



NATIONAL
FILM AND
TELEVISION
SCHOOL

Course Outline: Hair and Make Up For Film and Television (MA) - 1-Year Full-Time

The MA Hair and Make Up is a specialist pathway within the MA in Film, Television and Games at the National Film and Television School (NFTS). It is a one-year, full-time, in-person Master's degree designed for experienced practitioners who already possess junior-level hair and make up skills and are ready to advance into leadership, supervisory and design roles within contemporary film and high-end television production.

This is not a beginner's course. You are expected to arrive with existing technical competence in core hair and make up practice. The MA builds from that foundation to develop you into a confident, critically engaged and production-literate practitioner capable of operating as a Make Up Artist, Supervisor or Designer within complex screen environments.

The course is rooted in professional screen practice. You will work intensively within the NFTS production ecosystem, collaborating with directors, producers, cinematographers, production designers and performers on live film projects that mirror industry structures, pressures and expectations. Throughout the year, you will refine advanced craft skills while developing leadership capability, financial literacy, collaborative authority and reflective professional judgement.

Hair and Make Up departments today require far more than technical execution. Designers and Supervisors must interpret scripts strategically, manage continuity across extended schedules, plan and monitor budgets, supervise assistants, negotiate with directors and producers, and work confidently with wigs, prosthetics and specialist materials. This course develops those capacities through progressive production responsibility, independent projects and critical reflection.

Across the year, you move from advanced consolidation into independent and leadership-focused production roles. Alongside this, you build a substantial Master's Portfolio, evidencing your creative, intellectual and professional development and preparing you for sustainable careers in the screen industries.

Workshop 1: Fundamentals

The course begins with an intensive four-week Fundamentals workshop that establishes a shared professional and conceptual baseline across the cohort. This workshop consolidates and extends your existing junior-level skills into advanced, screen-ready practice. Working from a provided script extract, you design, test and critically evaluate Hair and Make Up concepts for three distinct characters. The emphasis is not simply on producing a polished “look,” but on demonstrating professional process: script breakdown, contextual research, visual development, practical testing, hygiene protocols, risk awareness and reflective evaluation. You will engage in specialist sessions across hairstyling, media make up, wigs and introductory prosthetics, alongside workshops in leadership, production etiquette and department organisation. You are expected to justify creative decisions in relation to narrative, historical and cultural context, performance and production feasibility. By the end of the workshop, you will demonstrate confidence in script-to-screen translation and readiness to operate within collaborative production environments at Master’s level.

Module 1: Take One Painting

Take One Painting places you into a fully collaborative, cross-department production context early in the course. Working with Production Design, Cinematography and other disciplines, you reinterpret a historical painting as a cinematic scene. Your role is to translate painterly detail into three-dimensional, screen-ready Hair and Make Up design. You research historical, cultural and aesthetic contexts, analysing how hair, grooming, texture and surface operate within the artwork, and how these elements must be adapted for camera, lighting and performance. Through iterative development, you produce design materials such as face charts, hair layouts, mood boards and test work. You participate in lighting and camera tests and contribute to on-set decision-making, ensuring integration with costume, set and performance. Assessment focuses on design thinking, collaboration and professional process. This module strengthens your ability to interpret visual sources critically and operate as a design collaborator within a professional screen workflow.

Module 2: Without Words

Without Words marks your progression into a live short fiction production. Working within an NFTS fiction production, you collaborate with Directing Fiction, Cinematography, Producing and other departments in a functioning production environment. On at least one film, you act as lead within Hair and Make Up, taking responsibility for script interpretation, character identity, continuity planning and on-set delivery. On at least one film, you work as Hair and Make Up assistant, developing supervisory awareness and departmental fluency. The project emphasises visual storytelling and characterisation without reliance on dialogue. You are required to justify creative and technical decisions in relation to narrative, lighting, performance, schedule and budget. Assessment centres on your professional working process: research, preparation, continuity systems, communication and adaptability under pressure. You are expected to operate with increasing independence and to document your development for integration into the Master’s Portfolio.

Module 3: Grad Fiction Film

The Grad Fiction Film represents the point at which training and professional practice converge. Working on a graduation project alongside second-year Directing Fiction students, you operate as an emerging Head of Department on one film, and as Hair and Make Up assistant on another film. As Hair and Make Up Head of Department, you lead Hair and Make Up design across pre-production and shoot, undertaking advanced script analysis, character arc planning, budgeting, scheduling, departmental organisation and strategic decision-making. Supervision is minimal; you are expected to sustain professional standards independently. You collaborate fluently with Costume, Production Design, Camera and Production teams, balancing creative ambition against financial and logistical constraint. A comprehensive departmental cost report forms part of the assessment, evidencing financial planning, budget tracking, variance analysis and reflective evaluation of leadership decisions. This module consolidates your readiness to function as a Designer or Supervisor within professional-scale film and television production.

Module 4: First Year Film

In First Year Film, you operate as a senior practitioner within a fast-paced production led by first-year Directing Fiction students. You lead on one project and assist on others, modelling professional standards and mentoring less experienced crew. The emphasis here is supported leadership. You manage departmental preparation, continuity systems, scheduling and budgeting while guiding collaborators in professional etiquette, inclusive practice and effective communication. You are expected to deliver high-quality design at pace, respond confidently to last-minute challenges and sustain resilience under production pressure. As in the Grad Fiction Film, financial planning and cost reporting form part of your departmental responsibility. This module consolidates your identity as a confident Make Up Artist or emerging Designer capable of leading and supervising within diverse production contexts.

Module 5: Preparing for Industry

Preparing for Industry focuses on your transition from postgraduate study into professional practice. Drawing together evidence from across the MA, you articulate a coherent professional identity aligned with your intended pathway, whether as Assistant, Artist, Supervisor or Designer. You produce an industry-standard CV, curated portfolio or showreel, and a structured career development plan. You present your work to an invited industry panel, responding to critique with professional clarity and composure. Workshops explore departmental hierarchies, freelance realities, budgeting awareness, wellbeing, sustainable working practices and continuing professional development. The module emphasises agency, realism and strategic thinking, enabling you to graduate with both creative authority and professional preparedness.

Module 6: Make Up Projects (Full-Year Module)

Running across the entire academic year, Make Up Projects is a longitudinal, independent practice module. You select ten fictional scenario briefs from a curated deck, each simulating a professional commission across varied genres, periods and production contexts. Each scenario results in a fully realised Hair and Make Up project, including script interpretation, research, design development, practical realisation, budget breakdown and reflective evaluation. Across the ten projects, you demonstrate range, technical advancement and increasing complexity, including wigs, ageing, prosthetics, transformation and genre variation. This module demands autonomy, discipline and sustained creative inquiry. It generates substantial material for both your professional portfolio and your Master's Portfolio, evidencing design leadership, budgeting awareness and reflective growth at Level 7.

Module 7: Master's Portfolio

Running throughout the course, the Master's Portfolio is a critical, reflective document equivalent to 5,000–7,000 words. The Master's Portfolio is not simply a record of work produced. It is a sustained critical examination of your creative development, professional identity and intellectual engagement with key themes such as representation, sustainability, ethics, technological change and collaboration. You integrate production evidence, research, practitioner insight and theoretical reflection, demonstrating your ability to synthesise theory and practice at master's level. The Master's Portfolio is submitted prior to your final Progress Review and serves as both academic assessment and professional articulation of your readiness to operate as a Make Up Artist, Supervisor or Designer within the screen industries.