

Course outline: Assisting Camera (Focus Pulling and Loading)

The Diploma in Assistant Camera (Focus Pulling and Loading) is a specialisation within the broader **Diploma in Film and Television**.

There are three modules in a year, each of eight to ten weeks in length. Each one starts three/four weeks before one of the three major films made by the MA and Diploma students at the school.

By the end of the course you will have evidence of work and skills in:

- The role of Loader, with experience on both 16mm and 35mm;
- The role of 2nd AC on both film and digital;
- The role of 1st AC (Focus Puller) on both film and digital.

During your time at the National Film and Television School, students will work on at least three short films to industry standards.

Course Elements

The course consists of a logical progression of classes, practical workshops and modules, taught and overseen by industry professionals run over three terms starting in January each year. Teaching sessions take place during Module to Friday from 09:30am to 5:30pm. Knowledge is imparted and experience gained through workshops and production experience onset.

Core skills taught to all students include:

- The role of the Loader;
- The role of the 2nd AC;
- The role of the Focus Puller;
- Loading 16mm and 35mm Film;
- Familiarisation with Alexa and Venice digital cameras;
- Familiarisation with 16mm and 35mm film cameras;
- AC tools including WCU-4s, Hi-5s and Cinetapes;
- Responsibilities on set including H&S;
- Familiarisation with grip equipment including Heads, Sliders and Dollies.

It is important to note that during shoot periods you may be required to work weekends and during nights for night-shoots.

Modules**Module 1: Understanding the role of 2nd AC**

This module provides a complete back-to-basics approach to digital equipment. The course
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January 2025

leader will take you through all you need to know from unpacking equipment to maintaining and returning it in the same condition you collected it in. You'll be taught how to assemble complex camera packages and how to design a build to suit the needs of a shoot. You'll be provided with the tools including kit bag needed to be a 2nd AC as well as trainee.

During the three-week introduction period, you will be both classroom and location based, and there will be opportunities to work with actors and block scenes, as well as shoot them. The Course Leader will continually assess your skills, and by week three will have chosen teams for the "Digi Fiction" shoots which are directed by shot by 2nd Year students on the Alexa Mini/Venice cameras. During the ten films in this module you will be led by a professional 1st AC as a way of providing continuous training.

Module 2: Introduction to the role of Focus Puller and 35mm

After a 10-week break, you will return to the School for a three-four week prep period ahead of Grad Fiction. These are longer shoot, again with 2nd Year MA and diploma students. Some of these films will be shot on the Venice/Alexa but some may choose to shoot on 16mm/35mm. Prior to these shoots you will be continuing with your training in both handling a further range of equipment and lenses, as well as beginning to practice your focus pulling and loading skills. Those the Course Leader feels are ready may be asked to focus pull on the Grad Fiction films.

Those not acting as a 1st AC/Focus Puller on the shoots will be assigned as 2nd ACs and Loaders if applicable. You will again be under continual assessment from the Course Leader with them attending set-visits.

Module 3: Working with 16mm

After a further four-week break, you will then prepare for First Year Film (FYF). These are shoots directed and shot by 1st year MA students. These shoots will be on 16mm, which is a fitting finale to the course as 16mm is the most exacting format to work with, both from a focus point-of-view, and also the care and accuracy needed in the testing and preparation of the equipment.

By this point we would hope that some if not most of the students on the course are now in a position to successfully carry out the role of 1st AC.

The aim of this course is to enable you to enter the industry as a camera trainee on large scale shoots or as a 2nd AC on smaller shoots. It will also giving you a grounding on 16mm/35mm including loading. While you may have had focus pulling experience on the course the role of Focus Puller is something that takes years of training.

Other Components of the Diploma

Assessed Work

This is a practical course so you will be assessed on the work you produce and with feedback based on your performance based on classroom activity as well as onset activity. The course will culminate in a final review which normally takes place in November.

Meet The Industry

You will meet numerous professionals, visiting tutors, alumni and lecturers from a wide-range of industry backgrounds throughout the course.

Optional Productions

In addition to the productions that are mandatory during the year, there are often many opportunities to work on additional student projects, there are films such as Commercials, Bridges to Industry and other shoots that may take place in between your modules which you are welcome to participate in by private arrangement with the DP's concerned. Between modules, the NFTS is not responsible for you, but welcomes you to continue to take part in its activities that take place outside of the various Curriculums. You can, of course, discuss anything you would like to be participate in with the Tutors.

Commitment

It is important when you sign on for the modules that you are 100% available for both the teaching module (3 to 4 weeks) as well as the shoots which are spread over a 3 to 5 weeks period. Once you are signed on to a module, significant failure to attend may mean you cannot continue with the Diploma.

Health & Safety

Training in the principles of Health and Safety, including manual handling and loading and movement procedures for equipment will be imparted through classroom and practical sessions. The NFTS believes in the principles outlined by the Mark Milsome Foundation and therefore requires all students on the course to undertake the online course into their careers.