

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.

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 fill different roles and undertake a variety of 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.

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.

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 3-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.

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 idea 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 5 O'Clock Show Live Magazine Show Module

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. 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.

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.

Year Two

Upon returning for the 2nd 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.

Graduation Project Development

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.

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

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 Fact 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.

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.

Dissertation

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