

Certificate in Script Development for Film and TV

Course Outline

This course is seminar-based with practical exercises, designed to enhance script development skills, industry knowledge, and hands-on experience of working with scripted material. It begins with a strong foundation in the core principles of dramatic storytelling and script development, ensuring that students understand the role of the script developer within the film and television industries. This knowledge will then be applied as they work on the development of scripted projects across the duration of the course.

The course includes the following elements:

Storytelling and Development Principles

Students will be introduced to the fundamentals of scripted storytelling, with a focus on narrative structure, character development, theme, genre, tone, and audience engagement. Emphasis will be placed on understanding how stories evolve through the development process and how a script developer supports this progression.

Students will explore the perspectives of key roles within scripted production - including writer, producer, executive, and commissioner - in order to strengthen collaborative practice and creative dialogue. Focus will also be given to the skills and attributes required to evaluate material critically, identify narrative challenges, and articulate constructive pathways for redrafting.

Craft and Development Skills

This section covers the essential craft skills required of a script developer. Students will learn how to:

- Analyse scripts for structure, character arcs, pacing, and thematic coherence
- Produce professional script coverage and development notes
- Facilitate development conversations with writers
- Support iterative drafting processes through structured feedback
- Assess a project's audience positioning and market viability

Attention will also be given to development documentation, including loglines, synopses, treatments, pitch documents, and verbal pitch preparation.

Practical Development Experience

Students will gain practical experience through a simulated development project. Students will gain practical experience through a core applied development project. Using selected material, students will engage in a structured development process, applying their learning from early concept or first draft through to successive revisions.

This hands-on component will involve analysing material, delivering written and verbal feedback, participating in development workshops, and tracking draft progression. Students will build a portfolio of professional development documents, including written reflections on development discussions, demonstrating their ability to guide a project toward greater clarity, coherence, and production readiness.

As part of the programme, students will undertake a slate development strand designed to reflect industry development practice. In addition to working in depth on a core scripted project, students will research, develop, and pitch three additional scripted project proposals suitable for a production company or independent development slate. Students will:

- Identify and research viable story concepts across film or television formats
- Assess audience, genre positioning, and market context
- Develop loglines, short synopses, and development rationales
- Articulate the creative vision and development strategy for each project
- Present and pitch their slate verbally and in written form

This strand emphasises strategic thinking, editorial judgement, and market awareness, encouraging students to balance creative ambition with production and audience considerations. It also develops confidence in curatorial decision-making - a key skill for script developers and development executives.

Tutor Support and Industry Insight

Students will receive one-to-one tutorials across the development process to refine their analytical skills and professional approach. Industry case studies and guest input will be included to contextualise the script developer's role within contemporary film and television production environments.

Guidance will also be provided on career pathways within script development, including working with production companies, broadcasters, and independent writers. Additional opportunities exist to extend learning and develop writing skills through progression to the NFTS Script Development Diploma.

By the end of the course, each student will be able to:

- Conduct detailed script analysis and provide structured development feedback
- Guide the progression of a script through iterative drafts using targeted development strategies
- Articulate narrative strengths and weaknesses with clarity and professional sensitivity
- Prepare industry-standard development documentation (coverage, notes, pitch materials)
- Facilitate constructive development conversations with writers and creative collaborators
- Assess projects in relation to genre, audience, and market context
- Research, curate, and pitch a cohesive development slate comprising three additional scripted projects, demonstrating strategic editorial judgement and market awareness.
- Demonstrate ethical and professional practice in handling creative material.