

Course outline: MA in Production Management for Film and Television

The MA in Production Management for Film and Television is a specialisation within the broader **MA in Film, Television and Games**.

As a student on the 13-month Masters course you will gain skills, knowledge and experience to become highly employable in the Production Management department within the film and television industries.

You will primarily learn through a mix of seminars and workshops delivered by key industry experts and personal practical experience on a variety of productions.

Productions include scripted dramas, animations, commercials and documentaries, where you will experience working as Production Assistant and Production Coordinator on the initial productions, then as your skills develop stepping up to Production Manager, all whilst collaborating with other NFTS specialisms. It is expected that you will contribute to the production management of up to ten productions through the duration of your course, with all production costs met by the School.

The emphasis will be very much on the practical application of these competencies and is enhanced by the opportunities to embed this learning in valuable work experience that will form a solid part of your CV and prepare you for the job market before graduation.

Course Elements

The course consists of a logical progression of classes, practical workshops, modules and practical film making, taught and overseen by industry professionals run over three terms starting in September each year. This is a full-time course, where students are expected to be at NFTS daily, Monday to Friday from 9.30am until 5.30pm, with longer working days and weekend work during production periods.

Your performance on the course will be monitored throughout, specifically across Assessed Modules – these are a mixture of classroom-based taught modules and practical film making modules, outlined below.

Modules

The following NFTS modules are mandatory except where indicated by the Head of Department.

Term One

During the first term you will work on a short fiction film, a documentary film and a commercial, from pre-production through to post-production, as your main assessed productions. You will also assist in the production support of an animation film to broaden your experience further.

First Year Film (assessed module)

This is a practical film making exercise working in full teams to produce a 15-minute short fiction film. Each film will have two PM students, working in two roles as Production Coordinator and Production Assistant, reporting to the Producer who is responsible for the production and manages the production

team. You will gain experience of pre-production, production and wrap working collaboratively to deliver a short film which is shot on 16mm film within four days, either at the NFTS Studio or on location.

This module will allow you to gain experience in a single camera scripted drama environment and to develop a critical awareness of the PC and PA's roles in the context of the wider crew. You will develop your logistical, organizational, and planning skills, whilst communicating well with the Producer and wider crew.

Documentary Question Film (assessed module)

This is a collaborative film making module with the Documentary Directors which begins with the Director identifying a question about something that intrigues them. The short film (approx. 20 minutes) will be their attempt to arrive at an answer.

You will join the Directors in the later stages of research and provide production support throughout pre-production, production, and across post-production, working as Production Manager or Production Coordinator. Sometimes you may support with researching ideas and possible contributors, and so this is a good opportunity for you to work closely with Directors and see the creative challenges at first hand.

The documentary may be shot in the UK (sometimes overseas) across multiple locations filmed over a three-week period. You will develop logistical planning and communication skills, as well as duty of care, legal and compliance knowledge and budget management skills.

Commercials (assessed module)

This module will allow you to gain experience of arranging and implementing the logistics of a one-day commercial shoot, working to a tight budget, firm deadlines and under the pressure of a fast-paced pre-production and green light process.

You will work collaboratively with a Director, Assistant Director and a Cinematographer, as well as other students and volunteer crew, and have the opportunity to get close to the creative processes from early pre-production, casting, locations, managing a team, managing the commercial through to post production and delivery.

You are expected to develop an understanding of the role of the PM within a commercial production, and to demonstrate your logistical, organisational and planning skills to execute a successful production whilst adhering to schedule and budget requirements. You will typically share responsibility and jointly manage the production with another PM student, working together from early pre-production through to delivery.

Terms One and Two

Budgeting & Scheduling (assessed module)

This module incorporates two practical workshops based on the Production Manager's main area of responsibility, the budget, and how it is intricately linked with the schedule.

The first workshop starts with breaking down a short film script provided by the tutor, the resources required to make the film are then scheduled using Movie Magic Scheduling software. Next you will prepare a budget created on Movie Magic Budgeting software, using a set of parameters and assumptions typical for short films produced at NFTS and in the industry.

You will use these key skills on future NFTS filming modules and productions as you gain further experience budgeting on these NFTS productions.

The final workshop is delivered by a professional Line Producer, Production Manager or Producer, and focuses on a larger scale production, as a case study. You will look in more detail at a complex, or longer-form budget, and the industry practices and processes involved in budgeting at this level.

This module will allow you to develop your skills in successfully budgeting and scheduling a short film within specified parameters, and to understand how to apply those skills to real-world industry situations and longer form production after the course.

You will be provided with software licenses and training for the professional standard Movie Magic Budgeting and Scheduling software used.

Term Two

Digi Fiction Film (assessed module)

You will production manage a 15-minute scripted film, shot within four days on a digital format, the team are encouraged to push film language and creative boundaries. You will be paired up with another PM student to form a production team, and be jointly responsible for the physical production on these films. You should manage the pre-production and production process and be in control of cost reporting throughout, attention will be paid to the wrapping of floats and preparation of an accurate cost report.

This module has been designed to allow students to take full responsibility for the Production Management of a fiction film. You will work collaboratively with a Director, Producer and a Cinematographer, a fantastic opportunity to get close to the creative processes from early pre-production, casting, locations, managing a team, managing the film through to post production and delivery.

You are expected to develop a deep understanding of the role of the PM within the fiction genre, and to demonstrate logistical, organization, communication and planning skills to execute a successful production whilst adhering to schedule and budget requirements.

Terms Two and Three

Graduation Production Slate (assessed module)

This module will see you work as Production Manager (PM) and/or Production Coordinator (PC) on a number of Graduation Productions forming your individual Graduation Production slate.

Your Graduation Production slate will be made up of a number of significant productions from different genres, typically formed of Fiction, Commercials, Documentary, Science and Natural History and Animation films. You will decide your productions and roles with consultation and approval from the Head of Department, before assembling and executing the productions.

You will have a specific schedule determined by the shooting dates and will be expected to work across multiple productions simultaneously - often wrapping one, whilst another is in pre-production. You must contribute to all phases of production from pre-production, shoot, post-production - including budget and scheduling, greenlight meetings, production safety planning, sustainability, wrap and delivery paperwork.

This is a collaborative module with students across many disciplines, including Producing, Directing,

Assistant Directing, Screenwriting, Cinematography, Assistant Camera, Production Design, Location Sound Recording and post-production courses, in which a short film or commercial is produced and delivered within strict parameters.

Productions include:

- Documentary Graduation Film (Terms 2 & 3, part time over 12 weeks)
- Science & Natural History Graduation Film (Terms 2 & 3, part time over 15 weeks)
- Fiction Graduation Film (Term 3, 5 weeks prep, 6 days shoot, plus wrap)
- Animation Graduation Film (Terms 2 & 3, part time from March until September)
- Commercial (Term 2 & 3, part time over April & May)

Workshops

Alongside and in between Modules and practical film making, there are a number of workshops and seminars including:

Induction and Introduction to Production Management (Term 1)

A series of seminars and practical workshops form an introduction to the School, to the Production Manager's role, the roles within the production department, as well as other heads of department within film and television. Compulsory training in First Aid and Health & Safety prepares students for the practical productions ahead. These introduction workshops and seminars provide many opportunities to meet tutors and students from across the school in preparation for the TV, film and documentary productions in Term One. As paperwork and logistical planning form a large part of production management, a number of seminars and workshops are provided to prepare you for the productions.

Practical workshops delivered alongside the Assistant Directors & Floor Managers, Script Supervisors, and Sounds Recordists, focus on set protocol on a drama set. You rotate through the various departments of a film set and gain hands on experience working in a variety of different roles e.g. boom operator, camera assistant and gaffer.

A similar workshop in the TV Studio provides you with practical experience of a multi-camera television show, with hands-on training in the professional standard TV Gallery and on the studio floor.

Health & Safety (Term 1 & 2)

During the Introduction workshops, you will complete the Mark Milsome Foundation 'Production Health & Safety' course, and have training to use the NFTS Risk Assessment software 'RiskPal'.

In addition to this, you will also be trained to assess production risks and implement suitable and sufficient risk management strategies and risk assessments, as part of the practical productions throughout the course and you are assessed on the H&S plans and Risk Assessments.

You are expected to adhere to the NFTS Health & Safety Policy at all times and implement this into your production H&S strategy. A further one-day workshop introduces the practical requirements of H&S for overseas filming using case studies and exercises.

An important part of the course is a one-day First Aid training programme, which will provide you with the 'Emergency First Aid Responder' qualification.

Television Workshop (Term 1 & 2)

This workshop offers you practical insights into working as a Production Manager in a television context. It consists of classroom sessions and practical exercises.

A two-day classroom-based seminar will introduce you to the world of unscripted TV. Specifically, how a show translates from idea to screen, including the commissioning process, pre-production, the shoot, wrap, post-production and delivery to a broadcaster. Case studies and real-world examples provide a clear understanding of the paperwork typically used, the roles within the production department, and how they interact with the other departments to plan a successful show.

A one-day practical workshop following the classroom sessions will introduce students to unscripted TV shows recorded in the NFTS 4K multicamera TV studio and gallery. This will provide familiarisation to the studio and gallery environment and an opportunity to experience various production roles in both spaces in a practical and hands-on way. Students will gain an overview of the processes, systems and technology involved in producing a multi-camera show and how a studio shoot runs.

Sustainable Productions (Terms 1, 2, 3)

The NFTS is one of the founding partners of the BAFTA albert Education Partnership and is committed to developing and implementing sustainable production methods.

The Applied Skills for a Sustainable Screen Industry module includes: the science and global impact of climate change; an overview on international, national and industry action; sustainable production solutions; creating content with a strategic environmental purpose; use of the industry standard Albert carbon footprint tool.

You will be expected to develop your sustainable production knowledge and implement this through the productions you manage on the course, with your Albert carbon calculations forming part of the Albert Certification process, a requirement for many of our productions at NFTS and closely following industry practice.

Post Production & Delivery (Terms 2 & 3)

A detailed multi-day workshop on post production routes for film and television from editing through to delivery. Using practical exercises and case studies, the tutors will introduce you to budgeting and scheduling for post-production and the delivery requirements for professional productions.

Opportunities are available for you to attend edits and other post-production elements from Digi Fiction films and documentary films), and there is a half day workshop in the Sound Dubbing Theatre to embed a creative understanding of the workflow and processes of post.

Rights, copyright, clearances, legal requirements and Duty of Care (Terms 1, 2, 3)

This is a multi-day workshop delivered as individual seminars across the year by industry experts and lawyers, designed to cover the key aspects of copyright, music licensing, archive, union agreements and contracts for crew and cast. The important considerations of Duty of Care for cast, contributors and crew are covered using case studies and augmented by tutors overseeing the practical film making throughout the course.

Other Components of the MA

Meet the Industry

You will meet numerous professionals, visiting tutors, alumni and lecturers from a wide range of industry backgrounds throughout the course during workshops, seminars, visits and on productions.

Where possible, case studies and specific meetings are used to ground your learning in an industry context. Workshops covering networking, how to get a job in production, interview training and CV preparation, and how to work as a freelancer, prepare you for work in the industry.

Optional Productions

In addition to the productions that are mandatory during the year, there are often many opportunities to work on additional student projects, including Games. PM students are encouraged to do so when time permits and with the Head of Production Management's consent.

Work Experience

Each student should aim to broaden their industry network and undertake some work experience during the course, or if the schedule does not allow then this can be done at the end of the course and will form part of the exit procedure. Suitable work experience should test the skills and capabilities you have gained whilst on the course.

By the Final Progress Review you should normally have completed approximately 5 days or more of relevant work experience. This is not formally assessed but you will be asked to outline your learning and self-reflection in your Personal Development Plan as part of the Final Progress Review.

Master's Portfolio

Running throughout the course, the Master's Portfolio is a critical, reflective document. 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 should 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 within Production Management and the screen industries.