes and one hard copy of the thesis which will be made available for public circulation, to Bennington College's Crossett Library, during the first five days of the final residency.

Final Critical Essay

In response to numerous conversations with faculty about the need to improve the mechanism by which we evaluate our students' critical writing, we have begun the process of phasing out the graduate student lectures. Beginning at the June 2020 residency (with students who are rising into their fourth term (or fifth if they are dual-genre)) students will receive a group faculty evaluation and subsequently revise their final critical essay, a finished version of which will be submitted with their final thesis manuscript.

During the student's **third term**, they will write a 20-25 page critical essay under the guidance of their faculty mentor for that term. At the end of the term, they will submit that essay to a two-member faculty panel who will read the essay and prepare comments for a face-to-face meeting during the student's fourth (fifth for dual-genre) residency.

Each student will meet with a two-member faculty panel to present an oral summary of their essay and to receive faculty feedback in the meeting. Faculty will have read the essay and will provide meaningful but limited written feedback. Faculty offer their notes and suggestions for revision. Notes will be provided to both the student and the program administration for distribution to the student's fourth-term teacher.

The administration will assign the faculty critical writing panel and pairings will happen regardless of the genre in which students and faculty work (for instance a student in fiction might have a panel consisting of a faculty member in nonfiction and one in poetry.)

During the final term, students work with the fourth-term teacher to revise the critical essay. That teacher will advise the student on revisions and will evaluate the essay in its final narrative evaluation for the term.

- The critical paper is meant to demonstrate the student's ability to perform literary analysis from primary sources. One major work of literature—such as a novel or a poetry collection, or multiple

works by a single author—should be the norm, though other configurations are certainly possible.

- These essays should demonstrate the student’s ability to read a literary text, analyze it, and draw a conclusion about it, with the goal being to pursue an original argument or observation.
- These papers are indeed “academic;” we are an academic institution granting an academic degree. Depending on the student’s inclinations—and in close work with the third-semester and fourth-semester teachers—secondary (critical) texts, biographical information, and theory are all possible avenues to explore.
- The use of the first person in the essay is acceptable, but the student should not be the focus. Please note that our student critical essays are not intended to be “memoirs of reading,” or reflections on how a piece of literature has affected the reader personally. Again, the goal is literary analysis.
- We discourage essays in which students highlight and describe an aspect of the “craft,” of writing, i.e., writing convincing dialog, how to write a second book, etc. Such essays do not show us the student’s ability to read and extrapolate meaning from what they have read.
- As stated in the guidelines, the final essay should be 20 to 25 pages in length. Essays should include a bibliography and when quoting from sources, they should include footnotes or endnotes. MLA style should be used.

The essay will be submitted as part of the student’s final thesis manuscript to be turned in to the library. There is no final second reader for the critical essay.

Graduation Ceremony

At the end of each residency, there will be a graduation ceremony. Graduating students participate in the ceremony during their graduate term residency. Students are encouraged to invite family members and friends to celebrate.

ACADEMIC PROGRESS & ACADEMIC STANDING

Academic progress in the Bennington Writing Seminars is both quantitative and qualitative. Every student’s academic progress is evaluated each term. As a result, students earn a level of academic standing: Good Standing, Academic Probation, or Dismissal.

All students are considered full time. The number of credits earned per academic term is 16. Each term is deemed completed when all work has been received and accepted by a faculty member. A total of 64 credits is needed to fulfill the degree; 80 credits for the dual-genre option.

Once the teacher has written the final narrative evaluation of the term's work and deems the work satisfactory, the credits are conferred. No partial credit can be awarded for an incomplete term.

All students are given access to Populi, the college’s grading portal, and are expected to check it for their grades and evaluations after each term. Questions on how to use the system can be addressed to the Registrar: Carly Rudzinski at carlyrudzinski@bennington.edu

The narrative evaluations then become part of the student's transcript. For transcript purposes, these evaluations serve as a short portrait of student accomplishments.

The final narrative evaluation includes a qualitative judgment of Pass, comparable to (A-C), Marginal Pass, comparable to (D), or Fail, comparable to (F). To remain in Good Standing, a student should receive a Pass each term. A student who receives a Fail, will receive no credit and faces dismissal from the program. Only one Marginal Pass is allowed during the 4 terms of the program (5 terms for the dual-genre

option). A student who receives a Marginal Pass for a term will be put on Academic Probation in the coming term. If a student receives a second Marginal Pass, they will be dismissed from the program.

When requested by an individual student, a letter grade will also be conferred. Such a request must be made in writing before each term begins and be approved by the Associate Director. Under no circumstances will letter grades be reversed once conferred or conferred retroactively, once a student has graduated from the Seminars.

An Incomplete may be considered when extenuating circumstances such as illness or death in the family arise. In such a case, the teacher may, at the teacher's discretion, recommend an Incomplete for the term. All Incompletes will be reviewed by the Director, who will make the final decision to confer the Incomplete and will also define a written plan for completion of work. If work is not satisfactorily completed by the date specified in the plan the student will not receive credit for the term, will have to repeat the term, or may be dismissed from the Seminars. Extensions on Incompletes are not granted.

Causes for dismissal include, but are not limited to:

- Failure to attend workshops
- Late receipt of packets
- Incomplete or insufficient work
- Unsatisfactory work
- Plagiarism
- Dishonesty
- Failure to comply with the Guidelines
- Behavior that endangers the health, safety, well-being, or overall community of the Seminars

The Director shall determine whether to dismiss a student and will render their decision in writing to the student. The student may appeal the decision of the Director within one week, in writing, to the Dean of the College. The decision of the Dean of the College is final in all cases.

GOVERNANCE

Faculty members at Bennington are chosen according to the literary merits of their writing and their ability to teach. The faculty lead workshops during the two 10-day residencies in January and June, advise students about their courses of study, correspond with students during the terms between residencies, give public readings of their work, and on occasion offer lectures and Master Classes and Genre Seminars.

Visiting writers conduct lectures and discussions of literature for two to three-day visits that take place within the ten-day residencies and give public readings of their work during each residency.

In addition to the faculty, the administration of the Writing Seminars is taken up by Director, an Associate Director, and a Program Coordinator. The Director is responsible for the vision and direction of the Seminars, and for the hiring of faculty and guests. The Associate Director is responsible for implementation of the Seminars on a daily basis, and is responsible for student concerns during the periods of residency and correspondence. The Program Coordinator is in year-round residence at Bennington College, and responsible for communications and business between the Seminars and the College.

Bennington College is governed by its Board of Trustees, who bear legal and fiduciary responsibility for the institution; by the President of the College, who serves at the pleasure of the Trustees; by the Provost and Dean of the College; by the Director of the Seminars, who consults with the College concerning Seminars Guidelines, and is responsible for faculty hiring, evaluation, and dismissal; by the Associate Director, by the Program Coordinator, and by the faculty. Each has a specific role to play, with specific responsibilities.

Within what we have to offer, there is great freedom for students to fashion their own courses of study. The Seminars cannot function as a democracy, but within its hierarchy we plan to maximize the greatest freedom and responsibility possible for its administrators, faculty, students, and staff.

Faculty maintain a basic continuity from term to term, though faculty members do change according to the needs of the program. The visiting writers generally change from residency to residency, although some visiting writers may return.

The entire faculty, as well as a faculty steering committee meets regularly at the beginning of each residency.

NUTS AND BOLTS

Admission

Students may begin their studies in the Seminars during either of the 10-day residency sessions in January or June. Admission is limited and competitive.

Students are admitted to the Seminars primarily on the strength of the original manuscript (s) and the essay submitted with the application. Each manuscript is judged according to its literary merit, its promise, and its indication of a student's readiness to study writing and literature on the graduate level.

Although we encourage students to write broadly in fiction, poetry, and nonfiction and criticism, students will be accepted to work in one primary genre, unless they apply for the dual-genre degree option. With the exception of the third-term switch and the dual-genre option, students stay in their chosen genre of focus. The manuscript(s) submitted with the application should be in the genre(s) in which the student intends to concentrate.

Applicants should otherwise provide a two-to-three-page essay on their reading life and their literary influences.

Students who are applying to the Seminars will often have completed some graduate work or attained graduate degrees in various fields; the Seminars may consider awarding up to one semester's worth of credits earned at an accredited creative writing program that awards MA, MFA or Ph.D. degree. No more than one semester's worth of credits will be awarded, no matter how many credits were earned while pursuing a degree in another program. In order to have a transcript reviewed, students must make this request at the time of enrollment in the program. Transcripts will be reviewed by the Program Director in consultation with the College's Dean of Studies.

Normally a bachelor's degree is required to gain admission, but this requirement can be waived if the quality of the application submitted warrants such an exception.

In addition to the original manuscript(s) and the essay, in admitting students we will give weight to previous education and life experience. We look to see that a prospective student has the ability to work independently, to successfully use the low-residency format, and to benefit from direct criticism within the collaborative nature of the residency periods. Our aim is to help guide students who are very self-motivated and who have already made their compact with the world of writing and reading.

Official transcripts from previous schools attended must also be submitted, along with recommendations from three people familiar with the student's writing and capacity to sustain study independently and collaboratively.

A \$70 nonrefundable application fee (\$100 for Dual-Genre applicants) is required. This fee cannot be waived.

Financial aid is available in the form of student loans. These funds must be applied for within the deadlines outlined on the application form. We invite interested applicants to call and discuss these matters in detail.

Application deadlines: Currently September 1 for winter/spring term, beginning with the January residency, and March 1 for the summer/fall term, beginning with the June residency.

Students who accept enrollment must make the matriculation deposit by the specified deadline to be considered fully enrolled.

Fees and Billing

A required matriculation deposit of \$500 is due upon acceptance into the Seminars. This deposit is nonrefundable and holds the student's placement in the Seminars. The full amount of the deposit will be applied to the student's first-term's tuition.

The Seminars fee for the first four terms (five for the dual-degree option) includes tuition, room and board, and is billed prior to the beginning of each term. In addition, students are billed for their "graduate residency fee" prior to the fifth (or 6th in the case of dual-genre students) and final residency. All fees, including the final residency fee, are due and payable as stated on the bill, approximately one month prior to the first day of the residency, generally May 15 for the summer term and December 15 for the winter term. Payments not received by the Business Office by the due date will be assessed late payment penalties.

Students who have not paid in full all amounts due and payable to the College, or whose loans are not guaranteed before the first day of classes of the upcoming term and who have not requested and received written authorization from the Business Office, will not be allowed to enroll in workshops or to occupy or use campus facilities. Such action will not constitute release of the student or the other responsible party from his or her financial obligation to the College.

Financial Aid

The primary responsibility for financing an education belongs to the student. Financial aid is available in the form of student loans. To begin the application process, those students who need financial aid fill out and return the financial aid application form at the time they apply to the Seminars. The Financial Aid Office requires the following: the Bennington College Financial Aid Application, a copy of the most recent federal income tax return, the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA), and financial aid transcripts. The student must complete the financial aid process by the deadline determined by the Financial Aid Office and in any event before the start of the residency.

Scholarships

Scholarships are awarded at varying amounts to students on the basis of merit and need and with input from the admissions committee, the Director and the Associate Director. Scholarship monies are awarded once during a student's time here and spread across the terms in which they are enrolled. All scholarship monies derive from the generosity of Bennington Writing Seminars alumni who give in order that future writers can receive the gift of time, craft, and camaraderie that is a Bennington trademark.

Withdrawal

Withdrawal from the College must be submitted in writing (email is fine) to the Associate Director. The effective date of withdrawal is the date on which this written notice is received.

The enrollment fee is forfeit in the event of a withdrawal.

Students receiving federal aid will have refunds calculated in accordance with federal refund policy. Details are available from the Financial Aid Office.

Refund Policy

A student who is not receiving federal financial aid who withdraws from the Seminars any time, from the first day of the term before its completion, will be assessed fees according to the schedule published by the Business Office in effect at the time of withdrawal.

Students receiving federal aid will have refunds calculated in accordance with the federal refund policy in effect at the time of withdrawal. Details are available from the Financial Aid Office.

Leaves of Absence

Requests for leaves of absence, not to involve more than one term's absence from the Seminars, must be received by the Associate Director in writing by the deadlines (currently March 1 for the June term and September 1 for the January term).

If a student decides after the deadline to take a leave of absence, she or he may finish the term but will be considered withdrawn at the end of the term, and will be required to reapply to the Seminars with the same status as other applicants seeking admission for the term to which she or he is reapplying.

Records/Access

The Family Education Rights and Privacy Act ("Buckley Amendment") of 1974 guidelines are followed. Student academic records are maintained in the Office of the Dean of the College. Faculty and Administrators may review student records as needed. Students may review their own records.

Transcripts are maintained by the Dean's Office and may be requested by students by writing to the Dean. There is no charge for transcripts. Transcripts contain the teachers' final evaluations. No student will be permitted to receive or to direct delivery of an academic transcript to another institution, agency, or individual until all of the student's financial obligations to the College have been met.

SECTION II BENNINGTON COLLEGE POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

Campus Resources

Crossett Library, the media center, and the post office will keep regular hours, to be announced before each residency. Sports equipment may be requested through the Meyer Recreation Barn Fitness Center, and the fitness center may be used only when a monitor is on duty.

Housing

Writing Seminars students live in single rooms in student houses. Bed linens, blankets, pillows, and towels are provided. It is the policy of the College that children and families not be housed in any campus residence hall.

Meals

Meals are provided by the College in the Commons dining hall. There are various dietary options available at all meals. There is no reimbursement for meals not taken.

Smoking Policy

In accordance with Vermont State law, the College is required to provide employees, students, and visitors with clearly stated guidelines on when and where they may smoke. The state policy restricts smoking in all places of public access. The policy has been formulated in recognition of the Surgeon General's conclusion that: smoking is injurious to health; and involuntary (or second-hand) smoking is a cause of disease in nonsmokers. The College has designated its administrative, academic, and other public buildings SMOKE-FREE. Smoking is not permitted inside any of these buildings nor within 30 feet of entryways and exits of all buildings.

Automobiles

Students may park properly registered automobiles in designated lots. Vehicle registration information will be taken at Registration.

Animals on Campus

All animals are prohibited from the campus except those belonging to Bennington College faculty/staff in approved housing.

Fire Regulations

The use or possession of candles or incense in any campus building is strictly prohibited. Halogen lamps with bulbs that exceed 300 watts are prohibited in student houses and faculty and staff offices.

Hallways and all areas of egress in student houses must be kept clear at all times. Fire screens must be employed whenever fireplaces are in use.

It is strongly suggested that students use power strips in their rooms. Three-way plugs may not be used anywhere in student houses.

Gatherings in student-house living rooms must not exceed the Vermont Fire Code. The maximum number is 80.

Gatherings in student rooms must not exceed the Vermont Fire Code. The maximum number of students in a room is 8, including the occupant of the room.

Bonfires are prohibited without the approval of the Director of Campus Safety. Approval for a bonfire is subject to the safety and environmental conditions as determined by the North Bennington Fire Department and/or the College.

IN THE EVENT OF FIRE:

PULL THE RED, MANUAL FIRE ALARM SWITCH IN THE BUILDING. FAMILIARIZE YOURSELF WITH THE LOCATION OF THESE ALARMS.

EVACUATE THE BUILDING.

CALL SECURITY IMMEDIATELY AT EXT. 210—DAY OR NIGHT. SECURITY IS RESPONSIBLE FOR CHECKING THE BUILDING AND DETERMINING WHEN OCCUPANTS MAY REENTER

Safety Devices

All student houses are equipped with fire extinguishers, and all the houses have smoke detectors and sprinkler systems in the common areas as well as in all student rooms that are linked to a located-annunciator panel in the Security Booth. Tampering with fire safety apparatus is a serious offense. Vermont law states that “a person who willfully or knowingly tampers with, interferes with, or impairs any public fire apparatus, wire, or associated equipment (including fire extinguishers) shall be imprisoned for not more than one year or fined not more than \$1,000 or both.” Students who tamper with such equipment will be subject to College and/or state sanctions, which may include fines, suspension, or expulsion.

Motor Vehicle Regulations

All vehicle and traffic laws promulgated by the State of Vermont are effective on the Bennington College campus as elsewhere in the state. Vehicles in operation must be licensed, registered, insured, equipped, and otherwise legal to operate.

All motor vehicle accidents that occur on campus must be reported promptly to Security. Motorists are reminded that leaving the scene of an accident or failure by a motorist to file a Report of a Motor Vehicle Accident form (available at Security) is a violation of Vermont law.

Security has the responsibility for enforcing motor vehicle rules and regulations. Anyone violating motor vehicle regulations may be prohibited from driving on campus. The College has the authority to ban vehicles from campus.

Parking

Fire lanes must be kept clear at all times. Cars parked in fire lanes are subject to towing.

Vehicles must be parked only in areas to which they are assigned. (See Parking Rules and Regulations available at Registration.)

Speed Limits

No vehicle shall be operated at a speed above the posted speed on the speed limit signs.

Reckless Driving

Reckless driving is prohibited. The College defines reckless driving as driving that endangers people, property, or animals. Examples of reckless driving include, but are not limited to, drunk driving, driving at an excessive rate of speed, failure to yield to pedestrians, and driving across lawns.

Writing Seminars Regulations Regarding Alcohol and Parties

Only persons of legal drinking age under Vermont state law (21 years of age) may consume alcoholic beverages on College property. The use of a false ID or falsifying one’s ID is a violation of College policies and state laws.

Food and non-alcoholic beverages must be available at every function where alcoholic beverages are available.

Publicity and posters for College functions may not mention alcohol or imply that it will be available. Publicity and posters are not permitted for private parties that promote or mention alcohol or imply that it will be available.

Admittance to events at which alcohol is served is limited to the College community and invited guests.

With the exception of parties attended by fewer than 8 people (the number in compliance with the fire code) held in individual rooms, alcoholic beverages may not be served at any event on College property except under the auspices of the College's catering permit through the Director of Food Services, who will determine if Vermont alcohol and beverage control regulations can be enforced.

Kegs of beer or beer balls are prohibited from College residences.

Consumption of alcoholic beverages out-of-doors or possession of an open container of alcoholic beverages out-of-doors on the Bennington campus is prohibited except at registered outdoor parties, which can only be sponsored by the College's catering service.

Operating a motor vehicle while under the influence of alcohol is prohibited. Alcohol may not be sold directly or indirectly at parties held in individual student rooms.

Summary of Vermont State Laws on Drugs and Drug Paraphernalia

A person knowingly and unlawfully possessing marijuana shall be imprisoned for not more than six months and/or fined not more than \$500. For selling marijuana, a person may be imprisoned for up to two years and/or fined up to \$10,000.

A person knowingly and unlawfully possessing cocaine, heroin, LSD, or any other depressant, stimulant, narcotic, or hallucinogenic drug may be imprisoned for up to one year and/or fined up to \$2,000. For selling cocaine or heroin, a person may be imprisoned for up to five years and/or fined up to \$100,000; for selling any other depressant, stimulant, or narcotic drug, a person may be imprisoned for up to five years and/or fined up to \$25,000; for selling LSD or other hallucinogenic drug, a person may be imprisoned for up to five years and/or fined up to \$25,000.

Nondiscrimination Policy

Bennington College is committed to a policy of nondiscrimination as defined under applicable state and federal laws, including but not limited to Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, which prohibits discrimination on the basis of sex in education programs and activities. The College does not discriminate in its programs and activities on the basis of race, color, age, sex, religion, disability, national or ethnic origin, sexual orientation, gender identity, HIV test, or any other legally protected status. Complaints of any type of unlawful discrimination that do not fall within the Sexual Harassment Policy above should be directed to the Director of Human Resources, whose office is located at Barn 102, whose telephone number is 802-440-4423, and whose email address is hfaley@bennington.edu. The Director of Human Resources also serves as the Title IX Coordinator, and complaints of sex discrimination under Title IX not covered by the Sexual Harassment Policy shall be directed to him or her in writing. The Director of Human Resources shall adjudicate any complaint of unlawful discrimination in a prompt and equitable manner, which will permit the complainant to make a written submission, to respond to any submission by the person complained against, to be given a written decision by the Director of Human Resources, and to take a written appeal to the President, whose decision, which will be rendered in writing, will be final. Except in

extraordinary circumstances, such grievance shall be determined by the Director of Human Resources within 60 days of the filing of the complaint.

NOTE: Any complaint determined by the chair of the Sexual Harassment Hearing Committee to fall within the jurisdiction of the Sexual Harassment Policy must be brought pursuant to the Sexual Harassment Policy and Procedures.

Consensual Relationships

Because of their potential to damage the bonds of mutual trust and responsibility upon which the Bennington community depends, sexual or dating relationships between faculty and students, as well as between staff and students, are prohibited at all times and in all circumstances except those described immediately below, even if the relationship is consensual and regardless of the age of the student.

Recent Bennington College graduates who are hired in a staff role and who have an existing dating or sexual relationship with a current student may be exempted from this policy if they have no supervisory or functional staff role with the student and where the College, in its sole discretion, determines that such is not a conflict of interest or in conflict with the best interests of the student; however, they must inform both Human Resources and their hiring manager of the existing relationship before they are hired. Failure to abide by this policy will result in discipline of the faculty or staff member, up to and including dismissal from employment at the College.

Weapons Policy

Possession of dangerous, potentially dangerous, or unauthorized materials such as explosives, firearms, or other weapons (whether or not loaded with ammunition) on College property is strictly prohibited. Employees may not carry such materials onto College property in their vehicles or by other means. The Dean of the College may authorize in writing specific exceptions for job-related activities for faculty and technical staff. The Director of Campus Safety may authorize in writing specific exceptions for job-related activities for other personnel. Violation of this policy will be considered grounds for immediate discharge.