

Course Outline: Certificate in Filmmaking**Module 1**

After some introductory sessions this first section of the course focuses on Screenwriting, Producing and Production Design.

Screenwriting

These four sessions introduce students to the principles and practice of screenwriting. We will spend time discovering what a story is and how a screenplay is different to prose.

From the basics of layout, to structure, and the building of characters you will leave with an understanding of not just the writing but the discourse around it, exploring protagonists, antagonists, inciting incidents, conflict and most importantly why one would wish to tell any story.

In these sessions we will not espouse a set system or screenwriting ideology but we will explore some principles on which one will be able to build a screenplay. All students will write a short script. Some of the scripts will be randomly chosen to base a pitching exercise on later in the course (See “The Pitch”)

Producing

The best creative producers are highly focused individuals with a passion for telling stories. They have a vision and want to strive to realise their projects from development through to distribution. They inspire and lead a creative team throughout the process, collaborating and mediating whilst remaining true to their initial vision.

Collaboration and the will to communicate with other creative filmmakers, as well as financiers of films or TV programmes, is essential at the development stage through production and post-production and including delivery to the marketplace.

During these four sessions we will concentrate on the The Role of a Producer, Idea Development & Pitching, Positioning & Packaging a Film, Financing, Production, Reaching an Audience and Starting out as a Producer.

Production Design

The Production Designer works on creating the mood, atmosphere and background of a film, TV series, music video or commercial. Using colour, space, objects and texture, a production designer and the art department will bring a script or story to life, helping to enrich a sense of place, character and emotion on screen.

During these classes we'll explore how all the different elements of design support the core narrative of a script and work to further embellish the detail and characters within it. We will look closely at the elements involved in production design, as well as looking at the art department team as a whole.

We will focus on how the production designer develops ideas from initial thoughts to the realisation of these ideas with the art department. As well as discussing how the art department crosses over and collaborates with other departments within the filmmaking process.

Module 2

This module focuses on Cinematography, Sound Recording, Pitching, Production Management, Assistant Directing and Directing Fiction and Directing Documentary.

Cinematography

The cinematographer or what's sometimes called the Director of Photography (DoP) must be able to interpret the script and create and enhance the story visually, on screen. They will use framing, movement, lighting, locations, different types of film, or digital cameras and all other creative and technical visual elements to tell the story.

The cinematographer will be the head of their department leading a team and will work closely with the director to support their overall vision of the story/film.

We will focus on the cinematographer's role on a film and their collaboration with director, production designers and other HODs as well as within the lighting and camera departments during the stages of prepping, shooting and grading a film. We will break down scenes and discuss how they were shot, drawing on the tutor's own work and scenes students are curious about.

Sound Recording

Acquiring high quality original sound for film and television requires not only a passion for film, television, and sound, but technical proficiency, mature inter- personal skills and well-developed creative instincts.

It is always assumed that sound can be "fixed" in post-production. Sometimes sound can be modified at a later stage, but at a cost. More importantly the original performance is lost. The sound recordists' principle is to "fix it in prep".

It is their aim to capture the magic of an original performance to provide the best possible final product.

You'll get a tour of the equipment you may use during your in-person workshops. We'll be covering the basic setup and operation of a SQN mixer, a shotgun microphone, boom operating and tethering to the camera to record onto.

The Pitch

The ability to articulate your film projects both visually and verbally is a fundamental skill for any filmmaker. In this task, students will develop a professional pitch deck and deliver a verbal pitch to present a selected script compellingly.

From the screenplays written during the Screenwriting classes, ten will be randomly chosen.

Students will be divided into ten teams, with each team assigned one of these scripts. The verbal pitches will be presented during a scheduled class session, where immediate feedback will be provided to refine and enhance pitching techniques. You'll get a chance to refine the pitches and repeat it in the last zoom class of the course.

Production Management

Production Managers oversee the budget, the hiring, the shooting schedules and managing the day-to-day. They are involved with a film through every stage of production, from pre-production to post. They work closely with producers, directors and heads of department to deliver the film.

What does it take to be a Production Manager? Someone who can multi-task, be dynamic, communicate well and stay calm under pressure; is creative with budgets but keeps an eye on the bottom line; who knows enough about health and safety to protect the cast and crew but not detract from getting the right shot; who knows about the best locations at the best price – and who knows production from start to finish.

NFTS PM graduates have gone on to work successfully on award-winning productions including Killing Eve, Silent Witness, The Crown, Call the Midwife, Mary Poppins Returns, Mamma Mia! Here We Go Again, Dunkirk, Doctor Strange, Jason Bourne, Spectre, Wonder Woman, The One Show, Mowgli, Sherlock Gnomes, Paddington 2, Black Mirror, The South Bank Show, The Doctor Who Gave up Drugs, Catastrophe, and many more.

Assistant Directing

Assistant Directors are responsible for the daily operation of the shooting set. Their objective is to provide the director with everything he or she needs to realise his or her vision. Their duties are supervisory, organisational and administrative. They are at the heart of ensuring a production stays on track and is delivered successfully.

Effective teamwork is essential to the Assistant Director as are interpersonal skills and the ability to negotiate.

These sessions will focus on what an AD does, where in the pipeline of making film does an AD come on board and leave, leading a technical recce, Set and Location protocols and etiquette, Liaising with the production office to create production paperwork, Breaking down a script, developing a shooting schedule, interpreting the scene, the impact of budget.

Directing Fiction

Directors have to find a way of developing their talents and finding their individual voices. For this engagement to be effective the director needs a keen understanding of the ideas being communicated. One defining quality of great directors is that they have a point of view concerning the world and human relationships.

NFTS MA directing students' films are regularly nominated for and win BAFTAs and Oscars. Once graduated they go on to make titles such as "Des", "Time", "Calm With Horses", "The Long Song", "71", "Saint Maud", "You Were Never Really Here" and many many more.

Over the four Zoom classes we'll explore vision, tone, pace, interrogation of script and scene analysis, how to build a scene, staging, camera placement, performance, working with actors and casting, as well as looking at a selection of books with practical directing content

Directing Documentary

Great documentary filmmakers tell stories that help us make sense of the world around us, just like great novelists, playwrights or screenwriters. The best documentaries use craft and creativity to take us into other people's lives. They break down the barriers between us, as viewers, and the people on screen, who might inhabit a different nation, religion or mindset.

Documentaries work best when they use the same essential techniques as the best fiction, telling emotional stories with compelling characters, observation and humour: in some important ways, there is no difference between a great fiction film and a great documentary.

The history of documentary at the NFTS is illustrious: graduates are among the biggest names in non-fiction of the past several decades, including Nick Broomfield, Kim Longinotto and Molly Dineen. Young documentary graduates work across all roles at the forefront of the medium.

In the first session, we'll start by defining documentary and looking at different types of documentaries before exploring what the organising principles are for a good story. You'll be given a brief for a short documentary exercise to be completed before the second session during which we'll review the work as a group.

Module 3

This final module will focus on Editing, Sound Design, Composing, Visual Effects, Distribution & Exhibition

Editing

Editors need to be able to devise, interpret and analyse films of all kinds. They need to be able to respond to story, image, sound and music, to have a sense of rhythm and form, and to be sensitive to narrative, meaning and atmosphere.

Editing is a highly creative contribution to filmmaking, and editors are expected to be intelligent and psychologically aware as well as technically accurate and hard-working. An editing career requires a combination of commitment and personal insight.

In these sessions you'll learn about the stages of editing, the editor's thought process when reading a script and see the evolution of a scene as it goes through the various cuts. You'll explore what editing can do to a scene or film's clarity, performances, geographical space, pace and meaning.

Sound Design

Sound design is the emotional heartbeat of a film or TV show. The soundtrack has the ability to make you feel scared, to be uplifted, to bring you to tears, to build tension and release joy.

Sound Designers' role on a film may include adding sound effects, editing dialogue and mixing the various sounds to make sure the balance is correct. They will make the world of the film audible, believable and powerful.

In these sessions you will explore how sound design, and a film's soundtrack more broadly, sets up a protagonist, their relationship to their environment, and establishes key thematic elements and how sound is used to develop characters and shape a scene.

Composing

Film composers are expected to have an informed understanding, musical versatility and an individual musical voice. They need to understand story and human emotions as well as be ready for the practical and intellectual demands from working in the industry.

A love of films, art, history and culture is essential as you will be collaborating with a wide variety of filmmakers and need to engage in their stories. You'll explore the key steps of a composer's work, Character Development through Music. The Technology and Software Used, Using "Temp" Music (pros and cons), Using Library Music (pros and cons), Use of pre-existing songs (difference between "licensed" and "commissioned" music).

Visual Effects

The important area of Visual FX (VFX) finds Digital Effects professionals blending physical effects that can be created and shot in-camera with complex digital effects that are created using computers, or creating entire worlds in the digital environment. All professional digital content also requires finishing and the complex creative skills of colour grading and online editing are closely aligned with VFX.

Special and Visual Effects is a highly creative contribution to film-making, TV production, games design, immersive experiences and all manner of content creation and visualisation. People working in this area expected to be intelligent, highly motivated and psychologically aware, as well as technically accurate and hard-working. A career in this area requires a combination of total commitment, passion, realism and personal insight.

These sessions will be split into four areas; Model Making and Physical effects, the world of CGI, Compositing on High End Productions and Colour Grading.

Marketing, Distribution & Sales

Those in the marketing distribution and sales roles within the entertainment industries need to be able to define their market and reach the all-important audiences and consumers in the most creative, effective ways possible.

The digital age has revolutionised the way that audiences and consumers interact with and consume content. Film, television and computer games are now bought and sold over a dizzying array of platforms, channels and release models, from traditional cinematic exhibition to premium-priced SVOD pre-releases of movies in the living room. Netflix, Amazon, Apple and a host of mass-market digital players with seemingly unlimited resources have made finding market space increasingly competitive.

Marketing Managers, Distributors and Sales Agents need the skills to spot trends, innovation and opportunity in each of the sectors, and apply them to their work across the film, television and entertainment industries.

You'll explore Window & Lifecycle Strategies, Dating Strategy, Positioning, Target markets and audiences, Creative, The Marketing Funnel, Media, Publicity and Promotions, P&A / Marketing Budgets, Consumer Research, Trade marketing, Distribution processes and the various stages of sales.

The Pitch II

You'll get a chance to refine the pitches delivered half way through the course (See "The Pitch") and repeat it in this last zoom class of the course. An extract of some of these scripts will be filmed during the in person workshops.

The Workshop

If you have stated this course in October these workshops will happen in April. If you started on Jan/Feb these workshops will be in July. During the shooting sections of this workshop extracts from some of the pitch scripts will be used.

- Day 1: Welcome. Screening of NFTS student work and Q&A followed by socializing.
- Day 2: A rotation of workshops. Performance | Lens | Set Protocol | Sound Design or Sound Recording | Prep meetings for Shoots.
- Day 3: A rotation of workshops continued. Performance | Lens | Set Protocol | Sound Design or Sound Recording | Prep meetings for Shoots.
- Day 4: Shoot Day 1: Five teams shoot while the other teams help.
- Day 5: Shoot Day 2: Five teams shoot while the other teams help.
- Day 6: Screening and Review of work in the cinema.

Certificate in Filmmaking
Commencing October 2025 or Feb 2026

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