

## Certificate in Crime Writing

Awarded by West Dean. 1 year, part-time course

Tutors  
Jo Furniss and Graham Bartlett



## Programme Specification

This Certificate in Crime Writing course is delivered in three weekend course units, with self-directed study and a final submission of 5,000 words of fiction. It is delivered by two best-selling writers of crime and thrillers, Jo Furniss and Graham Bartlett.

The course seeks to bring together all the key components of good crime writing into one continuing programme and to offer an insight into the writer's toolkit, necessary for developing skills and building your confidence.

Each weekend unit will be based in the inspirational environment of West Dean College's historic rooms. It is aimed at writers who wish to commit to an extended programme of study without having to make a significant time commitment and who will benefit from a cohesive course that offers focus on the key elements of successful crime writing. It also offers a potential pathway to those interested in applying for the College's Higher Education programmes in Writing and Publishing.

### Aims

An introduction

To develop the key skills and knowledge that underpin successful crime writing. These will include the organisation required for plotting, character development and narrative technique. It will also introduce you to constructive and focused critical reflection of your work and support the development of rewriting/drafting skills.

Skills Development

The course will offer a stimulating and varied learning environment to enable writers to explore their skills around voice, style, point of view, pacing and prose. Writing exercises will be used, along with discussion, textual analysis and a review of the 'golden rules of crime writing'. It will facilitate constructive feedback on work in progress, and cover editing, dialogue, suspense and research: key skills in successful crime writing.

Contextual and Critical Studies.

The course will offer insight into the traditions, theory and responsibilities of the crime writer, and will enable you to make clear authorial and editorial choices about your developing work.

### Essay/Final Writing

After the final unit, you will submit the first 5,000 words of a piece of fiction you have developed while following the programme.

Submission date for 5,000 words: 31 July 2026 (two months following the final unit).



Feedback from the programme tutors: (the following month) by 31 August 2026.

## **Course tutors**

### **Jo Furniss**

After spending a decade as a broadcast journalist for the BBC, Jo Furniss gave up the night shifts to become a freelance writer and expat. Originally from the UK, she spent seven years in Singapore and also lived in Switzerland and Cameroon.

Jo has a Distinction in MA Professional Writing. As well as running a regular writers' group in Hove, she has taught creative writing at Arvon, for numerous online courses and at a prison.

Her debut thriller, *All the Little Children*, hit the Amazon Charts and was one of the Top 25 best-selling Kindle titles of 2017. Her crime novels include the closed-circle mysteries, *Dead Mile* and *Guilt Trip*.

### **Graham Bartlett**

Graham was a UK police officer for thirty years, where he rose to become a senior detective and Brighton and Hove's police commander. Since retiring, he has become a police procedural and crime advisor helping authors and TV writers (including Peter James, Mark Billingham, Elly Griffiths and Dorothy Koomson) achieve authenticity alongside their drama.

Graham is a crime writing mentor and runs a series of popular and successful online crime courses. He is a best-selling crime writer of non-fiction crime books, *Death Comes Knocking* and *Babes in the Wood* and he is also the author of the Chief Superintendent Jo Howe crime fiction series: *Bad for Good*, *Force of Hate* and *City on Fire*.

## **Programme overview**

This course is designed for writers who want an extended and cohesive course on crime writing. It offers a deeper and broader raft of teaching, designed to enable you to take on a piece of longer fiction. At the end of the third unit, you will be asked to submit the first 5,000 words of a work in progress, for marking and feedback from the tutors.

### **Unit 1: Character and Point of View**

**Tutors: Jo Furniss and Graham Bartlett | 16–18 January 2026**

The first unit will include:

- What is crime fiction?
- Who is a 'detective'?
- Meet your characters
- Group work – dialogue
- Capturing the zeitgeist



- Point of View – whose crime is it anyway?
- A piece of work to develop for Unit 2

## Unit 2: Plot and Place

Tutor: Tutors: Jo Furniss and Graham Bartlett | 20–22 March 2026

- This second unit will include:
- The old and new rules of Crime Fiction
- A sense of place (using the grounds of West Dean)
- Building on weekend one – character arcs
- Plotting murder
- A chance to share your work
- Feedback session on your writing
- Understanding and writing a crime scene and murder investigation, with former detective, Graham Bartlett

## Unit 3: Writing Your Book

Tutors: Jo Furniss and Graham Bartlett | 29–31 May 2026

The third and final unit will include:

- Suspense
- Pacing
- Editing and rewriting
- Research and sourcing experts
- Writing a pitch

## Completion

On successful completion, you will receive a Certificate of Completion and be offered an interview for the MA in Writing and Publishing, should you want to continue your studies and project. The MA is set up to facilitate the production of a completed novel.



## Entry requirements

- A commitment to attending all three units on the dates given
- Some experience of writing or attending a short writing programme
- An interest in and awareness of the crime writing genre
- Ideally, a work in progress or an idea at the planning stage

For standard Terms and Conditions, please refer to our online Short Course brochure. Specific Terms and Conditions include a commitment to attend all three weekend course dates listed and no alternative course date can be offered for any that you are unable to attend. Therefore, no refund can be made for the course fee for any weekend you are unable to attend.

## Please bring

Your usual writing equipment, notebook and pen, and/or laptop.

## Course fees

The course fees are payable in advance of study.

Course fee: £1,230 (non-residential, payable in one instalment covering all three units - payable by 5 December 2025 (or on booking if after this date).

Accommodation is available at an extra cost at our Sussex campus. Find out more about our accommodation options and costs on our website.