

# GSA APPLICANT GUIDE

## Creative Writing



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## **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.

## **II. Preliminary Round Application Requirements (due January 10<sup>th</sup>)**

*Submit the materials in this section through the online platform [Accepted](#) no later than January 10<sup>th</sup>. NOTE: Applicants will be prompted to pay a \$30 application fee when submitting their materials (or \$35 if applying in two art forms). 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. Manuscript

### **a. Recommendation Forms (do this first!)**

Identify two people to fill out recommendation forms for you: a school administrator (e.g. counselor) and a teacher/instructor (see below if those do not apply). Enter their names and email addresses in your online application, and the individuals will receive emails instructing them on how to complete the recommendation process.

- Before submitting your recommenders' information, contact them to ask for their permission to use them as a reference and explain why you want to attend GSA. Confirm with them when you submit their email addresses to ensure they receive the recommender email. Initiate this process as soon as possible so your recommenders have time to complete the forms before the application deadline.
- *Your teacher/instructor recommender does not have to teach at your high school, nor do they have to teach you in your art form of focus*

*(although we recommend you choose someone who is familiar with your creative work, if possible).*

- *You do not need to submit letters of recommendation. Recommenders will receive an online form to fill out, which will serve as their recommendation for you.*
- *If you are home schooled, and/or you otherwise do not have a school administrator or teacher/instructor who can fill out your recommendation forms, please seek out another adult who can speak to your qualities/character/abilities in one way or another; this could include a mentor, a youth minister, a coach, etc.*
- *Applicants' parents/immediate family may not fill out their recommendation forms.*

#### **b. Personal Short Essay (250-word max)**

Provide an answer to the following question in essay form:

*As you envision yourself attending GSA, describe to us one thing you will bring to/offer the community, and one thing that you know will challenge you.*

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:

*Artists play a vital role in society, ranging from sparking large cultural movements, to facilitating meaningful interpersonal connections. What impact do you seek to make on your community/world as an artist, and why is that an important impact to make? How will GSA help you achieve this?*

- 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.
- 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. Manuscript

Your manuscript should fall under one of the following categories: fiction, poetry, playwriting, or creative nonfiction. You may only include work from one of these categories. Each manuscript should consist of one or multiple **complete** pieces. Do not submit excerpts from longer works.

You **may not** apply in more than one creative writing category. You are welcome to apply in another GSA art form.

#### Manuscript Formatting Guidelines

- Must be typed
- Spacing: Double-spaced (except for poetry)
- Margins: 1-inch on all sides
- Font: 12 points in Times New Roman, Arial, or Courier
- Total pages: 5-7 complete pages.
- If submitting multiple pieces include titles for each separate piece.
- The file format for your manuscript should be one of the following: PDF, DOC, DOCX, or RTF.

Follow the formatting guidelines exactly. Manuscripts that do not follow guidelines will not be read.

### **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 26<sup>th</sup> of whether they are invited to the Final Round. If you are selected to participate in the Final Round, you will be required to attend in-person on March 20<sup>th</sup>, 21<sup>st</sup> or 22<sup>nd</sup> in Lexington, KY at the University of Kentucky as scheduled by GSA.*

The Final Round for Creative Writing will include:

- a. Questionnaire
- b. Onsite Freewrite
- c. Group Interview

#### **a. Questionnaire**

When you arrive at the main registration table for your auditions/reviews, you will receive and complete a one to two-page questionnaire. This questionnaire may cover a range of topics, including your previous experience in your art

form, 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. Onsite Freewrite**

Finalists will participate in a freewrite exercise.

#### **c. Group Interview**

Adjudicators will lead applicants in a small group review/interview about their experiences with writing and reading, as well as their artistic motivations. This is an opportunity for applicants to interact with each other and verbally express the qualities of their work. The entirety of the onsite freewrite and interview will not exceed 45 minutes.

### **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 Fiction, Creative Nonfiction, & Playwriting 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 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 Art Form, Growth, and Community**

An ideal applicant demonstrates a commitment to and passion for their art form, 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. Class Announcement**

From the Final Round in March, adjudicators will choose the 2020 GSA Summer Program class for all 9 art forms.

On Friday, April 10 you’ll receive your results via email. GSA will also make a big announcement on our website: [www.kentuckygsa.org](http://www.kentuckygsa.org). Accepted and Alternate students will be listed. Accepted students will also receive paper written notification of their results via standard mail.



**For technical support with the application  
contact Acceptd**

Email: [support@getacceptd.com](mailto:support@getacceptd.com)

Phone: 1.888.725.2122, press 2

**For questions about Summer Program, the content and/or requirements  
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contact GSA**

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