

## Student Testimonials

### Ellan Dineen, MA in Irish Writing and Film (2016)

Having recently completed my Master's degree in Irish Writing and Film, I can truly say the skills and experiences provided to me by the programme have allowed me to develop into a confident student and researcher – something I believe was a result of the support and encouragement of the programme's many experts and their passion for their teachings.

The scope of topics taught during the programme's lecture hours, along with literary events held by the School of English throughout the year, allow for a truly immersive postgraduate experience. The programme and its lecturers encouraged debate and questioning of ideas in the spirit of University College Cork's promotion of independent thinking and allowed for individual ideas to be heard and discussed without any given lecture feeling like a one-sided recount of a text. Unique ideas for in-class assignment titles are encouraged and so allow for students to adapt and improve their research interests throughout the year, which, for me, allowed me to chart the development of my research before beginning my thesis. The tying together of academic writing to desirable employment traits, through such aspects as conference organisation and online blog work, have given me the self-assurance to enter into the working world knowing that I possess the skills and confidence to pursue a career in publishing.

Throughout my experience as a student of Irish Writing and Film, I felt fully supported by the every lecturer I came in contact with which meant no question or observation was too big or too small when it came to the discussion of lecture material and assignments. Class discussions are at the core of every lecture and so allowed for my classmates and myself to expand our academic thinking through an engagement with the many views one often finds within an academic setting. Once it came to commencing thesis work, the groundwork and support had already been well-established and made the entire experience a pleasure to immerse myself in. I look back on my time in the programme with nothing but fond memories and encourage anyone interested in expanding and refining their literary and research skills to take part in the programme. It really has been a tremendously enjoyable experience from start to finish.

### James Campion, MA in Irish Writing and Film (2014)

The MA I took with UCC's School of English was entitled "Irish Writing and Film". It lasted one year, and was divided broadly into two parts. For the first of these, our group (there were four of us) attended twice weekly classes given by lecturers who were experts in their respective fields. Due to the small size of our group, classes often took on a conversational aspect, where everyone contributed to a collective dialogue of shared information, opinion and insight. This allowed much scope for lengthy discussion of the particular text / theory we were studying at the time. These two-hour sessions were, as such, a bountiful source of enjoyment. I doubt I will forget those hours of engagement in informed debate, helped no end by the camaraderie of our group!

The second part of the year was devoted to the writing of an MA thesis, a task which had hovered around us ever since the beginning of our year together. Writing the thesis was a gradual process, spread out over five months. For me, it was essential to allow my ideas to crystallise over a period of time before I began any concerted attempt to actually write. I needed enough patience to give my ideas a chance to form a coherent whole, while also remaining (relatively!) calm during the process.

Life as an MA student brought a variety of challenges and rewards. It was a case of persisting through the hours spent reading, taking notes and reflecting, so that I could enjoy the wonderful feeling of submitting a bound thesis all the more. Holding a thesis that I myself had succeeded in producing was a great thrill. The development of my critical skills would have been impossible without the direction and insight of the lecturers for the course, some of whom I had the good fortune of working closely with on my thesis. Above all else, studying for an MA with UCC's School of English was a process of continual discovery. Apart from obtaining a much deeper knowledge of my research area, I came away with a rare sense of fulfilment at having produced a piece of critical writing which would undoubtedly stand to me in the years to come.

### **Laura Hussey, MA Irish Writing and Film, 2014**

The decision to apply for MA in Irish Writing and Film was a great one! Having loved my time as Undergraduate English student in UCC, I knew I was not ready to leave the department just yet. Getting to discover new Irish writers as well as the canons of the country was an incredibly rewarding and interesting year. From studying the work of Maria Edgeworth to Edna O'Brien, there was a lot of lively debates in the classroom during my time as a masters student. It can only be described as a full time academic challenge that will put your writing, communication and analysis skills to the test. The teaching staff are incredibly passionate and were so supportive throughout a very busy year! I can't describe the level of encouragement and engagement we received. I certainly wouldn't be an Editor in academic publishing now if not for lessons learned throughout my taught Masters. It enabled me to think creatively, work hard and do what I love! I'm proud to be an alumna of the Irish Writing MA.

Laura Hussey, Editor on the Theatre and Performance List at Routledge and former Irish Writing and Film MA student.

### **Marie Coffey, MA in Irish Writing and Film (2013)**

Having recently acquired a position as publishing editor for a global academic publishing house, I have come to realise how fundamental my MA in Irish Writing was in attaining this role. Whereas other university programmes I looked at seemed like stagnant and outmoded approaches to pedagogical instruction, UCC's School of English conveyed an active commitment to the evolving nature of theoretical and academic scholarship. Engaging in weekly class seminars and listening to renowned guest speakers on current literary trends in psychogeography, ecocriticism, and postcolonial transnationalism, I always felt confident that I was being set a contemporary and solid foundation for further academic studies, if I wished to pursue them.

One of the most encouraging and comforting aspects of UCC's English MA, was the diversity of the course's focus and its awareness that its emerging English graduates held a range of aspirations, ranging from PhD scholarship, to journalism, marketing and publishing. Unsure about what career to pursue upon entering an MA, and acutely aware of an economic climate that portrayed employability as a 'holy grail' prospect, it was UCC's persistent focus on digital e-learning, interconnected e-journals, and archival projects that convinced me to follow a Master's degree at University College Cork. These projects have since proved to be imperative in securing a career in academic publishing. Having worked for two publishing houses since graduating from UCC, it was my course's focus on databases, bibliography referencing, interactive presentations and *en vogue* debates concerning the rise of open access scholarship that have proved to be most valuable in obtaining a career in the protean environment of academic publishing.

The ethos of UCC's learning revolves around the principle of "independent thinking." This, I can confidently note, has been my experience with an MA in English. It was both a privilege and an exciting challenge to write an MA English thesis amongst engaged and critically

renowned lecturers. My ability to execute independent research and to construct a logical and theoretically engaged thesis was encouraged and cultivated by a faculty that were knowledgeable, motivated, and most importantly, friendly. I have thoroughly enjoyed my years in the English department as a BA, and subsequently, MA student.

## **Joan Hayes, MA in Irish Writing and Film (2009)**

I became a Mature Student at UCC because I had always had a niggling feeling of regret that I had never studied at Third Level. This feeling became more acute after my own children had completed their university educations. At that time, I began to wonder if I could do something about those regrets.

I started by enrolling in a two year, part-time Diploma course in Women's Studies. It was part of an Outreach Programme organised by UCC. By the time I had successfully completed it I had garnered enough confidence to apply to do a BA as a mature student. Once the BA was finished it was no longer about regrets, but more about being fully engaged with a keen desire to continue studying. My interest in Irish Writing made the taught MA course the obvious one for me.

Divided into two distinct parts - the taught element and the written thesis - the course provided a satisfying feeling of continual progress and with each assignment I felt I was another step closer to completion. Being used to the large Student/ Lecturer ratio of undergraduate life, it came as a very pleasant and rewarding surprise to work in our small group of six students with one, or two and occasionally even three lecturers. These lecturers each provided very fine and intensive tuition and attention. Choosing the subject of the thesis was difficult, because it was hard to see in advance where the choice might take you with regard to the conclusion. However, the staff offered excellent advice and support. Writing the thesis was not easy and there was a great deal of re-writing and editing involved. My supervisor for the thesis was most encouraging and supportive throughout and the feeling of achievement at the finished result made it all very worthwhile.