

**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

high quality 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: Physical and Practical FX –** This short workshop introduces students to some interesting aspects of Special FX employed on a shoot and will include

practical examples and exercises.

**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 and Motion Control**

**Workshop 2a: 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 2b: For Colour - Colour Theory and Grading Techniques**

**Workshop 3: For Colour - HD Online Editing – Avid – Editing within the AVID**

**editing application.**

**Workshop 4: For Colour – Finishing –** 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. Colour students will have the chance to grade and finish a variety of films and/or TV shows.