

Course outline: Directing and Producing Television Entertainment

The MA in Directing and Producing Television Entertainment is a specialisation within the broader **MA in Film and Television**.

The two-year course has been constructed with a clearly defined arc. We start at the very beginning with an understanding of television history moving very quickly on to the future and the generation of new ideas. From this beginning we take a journey to the final big production. Along the way essential modules are visited.

The main teaching method is to give as much information to the student as possible with a view to turning that knowledge into practical work very quickly indeed. Therefore, when students are taught to brainstorm we teach them where to begin and how to do it. Before long, we get them to generate their own ideas. Likewise, with studio skills we teach the grammar of television – not in a classroom but on the studio floor and in the gallery. When we have taught the theory, we move swiftly to practical exercises. It is a 'deep-end' philosophy with full tutorial back up.

When dealing with more administrative subjects such as health and safety or production management the modules are taught in lecture/seminar mode with practical exercises. Again, the emphasis is on teaching the right information and turning it into practical example as soon as possible.

Communication and collaboration are as important as creativity in television production. Students on this course will not only be taught the skills necessary to operate within their own group but to extend that philosophy to the rest of the School. Joint projects both scheduled and ad-hoc is an essential part of the learning process.

The following projects and workshops indicate a range of subjects covered on the course. There may be variations in this programme during the year.

Curriculum Attendance

Attendance at all scheduled curriculum events is compulsory. **Curriculum events and seminars can be re-scheduled or added at any time. Non-attendance of a curriculum event requires the student to give the Head of TV and TV co-ordinator advance written notification in good time.**

Do not book flights, trips or visits during term time without checking with the Head of TV beforehand. Absenteeism can affect your degree result.

Timekeeping

Good timekeeping is required of all TV students at all time. All curriculum events will begin at their scheduled time. Latecomers may be barred from any curriculum event to which they are late.

Persistent late coming may affect the outcome of your degree.

Year One

“Springboard” Cross Specialisation Introductory Workshop (duration - 1 week)

- an introduction to the moving image, looking at cinematic and televisual language through the prism of storytelling
- it investigates how the main crafts of cinema and television, screenwriting, cinematography, visualisation, editing, sound and music each relate to the way filmmaking puts across narrative ideas

The Production Team, TV Genres

A series of seminars and practical exercises in which we teach the fundamentals of television production. We start with a seminar on the life of a television show from the birth of an idea to its production and beyond. We build a picture of who does what, of how genres differ.

Studio Familiarisation Module

A week in the multi-camera studio in which students undertake a variety of exercises from script to finished sequence. Enable each student to understand the role of director, vision mixer, floor manager and camera operator. Also, to learn industry agreed shot sizes and vocabulary.

Television Students will also learn how to approach directing music in the studio. From receiving the music and lyrics, transcribing it, breaking down the music, plotting camera positions, preparing camera script, rehearsing band through to finally directing the show in studio.

The learning will be by example and practical application. It will be taught by the Head of Television. From the moment the music arrives, we take the students through how to break it down into bars and beats. From this, we will create a “white” script. We will then plot our cameras and prepare a camera script. We will rehearse the band with our camera plotting in mind. We will rehearse on camera leading to a full recording of the musical act.

Aim

To teach the grammar and etiquette of the TV studio and to introduce students to the various skills needed to make a TV show.

Objectives

To give students a full understanding of the interdependence of each and every person on a studio floor. Students also learn different aspects of a production and may well discover a particular aptitude or talent at this stage.

Brainstorming and Pitching

Instruction and practical work in generating and building ideas in a group, the art of pitching and selling those ideas. This is an important skill for any television creative and we will return to it several times across the two-year MA.

Development Module

The aim of this module is to teach the students how to devise and develop a new TV idea; how to create a programme proposal for a TV idea; how to create a 'sizzle' (a short video promo) for a TV idea using found footage (a common industry practice) and how to effectively pitch a TV idea.

Each student will:

- research a named Commissioning Editor of Entertainment or Factual Entertainment programmes to understand what kind of programmes they are looking for
- attend workshops about brainstorming and ideas generation designed to equip them with creative tools that will enable them to devise a suitable idea for their Commissioning Editor
- attend workshops about how to write and present programme proposals which will enable them to create industry standard programme proposals themselves
- receive instruction on the technical and editorial skills required to create sizzle reels
- see examples of sizzle reels produced by industry professionals
- create their own sizzle reel for their idea using found footage
- pitch their completed programme proposal and sizzle reel to a panel including the Head of TV Entertainment
- receive individual written feedback on their work.
- participate in a group review of the work created

Specific aims

Taken together this module brings together the core skills of the Development Producer, Students will learn how to devise and develop new TV ideas; how to write programme proposals and make them visually appealing to the reader; how to produce compelling sizzle reels; and how to deliver the perfect pitch.

Content, Teaching and Learning methods

This module is taught with a combination of presentations, workshops and practical tasks. Because the students are not required to produce a programme, they are encouraged to be as creative and ambitious with their ideas as possible whilst also meeting the requirements of their Commissioning Editor. A cast of guest speakers populate the module with the Head of TV Entertainment on hand throughout to provide advice and guidance.

Assessment

Students will receive written feedback on their idea and its suitability for their Commissioning Editor; their programme proposal and how effectively it communicates their idea; their sizzle reel and how well it sells the idea; their verbal pitch and how confident and articulate they were. There will also be a group review of the proposals and a group screening of the sizzles so that the students can reflect on what has been achieved.

Factual Entertainment Module

Michelangelo developed his craft by sketching classical Greek and Roman sculptures to understand form and develop his technique; this module has a similar inspiration and purpose. Working together as a group, you will produce a non-broadcast episode of a notable Factual Entertainment show to understand how it is made. This year, we want you to produce an episode of the Studio Lambert / Channel 4 hit, *Gogglebox*. This is a collaborative module focusing on casting, producing/directing, and editing.

In several ways, the production of *Gogglebox* anticipates your next module working in the TV studio: in *Gogglebox*, the talent (your contributor) is in one room, and you (as director/producer) are in another room. You have monitors to see them and a talkback through which to communicate with them and manage their performance.

The technical aspects of filming this module will be handled by a third party, who will be supplying the rig that is typically used by the producers of *Googlebox* on location. This will enable you to focus on managing the performance of your contributors and meeting the editorial requirements of the programme.

Specific Aims

To develop your understanding of the production processes of *Gogglebox*, and to develop associated skills in casting, producing, directing and editing.

Module Learning Outcomes

By the end of this module, you will have demonstrated that you can:

- Work positively as part of a producing/directing pair and the wider production team;
- Secure the participation of suitable contributors as part of a casting process;
- Meet all production management requirements for location filming in terms of call sheets, risk assessments, contributor and location releases etc;
- Edit a compilation of sequences from topical TV shows to play-in to contributors on location;
- Manage contributors and crew on location;
- Direct contributors on camera, maintaining high performance standards across a full day's filming;
- Ingest and log rushes;
- Complete an assembly of rushes using Avid editing software;
- Contribute to a voice-over script for the programme.

Summer Multi-Camera Module

Students will be placed into Producer & Director teams by the Head of Television

The aim of this module is for each team to develop several ideas from scratch and pitch them to the Head of Television who will decide which format each team will go into production with. Once green-lit, the teams go on to produce a 25 min entertainment programme to be made in the TV studio.

Student teams will be given a small budget and they will be responsible for casting the performers, organising rehearsals, arranging props and working closely with a professional designer on the overall set design. The technical skills will already have been taught elsewhere in other modules. This is very much about using those skills in a practical way.

As the **producer** in a team the student must:

- research, plan and prepare the show
- prepares/writes presenters' white script
- ensure the team director writes the camera script and camera cards; scripts should be agreed, checked by course tutor and typed up a minimum of 5 days before the shoot
- create the schedule, call sheets, etc.
- distribute all schedules, call sheets and scripts to cast, crew and NFTS staff 5 days prior to shoot
- prepare autocue script for studio – where applicable
- organise, attend and run relevant planning meetings with all key crew members
- liaise with the course co-ordinator to ensure that the correct crew are booked
- submit a budget in line with granted budget and NFTS regulations, and keep the course co-ordinator regularly up to date with work in progress
- source, cast and rehearse cast members
- arrange all rehearsal space and time
- communicate all changes and developments to all NFTS staff, crew and cast
- work with other assigned students as crew
- arrange actors'/musicians' fees in advance
- complete a risk assessment
- in conjunction with the team director, edit and deliver the agreed programme idea on an agreed date
- as a group, review and comment on finished product
- have an individual review session with the Head of Department

As the **director** in a team the student must:

- collaborate closely with the producer in developing the programme idea
- collaborate closely with the production designer
- visualise the show in images and sequences and fully express the idea on screen
- produce a multi-camera script for the show
- produce a studio rehearsal schedule
- attend and fully participate in the Technical Planning Meeting
- assist the producer in generating the required documents for the technical planning meeting
- run the studio days which involves supervising all studio rehearsals and utilise the time to the maximum
- direct the show on time and to the producer's satisfaction
- collaborate with the producer during with off-line edit and the full post production process
- as a group, review and comment on finished product
- have an individual review session with the Head of Department

Specific aims

This whole module is about learning on the job. At this point students are utilising many of the skills that they have learned so far during the course. Whilst professional tutorial back-up is available throughout this period the real aim is to test the ability of the students to budget, script, manage time and people, co-operate, lead and creatively inspire all involved. It is an intensive exercise leading to great personal reward. Experience shows that students learn a huge amount from making these shows.

Assessment

There are two ways in which this module is assessed. At the end of each studio day all the students meet with the Head of Television and other relevant tutors to review how the day went. We discuss as a group what went right and what went wrong. This meeting replicates the post-mortem one would expect after a studio show in the industry. Obviously, the slant is more towards the educational aspects of the exercise. Once the show has been edited and viewed by the students, tutors and other members of staff we have one to one assessments.

The 5 O'Clock Show Live Magazine Show Module

Students will be placed into Producer & Director teams by the Head of Television

The aim of this module is to give the students the feel and experience of working as a production team on a daily LIVE magazine show. Since the inception of entertainment television magazine shows have been a constant genre and graduating students may cut their professional teeth on such shows.

Once again, the Head of TV Entertainment will team up the students: those students who produced in the summer will now direct and the directors will now produce. For consecutive days the 5 O'Clock Show will go LIVE to the NFTS on the internal ring main. Note: Specific editorial requirements of the show will be revealed by the Head of TV Entertainment after the Summer Break.

Specific aims

To have students experience the pressure of real television production at real television pace and to test how they operate as a team.

As the **producer** in a team the student must:

- research, plan and prepare the episode
- prepares/writes white script
- create the pre-production schedule, call sheets, etc.
- distribute all schedules, call sheets and scripts to cast, crew and NFTS staff prepare write presenters script
- deliver autocue script to studio engineering department
- deliver all graphic content, stills and VT's to studio engineering
- organise, attend relevant planning meetings team director and with all key crew members
- submit a budget in line with granted budget and NFTS regulations, and keep the course co-ordinator regularly up to date with work in progress

- source, cast and rehearse cast members
- arrange all rehearsal space and time
- communicate all changes and developments to all NFTS staff, crew and cast
- order and purchase stock requirements
- arrange actors'/musicians' fees in advance
- complete a risk assessment
- as a group, review and comment on finished product
- have an individual review session with the Head of Department

As the **director** in a team the student must:

- collaborate closely with the producer on their specific episode
- collaborate closely with the production designer if their episode requires extra design input
- visualise the show in images and sequences and fully express the idea on screen
- produce a multi-camera script for the show, including two music scripts
- produce a studio rehearsal schedule for the day
- collaborate with producer to source all graphics, stills and VT's for their episode
- attend and fully participate in the Technical Planning Meeting
- assist the producer in generating the required documents for the technical planning meeting
- discuss in advance with studio engineering and sound any specific requirements
- run the studio day which involves supervising all studio rehearsals, dress run and utilise the time to the maximum
- get the show on air and off air on time
- as a group, review and comment on finished product
- have an individual review session with the Head of Department

Specific aims

This whole module is about putting into practice all the craft and production skills students have acquired thus far. It is also about working to a brief and using their collective editorial judgement to put together a live show for transmission under the time constraints of production.

Professional tutors will be on hand to operate cameras, floor manage, vision mix and Script Supervise leaving the students to be the show's Production Team. It will be an intensive exercise leading to great personal reward. The show will also be streamed to the internet and a select group of industry professional invited to view and offer their critical comments.

Assessment

Students will be assessed on the quality of the finished work as well as how well they performed in each of the key roles in the production team.

Year Two

Upon returning for the 2nd Year the Head of TV Entertainment will confirm the Producer/Director graduation production teams. These pairings are arrived at by direct consultation with each student and the careful deliberation of the Head of TV Entertainment utilising awareness of the strengths, weaknesses and aspirations of each student.

Brainstorming

At the beginning of the second year, student teams will start to focus on developing ideas for their graduation show. External industry practitioners will join the students to help develop embryonic ideas into fully-fledged pitches that student teams will take forward to produce for their final graduation projects.

Work Experience (NOT GUARANTEED - subject to COVID-19 restrictions)

Students will take part in two to four weeks of work experience with an Entertainment production company. Here they will be embedded on an existing programme that is either in production or pre-production or on a development team.

Students must supply the Head of Television with **three work experience suggestions and email contact details either for the Head of Production or Head of HR** by the requested time.

Students are not to engage in negotiations with the proposed target company but are required to complete a CV for use in the application process.

Aims

To match each student with a compatible production company, allowing them to work on television productions in a professional environment.

Objectives

- to introduce the student to a working environment similar to that in which they might find themselves working after graduation
- to get hands-on experience and to make strong industry contacts for the future

Graduation Project Development

Upon returning for the 2nd Year, the Head of Television will confirm the Producer/Director graduation production teams. These pairings are arrived at by direct consultation with each student and the careful deliberation of the Head of Television who utilises his awareness of the strengths, weaknesses and aspirations of each student.

Where possible students are matched with their preferred choice partners but this is not guaranteed. **Nor is it guaranteed that each student will work in the entertainment genre of their choice**. The development of graduation show ideas will continue throughout the year and, in addition to the Head of Television, there is additional development support from an outside tutor who will be an experienced Entertainment producer.

GREENLIGHT

A Commissioning Committee will make the final decision as to which grad project each team will go into production with.

The Format Garage

Just how do you create a successful entertainment Format and then rigorously test it out. What is the long, and often, difficult route from idea through development, pitching, budgeting, shooting, post-production and transmission? Experienced development tutor will move the bar up a notch in this workshop on creating and developing TV entertainment ideas.

Production Management

Overall aims – learning outcomes

The role of the production manager is crucial and as the designation suggests it is to manage the production.

This is designed as a refresher course and specifically aims to sharpen up the students' production management skills. The aim is to ensure they have the skills to tackle the budget of their Graduation Production and work with confidence with their assigned PM student.

Factual Entertainment Module

A series of Fact Entertainment producers and directors will give a series of seminars on the genre of Factual Entertainment. Unlike documentary Factual Entertainment must impose a structure on a story. Each scene must be able to deliver the narrative point the producer wants, whilst all the time maintaining spontaneity of reaction and performance from the non-professional contributors – think *The Apprentice* and *Wife Swap*. Students will learn to appreciate how important research is and, above all casting.

GRADUATION Green Light Process

Each **Producer/Director** team will be required to pitch at least three original ideas to the commissioning committee, which is made up of highly experienced TV producers and directors. The committee will be select one idea to Green Light for the team to make as a joint graduation production. **The decision of the Commissioning Committee is final.**

Format Creation

Irrespective of who in each team originated the green lit idea, the format will be attributed to both students in the form of a 'Format Created by' credit on the final end roller. This joint ownership will reflect the creative efforts of both the producer & the director across the development, production and post production stages.

Each graduation production will be no longer than 25 minutes long. Student teams have the option of producing a final show either in the multi-camera studio, on location or a mixture of both.

Through each of the following areas, the student teams will be required to fully research, equip and deliver results to the required NFTS standards. The various

modules of teaching earlier in the course will directly benefit their work throughout the production process.

- Scripting for final graduation shows
- Castings for inserts and graduation shows
- Planning meetings and rehearsals
- Graduation shoots (studio or location)
- Graduation show edit and dubs
- Screening of graduation shows and other works to Industry professionals