Course outline: Digital Effects

The MA in Digital Effects is a specialisation within the broader MA in Film and Television.

The course represents a steady progression, beginning with the basic technology and skills and ending with the responsibility for finishing effects or finishing the post production on a range of graduation film, television and games projects. At each stage additional skills are added through specific workshops to provide a comprehensive education that is of great value in understanding and communicating with other industry professionals.

Using the latest equipment and technology, or their initiative to find a creative solution, students work on a variety of NFTS productions, as well as departmental exercises and cross disciplinary workshops.

By the end of the course each student will have evidence of work in:
- An awareness of Special Visual Effects content creation
- 2D and/or 3D and/or Colour work across multiple NFTS student productions
- Creation of Graduation Showreels
- Specific examples of individually specialist work in the creation of Effects content and/or Grading/Onlining in particular focus areas

The first year of the course is focused on teaching the range of advanced craft skills and the underpinning learning and education required for students to develop the mastery they need to progress their creative potential and deep learning.

The second year allows students to continue this development and demonstrate their creativity through practice. It ensures the students become independent learners often generating their own self-set briefs or working with teams of students on projects.

Throughout the course, students engage in cross specialisation workshops and projects to deepen their understanding of the film making process. Many first year projects and graduation projects involve a range of Visual Effects and/or Physical effects. An example of second year activity is the Animation Graduation films that involve the Digital Effects students who supervise and manage the finishing of the films, as well as the effects work – often helping with the animation pipeline from scripting stage right through to delivery.

Year One

Workshop 1: The Common Agenda (Springboard) – This series of lectures, presentations, demonstrations, seminars, masterclasses and practical exercises are common to all the MA specialisations and are designed to illustrate what is involved in the work of each of them and how this expertise fits into the jigsaw of production.

Workshop 2: The Fundamentals

Introductory Workshop – This is an essential introduction to pixels, bit depths, formats and all manner of useful technical information that often blocks progress early in the learning process.

Workshop 3: 3D CGI – Maya – This workshop is a major undertaking for the DFX students and features an intensive block of CGI tuition that aims to introduce the students immediately to the practical and theoretical techniques involved in creating photo-realistic 3D imagery.

Workshop 4: An Introduction to Tracking and Match Moving – Running alongside the CG tuition, this essential workshop will introduce the concept of camera tracking.

Module 1: Take One Painting – Maya – Take One painting is a cross-specialisation exercise in three distinct parts that allows for a collaborative approach to be taken on a practical film project for the first time on the DFX course.

Workshop 5: 2D/3D Compositing – NUKE – This workshop aims to introduce the Students immediately to the practical and theoretical techniques involved in Digital Compositing, whilst also starting to develop an understanding of the breakdown and construction of film and broadcast sourced digital image material.

Workshop 6: Previsualisation (Optional) – The DFX students join forces with the Production Design department as they undertake the Sci-Fi design project.

Workshop 7: Physical and Practical FX – This workshop introduces students to some interesting aspects of Special FX employed on a shoot and will include practical examples and exercises from initial planning, preparation and risk assessment to the final product.

Module 2: Motion Capture with Further 3D – Maya – This innovative module is designed to offer students the further opportunity to really discover where their natural abilities lie and by developing their knowledge and deepening their understanding of CG animation and technical direction.

At this point in the MA programme, the DFX students start learning the topics in their chosen area of outcome - **CG**, **Compositing** or **Colour**. Please note that the

module/workshop descriptions for the individual outcomes are clearly marked "***For CG***", "***For Colour***" and "***For Compositing***". If the module/workshop descriptions are not preceded by "***For***" and the outcome, this means they are available as an option to all DFX students.

Module 3: *For CG & optional for Compositing* - Prosthetics and SFX Make-Up

Workshop 8a: *For Colour & optional for Compositing* – Start to Finish
As the DFX department takes responsibility for delivering every major film and television project at the NFTS, the online editing aspects of the course provide the students with an essential skillset for finishing films and television programmes.

Workshop 8b: *For Colour & optional for Compositing* – Intro to Colour Grading

Workshop 8c: *For Colour & optional for Compositing* – B/W Emulation – This short exercise explores the techniques associated with black and white emulation.

Year Two

Workshop 1: For CG & Compositing – Models/Miniatures, Motion Control Workshop

Workshop 2: For Colour - Online Editing – Flame – The second stage of tuition of online editing skills and techniques takes the students skills to the next level and is designed to include another cutting edge online editing environment, the Autodesk Flame system.

Workshop 3a: For Compositing & optional for CG - 2D/3D Compositing – NUKE – The tutor will take the students through a recap of the main 2D and 3D compositing techniques using the Nuke application. Advanced techniques will be explored.

Workshop 3b: For Colour - Colour Theory and Grading Techniques

Workshop 4: For Colour - HD Online Editing – Avid – Editing within the AVID editing application.

Workshop 5: For Colour – Expanded Cinema – This workshop aims to cover the 'business end' of final Post Production - mastering and delivering projects.

Graduation Film and TV Productions and Games Portfolio – All through the 2nd year students have the opportunity to work together on amazing film and TV productions and Games. Each of the directors from the five directing departments: Documentary, Television, Fiction, Games and Animation and their team usually comprising one member of each of the other departments (Producing, Production Design, Cinematography etc.) are given a budget and access to the all the NFTS resources to make a single film or TV project or Game to display their newly acquired skills. DFX students will team up with each of the directors and act as CG

or Compositing Supervisor for their final film or TV production, or help with Game assets.

MA Digital Effects
Commencing January 2019