

GSA 2023 APPLICANT GUIDE

Creative Writing



I. Program Description

Students in the **Creative Writing** program receive intense individualized and small group instruction in all aspects of writing, from the formulation of ideas to revising, publishing, and performing. Students participate in classes, workshops, field trips, and individual conferences with faculty members who are published authors. Students also read aloud their works-in-progress, learn peer editing techniques, design and create their own chapbooks, and participate in several public readings (including a reading for family and friends on the final day of the program). GSA writers meet and learn from a variety of visiting professional writers and guest artists.

[Click here](#) to view the Creative Writing program photos from GSA 2022. *

II. Preliminary Round Application Requirements (due January 8th @ 11:59 p.m. EST/10:59 p.m. CST)

Submit the materials in this section through the online platform **Acceptd** no later than **January 8th**.

NOTE: Applicants will be prompted to pay a \$30 application fee when submitting **their** materials (or \$35 if applying in two artforms). Students on free/reduced lunch may opt to have this fee waived when payment is requested.

For the Preliminary Round, submit the following (see below for more detail):

- a. Two Recommendation Forms
- b. Personal Short Essay
- c. Personal Question Video
- d. Artform-Specific Questions
- e. Manuscript

a. Two Recommendation Forms (do this first!)

Identify two people who will complete recommendation forms in support of your GSA application (*each person will complete the same form separately*):

NOTE: *previous GSA application cycles have required recommendations from a teacher and a school administrator. The recommendation guidelines have changed in recent years to broaden the scope of who may complete these forms. Please review the new guidelines below.*

The recommendation form includes questions about your artistic abilities/potential, how you contribute to your learning environment/community, and your overall fit for GSA. If you can select two recommenders who can speak to your artistic abilities, we encourage you to do so. However, we understand not every applicant will have one or two recommenders who have experienced the student's artistry. In this case, select recommenders who can speak to your character, accountability, and/or work ethic. Recommenders can be teachers (from inside or outside of your school and in any

subject), school administrators (i.e., guidance counselor), mentors, or other people involved in your personal or artistic development such as a coach, youth minister, or staff at an organization for which you volunteer.

You will enter the names and email addresses of each recommender in your online application, and those individuals will receive emails instructing them on how to complete the recommendation form, which will take about five minutes.

Before submitting your recommenders' information, we strongly encourage the following:

1. **Inform them you are applying for GSA and would like to list them as a recommender.** Tell them they will complete a short form via email, and that their responses are confidential (you will not have access to them). Ask if they have any questions about GSA and/or your desire to apply.
2. **Confirm what email address you should list for them;** double check that you have the correct spelling.

Submit your recommenders' information as soon as possible so they have plenty of time to complete the forms prior to January 8th. After you have submitted their information, we strongly encourage the following:

1. **Tell your recommenders to check their email.** The email will come from do-not-reply@getacceptd.com and be titled "Documentation Request from {{your name}} for Kentucky Governor's School for the Arts."
2. **Ask them to confirm with you when they have submitted the form** – and then tell them thank you! If they have not received the form, ask them to check their junk folder and ensure you entered their email address correctly in the application. Contact GSA if you need to correct an email address.

NOTE: Once you submit your recommenders' information, you will have to click back into your profile to access the remainder of the application; *Acceptd* will refer to this next section as "**Application Part 2.**"

Additional information about recommendations:

- No letters of recommendation are needed, nor should you submit any. Recommenders simply need to complete the form they receive via email.
- Applicants are not able to review the contents of their recommendations.
- Applicants' parents/immediate family may not fill out their recommendation forms.

- While we encourage you to secure the best recommenders possible within the guidelines listed, know that we rely on your personal application materials (essays, artistic work, etc.) as the primary tools to assess your fit for GSA. Recommenders have the option to choose “unknown” if they are not aware of the answer to a question, and this will not be held against you as an applicant.
- If you are applying for two artforms and using the same recommender(s), they must complete two forms (one for each artform), even if their answers are identical.

b. Personal Short Essay (250-word max)

Provide an answer to the following question in **essay** form:

How can/why should the artform you are applying in be of importance to your community or society as a whole? *Provide an answer that is specific to the artform you are applying for.*

- **Be open, honest, and authentic in your response – let us learn something about you.**
- **Upload this essay response as a document file;** type out the question at the top of your response, so the question and answer are both in the document (the question restatement does not count toward the word count limit).
- **When uploading your essay, title the file, “Personal Short Essay.”**

c. Personal Question Video (90-second max)

Provide an answer to the following question in **video** form:

Why is the artform you are applying in important to you? What are your goals for yourself as an artist in this artform? *Provide an answer that is specific to the artform you are applying for.*

- **Be open, honest, and authentic in your response – let us learn something about you.** While you are encouraged to prepare your thoughts before shooting the video and you may consult notes as you speak, please do not just read off a transcript. We want to get a sense of your personality.
- **Begin your video by stating “Hello, my name is (first/last name).”** Record your answer in an interior space that is free from interruptions, noise, etc. Do not edit or splice the video. You do not need to include an introductory frame or any effects such as fades, etc.
- **Shoot straight on, leaving the camera in one location.** Review the video to ensure you can be seen AND heard. Ensure the video plays all the way to the end.
- **When uploading your Personal Question Video, title the file, "Personal Question Video."**

d. Artform-Specific Questions

Applicants will be asked questions about their specific interests in their artform and their level of access to training/classes/lessons in their artform. Applicants can review the specific questions for their artform once they have submitted their recommender information. There are no right or wrong answers for these questions, nor are we looking for one profile of a student over another – rather, we ask these questions to understand the applicant in the fullest context possible.

e. Manuscript

For GSA 2023, all manuscripts will be submitted in a single Creative Writing category. We will read and consider manuscripts that include work in a variety of forms: fiction, creative nonfiction, poetry, playwriting, screenwriting, hybrid forms — the list goes on.

While you can include creative writing from any form you desire, we **strongly recommend** that you submit complete pieces. We discourage submitting excerpts from longer works. The reason why we discourage excerpts is because we want to see how you bring your work to its complete conclusion.

Manuscript Formatting Guidelines

- All manuscripts must be typed.
- Spacing: Double-space all prose sections; single-space all poetry, screenwriting, or playwriting sections
- Margins: 1-inch on all sides
- Font: Times New Roman, Arial, or Courier
- Font size: 12
- Total pages: 6 to 7 pages. You do not need to put page breaks in between your pieces. Please be sure to include the titles in between your pieces; you can underline and center-align titles for clear readability.
- The file format for your manuscript should be one of the following: PDF, DOC, DOCX, or RTF.

Follow these formatting guidelines as closely as you can. Please know we would rather read any manuscript over no manuscript.

III. Final Round Requirements

*Some applicants will be invited to participate in the Final Round of GSA Auditions/Reviews, which will consist of the elements described below. All applicants will be notified on February 17th of whether they are invited to the Final Round. **The final round auditions/reviews for Creative Writing on March 17th and 18th will be virtual.***

The Final Round for Creative Writing will include:

- a. Pre-Review Questionnaire
- b. Virtual Group Interview
- c. Post-Interview Freewrite (due 45 minutes after end of interview)

a. Pre-Review Questionnaire (due via *Acceptd*)

Applicants who advance to the final round will be forwarded to a new section of their application in *Acceptd* (called “**Application Part 3**”). This new part of the application will include a short questionnaire. This questionnaire may cover a range of topics, including your previous experience in your artform, your favorite artists, and/or your college and career goals. The questionnaire is not a quiz and is not scored, but it is a way for adjudicators to get to know you. The questionnaire may be used to customize questions in your interview.

b. Virtual Group Interview (on March 17th or 18th)

Adjudicators will lead applicants in a virtual small group interview with other Creative Writing Finalists. We want this interaction to feel more like a conversation than an interview; we will begin with a short meditation to help us relax, and then we will ask you a few questions about your writing process and interests. *The interview will last approximately 30 minutes.*

*Finalists will receive the time/date and Zoom link for their interview. This will be sent through *Acceptd*'s messaging system.*

c. Post-Interview Freewrite (on March 17th or 18th)

Following the interview, Finalists will have 45-minutes of self-guided time to complete a freewriting exercise. The prompt and submission instructions for the prompt will be provided in the interview. Be sure to schedule in this time for yourself after your interview.

IV. Criteria

The work of each student will be given an objective review by the adjudicators as to how they fulfill each of the following criteria:

Criteria For Prose, Playwriting, and Screenwriting Submissions in Manuscripts

Writing Structure

An ideal candidate exhibits skilled ability to track character through setting(s) and the rise and fall of action. They establish a point of view and conflict/problem resolution based on theme or message. Sophisticated structure helps the reader to wonder what is next. An ideal manuscript makes the conclusion uncertain until the end, and then reaches a level of resolution for the reader.

Language

An ideal candidate exhibits expertise with descriptive language in service to the story with consistent rhythm. An ideal manuscript is filled with a range of literary devices: e.g., figures of speech, elaboration, personification, dialogue for conversation, metaphors, parallelisms, etc.

Character Development

An ideal applicant's manuscript possesses developed characters through descriptive detail: appearance, relationships, ambitions, weaknesses/strengths. A character's communication is developed through dialogue. The writer creates empathy for a character by revealing factors of relatability or humanization.

Criteria For Poetry Submissions in Manuscripts

Language and Imagery

An ideal candidate's poetry manuscript is written with descriptive language and is populated with intentional and consistent use of imagery. A range of literary devices (e.g. figures of speech, elaboration, personification, dialogue for conversation, metaphors, alliteration, etc.) is also used.

Voice

An ideal applicant's manuscript demonstrates a command of multiple types of rhythm (e.g., meter, iambic pentameter, parallelism, hexameter, tetrameter, etc.). Additionally, the tone matches attitude and emotional quality; authenticity is evident and consistent.

Form

An ideal applicant exhibits command of multiple forms (e.g., line, stanza, verse paragraph, combinations of stanzas or lines) and poetic modes (e.g. sonnet, haiku, free verse, etc.) in their manuscript (although the applicant may prefer one over another).

Criteria for ALL Creative Writing Applicants

Dedication to Artform, Growth, and Community

An ideal applicant demonstrates a commitment to and passion for their artform, as well as a desire and ability to grow as an artist. The applicant can thoughtfully and authentically explain why they want to attend GSA and how they are uniquely qualified to contribute to a robust, diverse community of artists.

Onsite Freewrite (Final Round only)

An ideal applicant's writing sample displays a sophisticated sense of form, voice, and original language.

Interpersonal Communication (Final Round only)

An ideal applicant will demonstrate engagement and social interest in the group interview setting; listening and responding to others with empathy and compassion.

V. Tips

These tips are suggestions. They are NOT eligibility requirements for admittance to GSA.

- Be sure to **include strong imagery and figurative language** in your writing.
- Develop a mature grasp on language (e.g. sensory details, image, rhythm, simile, metaphor) but also **be open to trying different styles and genres**.
- Develop a **structured consistent writing routine**.
- Read diverse materials and/or **see live spoken word/poetry performances** of the genre similar to your manuscript.
- **Be prepared to talk about your writing process**, editing process, what you are reading, your favorite authors and favorite book.
- Be prepared to talk about **why you are passionate** about writing and why you are interested in attending GSA.
- **Pay close attention to the adjudication criteria**. While GSA students are accepted based on their holistic identity as a young artist, the criteria are the foundation of how your materials are being scored.
- **Remember: the adjudicators are very excited to see your work, and they want you to do well!** We know it takes hard work to submit this application, and that it can be scary to “put yourself out there.” We have faith in you, so put your best foot forward and don’t be afraid to show us the wonderful artist you are. You prove a level of dedication just by submitting your application, and you should be proud of yourself.

VI. Application Timeline/Deadlines

January 8, 2023 - GSA Application Due

All applicant materials must be submitted via *Acceptd* by **11:59 p.m. EST/10:59 p.m. CST**. We encourage you to submit early and not to wait until the last minute, as the application portal runs slowly when many people try to upload at once.

February 17, 2023 – GSA Finalists Announced

All applicants will be notified of whether they have advanced to the final round of adjudication. Those who’ve advanced to the final round will also be given instructions on how to complete “Application Part 3” via *Acceptd*.

March 17 & 18, 2023 – Final Round Auditions/Reviews

All Finalists will attend an audition/review. Some artforms will hold their auditions & reviews in-person at the University of Kentucky, while others will be held virtually. Friday and Saturday auditions/reviews run from 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. EST.

Friday, April 14, 2023 – Announcement of GSA 2023 Accepted Students and Alternates

All Finalists will be notified of whether they have been accepted into the summer program. Alternates will also be listed. In addition, accepted students will be sent their assigned summer session.

Sunday, June 11, 2023, to Saturday, July 1, 2023 – Session One of GSA Summer Program

- *Architecture + Design will be held in Session One only*

Sunday, July 9, 2023, to Saturday, July 29, 2023 – Session Two of GSA Summer Program

- *Dance will be held in Session Two only*
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For technical support with the application, contact *Acceptd*:

***Acceptd* Email:** support@getacceptd.com

***Acceptd* Phone:** 1(888) 725-2122, *press 2*

For questions about the content and/or requirements of the application, please contact **GSA:**

GSA Office Hours – Monday to Friday, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. EST

GSA Info Box (Email) – gsainfo@kentuckyperformingarts.org

GSA Helpline (Phone) – (502) 566-5192