



NATIONAL
FILM AND
TELEVISION
SCHOOL

Certificate in Documentary Storytelling

Delivered over 24 weeks

This Certificate course is designed to guide students through the various stages of documentary filmmaking, from conceptualizing film ideas to the final delivery of a short film, taster or fragment. With the focus being documentary storytelling rather than production, this is a space to experiment, build confidence, play and test your creative storytelling ideas and skills in a supported environment.

Students engage in practical, hands-on learning with expert instructors, developing skills in directing, filming solo (and with collaborators where necessary), editing, and pitching.

Module 1: Elements of Documentary – Structure and Style, Knowledge and Skills

In person sessions | 8 weeks, one afternoon a week

Weekend Intensive | 2 days

Students kick off the course by learning to use each element of documentary as a tool for exploring their subject of choice. Exploring the widest range of documentary language from artists films to observational to journalism to therapeutic and medical interventions, interactive and immersive film-making, they experiment with different filming methods through group and individual exercises to support them to develop their own cinematic language.

Students learn each aspect of the production process while understanding how documentary extends their looking and listening. They learn how to research and access their subject, including the right agreements to use. Working alone and in a team is covered alongside the core practical skills any documentary filmmaker needs to get started – interview techniques, camera skills, sound recording and sound design.

Students learn how to define their film's audience, why it's all about the relationships and how to pitch their story to a panel of gatekeepers.

Module 2: Filming – The Shock of the Real

Practical Production with mentored support | 4 weeks

Students are supported to plan and risk assess their project, before entering a core filming period of four weeks, where they capture recorded material for their documentary film, taster or fragment. They have a personal mentor assigned who will provide expert feedback and support during the process. Students share and discuss their film rushes and prepare all elements for their edit.

Through this process students maintain a relationship with their main character/s, build trust with their project stakeholders, learn to transform any situation into visual story-telling, record

useable sound and create a well-being contract. They are guided to ensure they have all the shots and sound they need for their edit.

Module 3: Storytelling in the Edit

Weekend Intensive | 2 days

Practical Post-Production with mentored support | 6 weeks

Students receive training in Adobe Premiere Pro, hands-on experimentation with sound design and grading, titling and online support.

They learn how to create an opening sequence, understand pacing and rhythm, produce narrative tension, experiment with structure, lay a sound track, use spot effects and music, create titles and credits and respond to test audience feedback.

Module 4: The Audience for Your Story

In person sessions | 4 weeks

Students explore structure and storytelling in the edit with feedback sessions from their mentor and group review screenings with their cohort.

Students learn to present their film, give essential context, prepare audiences for sensitive content and be ready to answer questions. Students are supported by distribution mentors to find their films audience, which may be through film festivals, charities, third sector organisations, industry and peers.

Students are given detailed feedback, final assessment and attend their graduation screening in a local cinema with family, friends and invited guests.