

Course outline: Directing and Producing Television Entertainment

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

The two-year course has been constructed with a clearly defined arc. We start at the very beginning with an understanding of entertainment television history, moving very quickly on to the future and the generation of new ideas.

The principle teaching method is to give as much information to the student as possible with a view to turning that knowledge into practical production experience very quickly. So when students are taught to brainstorm we teach them where to begin and how to do it. Before long we get them to generate their own ideas.

Likewise, with studio directing skills we teach the grammar of television – not in a classroom but on the studio floor and in the production gallery. When we have taught the theory we move swiftly to practical exercises.

Communication and collaboration are as important as creativity in television production. Students on this course will not only be taught the skills necessary to operate within their own group but to extend that philosophy to the rest of the School. Joint projects both scheduled and ad-hoc is an essential part of the learning process.

The following range of projects and workshops are just some of subjects covered on the course.

Year One

TV History - We set television entertainment in context with seminars with the Head of Department and visiting tutors to create an understanding of the history of television and give a grounding in the culture. A visiting Director and a Producer outline the distinction between the two key roles.

The Production Team, TV Genres - A series of seminars and practical exercises in which we teach the fundamentals of television production. We start with a seminar on the life of a television show from the birth of an idea to its production and beyond. We build a picture of who does what, of how genres differ.

Studio Familiarisation Module - A week in the multi-camera studio to learn the principles of multicamera directing. Here students fill different roles and undertake a variety of directing exercises from script to finished sequence. To introduce each student to the experience of directing, vision mixing, floor managing and operating a camera. Also to learn industry agreed shot sizes and vocabulary.

Brainstorming and Pitching - Instruction and practical work in generating and pitching entertainment ideas. How to pitch well and sell an idea is crucial in the modern TV Entertainment industry

Single Camera Operating – Experienced Camera and Sound tutors teach the fundamentals of single camera operating and sound recording.

Single Camera Directing and Basic Operating – Students are taught the basics of single camera directing with shooting exercises to test that they have understood. Then an editing workshop, all supervised by industry tutors.

Pitch Reel Module - The aim of this module is to teach the students how to translate an original entertainment format into a three-minute pitch reel. Through planning, budgeting, scripting and casting, to shooting, editing and delivering a pitch reel that could be used to sell the project to a commissioning editor.

Summer Multi-Camera Module – Now, in Producer and Director teams, students create half-hour multi-camera studio formats and pitch them to the Head of Television. Once green-lit, the five teams go on to make their show in the multicamera TV studio. Each of the productions has two days in the studio and is supported by industry tutors including a set designer.

The 5 O’Clock Show Module - The aim of this module is to give the students the feel and experience of working on a daily LIVE music and arts magazine show.

Students are again divided into five Producer and Director teams. Each of the five episodes will contain guest interviews, studio demonstrations, reviews and a live band and the shows are streamed live on the internet. Apart from the TV students the whole production is manned by industry professionals in the areas of camera, lighting, sound, vision mixing, script supervising and floor managing.

The Monologue Workshop - In this workshop we collaborate with the 1st Year Screenwriters to script, rehearse and direct a five-minute monologue as a single continuous multi-camera recording.

Year Two

Upon returning for the 2nd Year the Head of Television will confirm the five Producer/Director graduation teams.

Brainstorming - At the beginning of the second year, student teams will start to focus on developing ideas for their graduation show and step up their format creating skills

Placement Module - Students will take part in a four-week working placement with an Entertainment Broadcaster or production company. In the past students have had placements with the BBC, ITV, Hat Trick, Tiger Aspect, Objective, betty, & Studio Lambert. *(note the NFTS cannot guarantee a placement or to guarantee the placement to happen where each student would prefer)*

Factual Entertainment Module – Led by a Factual Entertainment producer the 2nd Year students will immerse themselves in a genre of Television Entertainment that has a very high profile across all the channels. Then students, in groups of three or four, will put what they have learned into practice by shooting and editing a Factual Entertainment scene.

Production Management – This is designed to sharpen up the students' understanding of the role of the production manager as well as a chance to discuss the budgeting and planning of potential graduation productions.

Graduation Green Light Process – Each Producer/Director team will be required to pitch at least three original ideas to a commissioning committee consisting of the Head of Television and two highly experienced TV producers and directors. That committee will eventually green lit one idea from each team.

Dissertation – A 10,000-word dissertation, started in the first year, will be completed and delivered at the end of July.

Graduation Project – Each student team will make their 25-minute graduation productions in collaboration with students from several different departments. Post production will be completed in mid-December.