

### Course outline: Directing Documentary

The MA in Directing Documentary is a specialisation within the broader MA in Film and Television.

**Year One** is built around a series of distinct practical exercises, increasing in length and complexity. These are designed to identify and focus on the particular techniques and content of a variety of documentary genres.

The key ones are:

- **Observation** (5 mins)
- **Sound and Music** (3 mins)
- **Moment of Truth** (15 mins)
- **Investigation** (20 mins)

Each exercise is preceded by a search through the relevant tradition for techniques and inspiration. Students collaborate in various combinations with cinematographers, editors, sound designers and composers and also work alone using a range of digital cameras. In addition to starting the process of becoming an original storyteller, there are two other important purposes in the first year: one is to help you become fluent and confident with camera and sound. The other is to teach you how to collaborate successfully.

Towards the end of the second term of the first year you will be encouraged to take up a short industry work-placement. This is a key part of the overall aim of the course - to prepare you for a working life in the film and television industry when you leave the School.

In **Year Two**, in addition to your dissertation, you'll be asked to complete three tasks:

- **'Imagining Reality'**, the graduation film, is a project designed to encourage students to construct a film that challenges conventional approaches to character and event-led documentary making. It's scheduled to be made during the first 6-8 months of the second year.
- **'Meet The Industry'** Students will be encouraged to develop their contacts with the industry through a longer work-placement and a series of meetings with broadcasters, producers and distributors to better understand the commissioning process, how production houses operate, what they look for in directors, how festivals select films and how national and international finance works.

- **'Next Move'** is an opportunity for students who complete their graduation films on time to develop a viable proposal or taster for their next documentary. The School will provide support and expertise in attracting commissioning attention, crowd-funding and the production of materials to help students take their project out into the world once they've graduated.

The year finishes with multiple industry screenings of your work in the graduation show.

## Year One

**Foundation Course** – a variety of different familiarisation sessions including an exchange of the work that brought you to the school.

**“Springboard” Cross Specialisation Introductory Workshop** – an introduction to the moving image, looking at cinematic and televisual language through the prism of storytelling.

### **Introduction to cameras, sound and editing**

**Observation Module** – This module explains the basics of how to shoot an observational documentary scene.

**Story Workshop** – In preparation for the first full storytelling exercise, this collaboration challenges writers and directors to explore storytelling models and to make a short fiction film in record time.

**Sound and Music** – This workshop is designed to reveal the power of sound in documentary and how it can be used to develop not just atmospheres, but characters, stories, ideas and emotions.

**Moment of Truth** – This module is about casting and story-telling in observational documentary filmmaking.

**Investigation Module** – This module introduces you to the basic principles of enquiry through film-making.

### **Industry placements**

## Year Two

**Imagining Reality** – This culminating module synthesises what students have learned about themselves, about storytelling and about the processes of filmmaking in a piece of work which challenges their boundaries and does so with confidence and skill in an intensely collaborative environment.

**Meet the Industry** – This is a combination of work-placements and individual meetings designed to consolidate graduating students understanding and knowledge of the British documentary industry through exposure to broadcasters, production companies, distributors, festivals and successful filmmakers.

**Next Move** – For students that finish their graduation module project on schedule, there is an opportunity to enlist the support of the School to help them prepare a viable documentary project that they can take with them when they leave the School.

**IDFA – International Documentary Festival** – Students visit IDFA, the biggest DocFest in the world, to see a wide range of the most recent and classic docs, attend workshops specially designed for new filmmakers and meet and hang out with the movers and shakers in the international documentary community.