



Australian Society of Authors

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ASA Mentorships 2009: Frequently Asked Questions

How many applications do you receive?

We received around 500 applications in 2007, the first year in which we offered 20 places, and 350 in 2008.

Can I put in more than one application?

Yes. Use a separate entry form for each application. Entry is free for ASA members and \$55 per entry for non-members.

I've had more than two books published but only two were trade books. The rest were education books. Am I eligible?

Sorry, but it's no more than two books published full stop. It doesn't matter if they're education books, or you're switching from picture book illustration to children's writing or from economics textbooks to literary fiction, if you've published more than two books you're not eligible.

How do you define book?

A book is a print or digital publication that has an International Standard Book Number (ISBN).

How do you define published?

Published means printed or produced for distribution and sale. If a work is under consideration by a publisher or contracted to a publisher but not actually published, it is considered unpublished.

Why can't I apply for a mentorship if I've already sent my manuscript to a publisher?

Because the mentorship program is for writers and illustrators whose work hasn't reached the point where it's ready to be sent to a publisher. And, if your manuscript is accepted by a publisher, it puts the mentor in a difficult position where they're either working with you and your editor – or they're essentially doing the editor's work for the publisher.

What you do mean by a substantial work-in-progress?

A substantial work-in-progress is one that could eventually be published in book form – a novel, novella or collection of short stories; a history, biography, autobiography/memoir or collection of essays; a collection of poetry; a Young Adult work; a children’s novel, chapter book or the text for a children’s picture book; or the pictures and text for a children’s picture book. This list is not exhaustive.

What if I’m working on a collection and some of the poems or stories have already been published? Or a novel and an extract has been published? Can still I apply for a mentorship?

Yes, you can. Most poetry and short story collections include previously published poems and stories as well as new ones. And whether it’s a previously published poem, a story or an extract from a novel-in-progress, it will probably change before it appears in a finished collection or novel.

Should I put my name on each page of my application, including the sample of my work?

You can include your name on the sample of your work, but it doesn’t matter if you don’t. The judges will receive your full application – your entry form, literary CV, the description of writing project and what you want to achieve from the mentorship program, and the sample of your work-in-progress,

Does the 10-page sample of my work in progress need to be one continuous piece?

The sample doesn’t have to be one continuous piece, but the judges will be interested in seeing how you develop themes and ideas – so try to avoid putting in more than two extracts.

How should I set out the sample of my work in progress?

The general rule is that it should be no more than 10 pages, typed, double-spaced, on single-sided white A4 paper.

Poets should submit 8 to 10 poems, in any format (single-spaced, pineapple shaped, whatever you like), up to 10 pages.

Children’s story writers should set out their work as if it were a short story, even though it will probably only come to one or two pages. Please don’t write each sentence on a separate sheet of paper.

Picture book illustrators should submit a story outline or draft or manuscript; a rough story board or dummy for book; and a sample of the illustration technique and style you intend to use.

Please do not use plastic folders, binders, or sheet protectors. If your application is successful, we’ll need to photocopy it. If it’s unsuccessful, we’ll recycle the paper. Either way, we’ll need to remove the plastic and it will end up as landfill.

Does fiction include fantasy, sci-fi, romance, crime and so on?

Yes, it does!

I'm not sure whether my children's picture book should be classed as children's writing or picture book illustration.

If you're a writer and someone else will illustrate your story when it's published, then you should apply in the children's writing category. Children's writing also includes chapter books and novels for children.

If you're writing and illustrating the story, you should apply in the picture book illustration category.

I'm an illustrator – can I submit just pictures?

You need to submit a story to go with the pictures as well. It can be a draft, an outline or just an idea, but it has to be a story. The mentorship program aims to assist illustrators to develop a publishable picture book – text and illustrations - rather than just a portfolio of illustrations.

What should I include on my literary CV?

You should include a list of your publications, any prizes, awards or fellowships you've received, any writing courses or seminars you've attended and relevant professional memberships. If you've nothing to put on your literary CV then just write "Nil".

How do the judges assess literary merit?

The judges used the Australia Council's definition: "an assessment of the applicant's writing ability, focusing on style, appropriateness of form, skilled use of language, clarity of expression and sustained development of themes or ideas".

Should I ask a mentor from your list if they would like to work with me before I nominate them?

No, please don't approach mentors from our list unless you know them personally. If your application is successful we'll contact you to discuss your mentor preferences and then contact your first choice.

I want to nominate a mentor who isn't on your list. Should I approach them first to see if they'd like to work with me?

You could mention it if you know them personally, otherwise best not to. First, the mentorship program is very competitive and your application may not be successful. Second, for whatever reason, the mentor may just not relate to your work and it puts them in a difficult position if you've approached them directly and they later decide that they're not the best mentor for you.

What happens next if my application is successful?

We'll contact you to check your mentor preferences and then contact your first choice. If they are available, we'll send them a copy of your application – the description of your writing project and what you would like to achieve from the mentorship, the sample of your work and your literary CV. We don't send them a copy of your entry form. If they're interested, we'll arrange for the two of you to have a preliminary discussion about the mentorship – what you want to achieve, what they see as their role, and how the two of you would work together. After that discussion either of you can opt out. If you're both happy to proceed, we'll send out the paperwork and the mentorship can start.

If my application is unsuccessful, can you help me arrange a private mentorship with one of the mentors on your list?

Sorry, but we don't arrange or facilitate private mentorships.

The NSW Writers Centre offers a "user-pays" mentorship program. You'll find details on their website at <http://www.nswwriterscentre.org.au>

Alternatively you could consider getting a manuscript appraisal. The Australian Literary Agents Association has a link to manuscript assessment services on its website at <http://austlitagentsassoc.com.au/contacts.html>

Thank you for your interest in the ASA's Mentorship Program.