

### **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 television history moving very quickly on to the future and the generation of new ideas. From this beginning we take a journey to the final big production. Along the way essential modules are visited.

The main teaching method is to give as much information to the student as possible with a view to turning that knowledge into practical work very quickly indeed. Therefore, 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 skills we teach the grammar of television – not in a classroom but on the studio floor and in the gallery. When we have taught the theory, we move swiftly to practical exercises. It is a 'deep-end' philosophy with full tutorial back up.

When dealing with more administrative subjects such as health and safety or production management the modules are taught in lecture/seminar mode with practical exercises. Again, the emphasis is on teaching the right information and turning it into practical example as soon as possible.

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 projects and workshops indicate a range of subjects covered on the course. There may be variations in this programme during the year.

#### **Curriculum Attendance**

Attendance at all scheduled curriculum events is compulsory. **Curriculum events and seminars can be re-scheduled or added at any time. Non-attendance of a curriculum event requires the student to give the Head of TV and TV co-ordinator advance written notification in good time.**

Do not book flights, trips or visits during term time without checking with the Head of TV beforehand. Absenteeism can affect your degree result.

## **Timekeeping**

Good timekeeping is required of all TV students at all time. All curriculum events will begin at their scheduled time. Latecomers may be barred from any curriculum event to which they are late.

Persistent late coming may affect the outcome of your degree.

## **Year One**

### **“Springboard” Cross Specialisation Introductory Workshop** (duration - 1 week)

- an introduction to the moving image, looking at cinematic and televisual language through the prism of storytelling
- it investigates how the main crafts of cinema and television, screenwriting, cinematography, visualisation, editing, sound and music each relate to the way filmmaking puts across narrative ideas

### **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 in which students undertake a variety of exercises from script to finished sequence. Enable each student to understand the role of director, vision mixer, floor manager and camera operator. Also, to learn industry agreed shot sizes and vocabulary.

Television Students will also learn how to approach directing music in the studio. From receiving the music and lyrics, transcribing it, breaking down the music, plotting camera positions, preparing camera script, rehearsing band through to finally directing the show in studio.

The learning will be by example and practical application. It will be taught by the Head of Television. From the moment the music arrives, we take the students through how to break it down into bars and beats. From this, we will create a “white” script. We will then plot our cameras and prepare a camera script. We will rehearse the band with our camera plotting in mind. We will rehearse on camera leading to a full recording of the musical act.

### **Aim**

To teach the grammar and etiquette of the TV studio and to introduce students to the various skills needed to make a TV show.

### **Objectives**

To give students a full understanding of the interdependence of each and every person on a studio floor. Students also learn different aspects of a production and may well discover a particular aptitude or talent at this stage.

### **Brainstorming and Pitching**

Instruction and practical work in generating and building ideas in a group, the art of pitching and selling those ideas. This is an important skill for any television creative and we will return to it several times across the two-year MA

### **Pitch Reel Module**

The aim of this module is to teach the students how to translate an original entertainment format into a pitch reel from the original idea through planning, budgeting, scripting and casting, to shooting, editing and delivering a 2-minute pitch reel that could be used to sell the project to a commissioning editor. This is also an introduction to single camera directing techniques.

Each student will:

- develop a new format
- create short treatment
- agree the format with the Head of Television
- prepare the production including permissions and clearances
- script, schedule and create call sheets
- complete risk assessment for Health and Safety
- submit a budget for the shoot in line with granted budget and NFTS regulations
- undergo full practical training on DV camera
- work with other TV students as crew
- shoot on location
- edit their pitch reels to ensure delivery of agreed idea
- finalise and close all aspect of individual budget with Course Co-ordinator
- deliver a finished 2-minute pitch reel to the Head of Department on an agreed date
- take the project through Post Production by On-Lining and Sound Mixing to completion
- optionally show this pitch reel to outside Industry contacts
- as a group, review and comment on finished product

### **Specific aims**

To bring together much of what has already been learned into one complete exercise. Brainstorming, pitching, researching, location finding, scripting, DV camera operation and editing skills are brought together for the first time in this workshop. Students need to demonstrate that they recognise key format points and demonstrate them on screen in a way that would sell the idea successfully to a commissioner.

### **Content, Teaching and Learning methods**

This module is taught in different ways and the practical skills (DV/editing) by a mixture theoretical teaching and practical application. Research and brainstorming through seminar and practice. The students concerned create the content of each pitch. Throughout the module students' meet regularly with the Head of Television, who offers advice and guidance however, this module is all about the students having enough space to be creative.

### **Assessment**

Having completed and having shown the pitch reels to their peers in a seminar, students have a one-to-one meeting with the Head of Television The quality of the

work and the level of communication and collaboration are discussed. We take the opportunity to assess the work up until this point. This meeting forms the basis of the discussion and we use this opportunity to examine the course and how the student is doing.

## **Summer Multi-Camera Module**

### **Students will be placed into Producer & Director teams by the Head of Television**

The aim of this module is for each team to develop several ideas from scratch and pitch them to the Head of Television who will decide which format each team will go into production with. Once green-lit, the teams go on to produce a 25 min entertainment programme to be made in the TV studio.

Student teams will be given a small budget and they will be responsible for casting the performers, organising rehearsals, arranging props and working closely with a professional designer on the overall set design. The technical skills will already have been taught elsewhere in other modules. This is very much about using those skills in a practical way.

As the **producer** in a team the student must:

- research, plan and prepare the show
- prepares/writes presenters' white script
- ensure the team director writes the camera script and camera cards; scripts should be agreed, checked by course tutor and typed up a minimum of 5 days before the shoot
- create the schedule, call sheets, etc.
- distribute all schedules, call sheets and scripts to cast, crew and NFTS staff 5 days prior to shoot
- prepare autocue script for studio – where applicable
- organise, attend and run relevant planning meetings with all key crew members
- liaise with the course co-ordinator to ensure that the correct crew are booked
- submit a budget in line with granted budget and NFTS regulations, and keep the course co-ordinator regularly up to date with work in progress
- source, cast and rehearse cast members
- arrange all rehearsal space and time
- communicate all changes and developments to all NFTS staff, crew and cast
- work with other assigned students as crew
- arrange actors'/musicians' fees in advance
- complete a risk assessment
- in conjunction with the team director, edit and deliver the agreed programme idea on an agreed date
- as a group, review and comment on finished product
- have an individual review session with the Head of Department

As the **director** in a team the student must:

- collaborate closely with the producer in developing the programme idea
- collaborate closely with the production designer
- visualise the show in images and sequences and fully express the idea on screen

- produce a multi-camera script for the show
- produce a studio rehearsal schedule
- attend and fully participate in the Technical Planning Meeting
- assist the producer in generating the required documents for the technical planning meeting
- run the studio days which involves supervising all studio rehearsals and utilise the time to the maximum
- direct the show on time and to the producer's satisfaction
- collaborate with the producer during with off-line edit and the full post production process
- as a group, review and comment on finished product
- have an individual review session with the Head of Department

### **Specific aims**

This whole module is about learning on the job. At this point students are utilising many of the skills that they have learned so far during the course. Whilst professional tutorial back-up is available throughout this period the real aim is to test the ability of the students to budget, script, manage time and people, co-operate, lead and creatively inspire all involved. It is an intensive exercise leading to great personal reward. Experience shows that students learn a huge amount from making these shows.

### **Assessment**

There are two ways in which this module is assessed. At the end of each studio day all the students meet with the Head of Television and other relevant tutors to review how the day went. We discuss as a group what went right and what went wrong. This meeting replicates the post-mortem one would expect after a studio show in the industry. Obviously, the slant is more towards the educational aspects of the exercise. Once the show has been edited and viewed by the students, tutors and other members of staff we have one to one assessments.

### **The 5 O'Clock Show Live Magazine Show Module**

#### **Students will be placed into Producer & Director teams by the Head of Television**

The aim of this module is to give the students the feel and experience of working as a production team on a daily LIVE magazine show. Since the inception of entertainment television magazine shows have been a constant genre. The magazine show contains all the DNA strands of Entertainment Television – celebrity chat, live music, comedy sketches, short film reports, items on fashion, film, studio demonstrations of everything kind from cookery to origami – it's all there. The reality is also that many of our graduating students will cut their professional teeth on such shows.

Once again, the Head of Television will team up the students: those students who produced in the summer will now direct and the director's will now produce. For four consecutive days the 5 O'Clock Show will go LIVE to the NFTS on the internal ring main.

### **Specific aims**

To have students experience the pressure of real television production at real television pace and to test how they operate as a team.

As the **producer** in a team the student must:

- research, plan and prepare the episode
- prepares/writes white script
- create the pre-production schedule, call sheets, etc.
- distribute all schedules, call sheets and scripts to cast, crew and NFTS staff prepare write presenters script
- deliver autocue script to studio engineering department
- deliver all graphic content, stills and VT's to studio engineering
- organise, attend relevant planning meetings team director and with all key crew members
- submit a budget in line with granted budget and NFTS regulations, and keep the course co-ordinator regularly up to date with work in progress
- source, cast and rehearse cast members
- arrange all rehearsal space and time
- communicate all changes and developments to all NFTS staff, crew and cast
- order and purchase stock requirements
- arrange actors'/musicians' fees in advance
- complete a risk assessment
- as a group, review and comment on finished product
- have an individual review session with the Head of Department

As the **director** in a team the student must:

- collaborate closely with the producer on their specific episode
- collaborate closely with the production designer if their episode requires extra design input
- visualise the show in images and sequences and fully express the idea on screen
- produce a multi-camera script for the show, including two music scripts
- produce a studio rehearsal schedule for the day
- collaborate with producer to source all graphics, stills and VT's for their episode
- attend and fully participate in the Technical Planning Meeting
- assist the producer in generating the required documents for the technical planning meeting
- discuss in advance with studio engineering and sound any specific requirements
- run the studio day which involves supervising all studio rehearsals, dress run and utilise the time to the maximum
- get the show on air and off air on time
- as a group, review and comment on finished product
- have an individual review session with the Head of Department

### **Specific aims**

This whole module is about putting into practice all the craft and production skills students have acquired thus far. It is also about working to a brief and using their collective editorial judgement to put together a live show for transmission under the time constraints of production.

Professional tutors will be on hand to operate cameras, floor manage, vision mix and Script Supervise leaving the students to be the show's Production Team. It will be an intensive exercise leading to great personal reward. The show will also be streamed to the internet and a select group of industry professional invited to view and offer their critical comments.

### **Assessment**

Students will be assessed on the quality of the finished work as well as how well they performed in each of the key roles in the production team.

### **The Monologue Workshop**

In this workshop, we collaborate with First Year Screenwriters. The screenwriters are given a strict brief as to what a TV Monologue is and how many words they may write. Each Television student must then interpret the finished scrip they are given, rehearse and direct a monologue as a single continuous multi-camera recording. There will be no editing or post production. Each TV student will be allocated half a day in the TV studio, allowed minimal props, and have to use expressionistic lighting.

### **Specific aims**

Television students will experience the full-on pressure of working with an artist and crew with the aim of producing a finished take in half a day.

TV students will be forced to examine the power of 'the shot' and its meaning in the story telling sequence of this stripped down exercise.

- each TV student will liaise with his or her actor to discuss aspects of the performance prior to the studio day
- each TV student will liaise with his or her lighting cinematography student to discuss lighting style
- on the day of recording each TV student will have two hours to rehearse with their actor whilst the cinematography student lights the performance area
- each TV student will then have one hour to block their camera script with half an hour being set aside for the recording of a single continuous take

### **Assessment**

We will be looking for an understanding of the written monologue and how each individual student interprets it as well as looking for clarity of intention in the script. We will assess creativity and inventiveness. We shall also assess collaborative 'people skills'. How did the student work with the actor and fellow crew members?  
Year Two

Upon returning for the 2<sup>nd</sup> Year the Head of Television will confirm the Producer/Director graduation production teams. These pairings are arrived at by direct consultation with each student and the careful deliberation of the Head of Television utilising awareness of the strengths, weaknesses and aspirations of each student.

### **Brainstorming**

At the beginning of the second year, student teams will start to focus on developing ideas for their graduation show. External industry practitioners will join the students

to help develop embryonic ideas into fully-fledged pitches that student teams will take forward to produce for their final graduation projects.

### **Work Experience (NOT GUARANTEED - subject to COVID-19 restrictions)**

Students will take part in two to four weeks of work experience with an Entertainment production company. Here they will be embedded on an existing programme that is either in production or pre-production or on a development team.

Students must supply the Head of Television with **three work experience suggestions and email contact details either for the Head of Production or Head of HR** by the requested time.

Students are not to engage in negotiations with the proposed target company but are required to complete a CV for use in the application process.

### **Aims**

To match each student with a compatible production company, allowing them to work on television productions in a professional environment.

### **Objectives**

- to introduce the student to a working environment similar to that in which they might find themselves working after graduation
- to get hands-on experience and to make strong industry contacts for the future

### **Graduation Project Development**

Upon returning for the 2<sup>nd</sup> Year, the Head of Television will confirm the Producer/Director graduation production teams. These pairings are arrived at by direct consultation with each student and the careful deliberation of the Head of Television who utilises his awareness of the strengths, weaknesses and aspirations of each student.

Where possible students are matched with their preferred choice partners but this is not guaranteed. **Nor is it guaranteed that each student will work in the entertainment genre of their choice**. The development of graduation show ideas will continue throughout the year and, in addition to the Head of Television, there is additional development support from an outside tutor who will be an experienced Entertainment producer.

### **GREENLIGHT**

A Commissioning Committee will make the final decision as to which grad project each team will go into production with.

### **The Format Garage**

Just how do you create a successful entertainment Format and then rigorously test it out. What is the long, and often, difficult route from idea through development, pitching, budgeting, shooting, post-production and transmission? Experienced development tutor will move the bar up a notch in this workshop on creating and developing TV entertainment ideas.

## **Production Management**

### **Overall aims – learning outcomes**

The role of the production manager is crucial and as the designation suggests it is to manage the production.

This is designed as a refresher course and specifically aims to sharpen up the students' production management skills. The aim is to ensure they have the skills to tackle the budget of their Graduation Production and work with confidence with their assigned PM student.

### **Factual Entertainment Module**

A series of Factual Entertainment producers and directors will give a series of seminars on the genre of Factual Entertainment. Unlike documentary Factual Entertainment must impose a structure on a story. Each scene must be able to deliver the narrative point the producer wants, whilst all the time maintaining spontaneity of reaction and performance from the non-professional contributors – think *The Apprentice* and *Wife Swap*. Students will learn to appreciate how important research is and, above all casting.

## **GRADUATION Green Light Process**

Each **Producer/Director** team will be required to pitch at least three original ideas to the commissioning committee, which is made up of highly experienced TV producers and directors. The committee will select one idea to Green Light for the team to make as a joint graduation production. **The decision of the Commissioning Committee is final.**

## **Format Creation**

Irrespective of who in each team originated the green lit idea, the format will be attributed to both students in the form of a 'Format Created by' credit on the final end roller. This joint ownership will reflect the creative efforts of both the producer & the director across the development, production and post production stages.

Each graduation production will be no longer than 25 minutes long. Student teams have the option of producing a final show either in the multi-camera studio, on location or a mixture of both.

Through each of the following areas, the student teams will be required to fully research, equip and deliver results to the required NFTS standards. The various modules of teaching earlier in the course will directly benefit their work throughout the production process.

- Scripting for final graduation shows
- Castings for inserts and graduation shows
- Planning meetings and rehearsals
- Graduation shoots (studio or location)
- Graduation show edit and dubs
- Screening of graduation shows and other works to Industry professionals

