Lancaster Creative Writing Marking Criteria

Each creative project sets out its own parameters which vary broadly from prose to poetry to scripts and beyond. Within these parameters, however, there are degrees of achievement, which we categorise here for the purposes of assessment. These categories are not exhaustive but should serve as benchmarks when writing exhibits outstanding, strong, competent or limited elements not covered by these parameters.

**Language** (imagery, diction, freshness, clarity)

*Outstanding* language may refer to consistently remarkable and appropriate diction or imagery. *Strong* language will be polished and fresh with a clarity of narrative present. *Competent* language will be mostly clear with rare reliance on cliché. *Limited* use of language will be unclear or reliant on familiar phrasing.

**Subject Matter** (theme, world-building, realisation, ambition)

*Outstanding* subject matter may refer to a fictive world of surprising depth, or work that deals with distinctly original material. *Strong* subject matter may revisit familiar themes/genres with ingenuity, or show a well-realised fictive world. *Competent* subject matter may have a clear fictive world or a new take on familiar themes. *Limited* subject matter will risk incredulity by its own logic or follow genre-tropes without style or innovation.

**Structure** (plotting, versification, POV, cadence)

*Outstanding* structure may refer to excellent plotting, deft versification or a deep engagement with the medium. *Strong* structure may refer to adept plotting, polished script-formatting or thoughtfully formed verse. *Competent* structure may refer to the correct formation of filmscripts or sonnets, or a clear plot arc. *Limited* structure includes incoherent plots, a failure to grasp the requirements of the medium or jarring effects with little payoff.

**Voice** (dialogue, characterisation, poetic persona, authenticity)

*Outstanding* voice may refer to innovative or authentic dialogue, deeply engaging characters or a convincing poetic persona. *Strong* voice may include fresh believable dialogue or three-dimensional characters or a developing poetic identity. *Competent* voice may refer to largely believable dialogue or credible characters. *Limited* voice may refer to one-dimensional characters, inappropriate dialogue or an affected poetic voice.

**The Reflective Commentary**

The reflective commentary is marked on the student’s awareness of the literary context of their work, the sophistication of the discussion of creative processes and techniques and the relevance of citation and bibliography. *Outstanding* commentaries will involve a critical or theoretical synthesis of ideas. *Strong* commentaries will reflect on other sources as well as their own work. *Competent* commentaries will be reflective but occasionally descriptive. *Limited* commentaries will be almost entirely descriptive.

**Mark Bands**

Creative writing portfolios may exhibit a greater range of achievement than more traditional academic subjects, whereby a portfolio may contain outstanding elements alongside good, competent and even limited writing. For an overall grade, we categorise work according to consistency of achievement as described below.

**A+ to A-** Outstanding in most areas.
The highest level work will be outstanding in all areas, whereas there will be a greater proportion of strong or competent writing down the scale.

**B+ to B-** Strong in most areas.
Work in this range will be largely strong, although it may include outstanding elements at the top of the scale, and a mix of competent or limited writing down the scale.

**C+ to C-** Competent in most areas.
Work in this range will be largely competent, although may show elements of strong or rare elements of outstanding writing at the top end, with more limited work down the scale.

**D+ to D-** Limited in most areas.
Work in this range will have serious limitations throughout, but there may be elements of strong or competent writing present, decreasing down the scale.

**F1-F4** Limited work with little evidence of Competence.
Work here will fail to engage with the reader, the course or the requirements of the genre.