

Course outline: Producing

The MA in Producing is a specialisation within the broader **MA in Film and Television**.

Year One

During the first year of the course Producing students are given grounding in both the creative development process and the many other practical aspects of the role of a Producer. The First Year Film gives the producers the opportunity to put their learning into practice, working with all the other relevant specialisations.

The first year contains four assessed modules (as well as a wealth of other exercises and workshops). The four assessed modules are:

1. **First Year Film***

This **module**, running through the first year, consists of the development, budgeting, scheduling, production, post-production, editing and delivery of a 7-10 minute fiction film, which is shot and edited during the autumn term. The shooting period is four days in duration. Scripts will be developed by the producers and directors, and writers where relevant, (but working in conjunction with cinematography, production design and sound). The composers provide the music and the films are edited and mixed by the end of the year. The module introduces students to the full range of requirements of creative development and team leadership, seeing a film through from inception to delivery (although post- production does not allow for ADR or pick-ups in this module). It teaches students the different methods of editing, introduces them to sound post-production and mixing, and the requirements for completion and delivery of a film to include printing from negative and DPP.

2. **Development Skills***

This **module** spans across the two years, though most of the structured teaching is in the first year. Students will be introduced to the methodology of script and film analysis, with continuous practical experience of writing treatments, script coverage and script notes for writers in order to develop their skills in creative development, together with script to screen case studies, and an introduction to development practice within the industry with active development producers. They will also gain an understanding of option and writers agreements, and development budgets.

At the beginning of the course, each student will be required to find a book or other source material that is suitable for adaptation to film or television drama, and during the first term they will write a film/TV treatment from this material. They will then either continue to develop this project, if they can secure the rights, or find another original idea or adaptation to pursue further so that they will have at least one project in development when they leave the school. Tutorial support will be given during the process, but it is the student's responsibility to research and read widely to find their project. The chosen project will normally form the basis for the Business exam dossier in the final term.

Towards the end of the year, students will build on these skills with the 'Business of Development' classes during which they will hone their abilities to analyse scripts for different areas of the industry – from notes for writers, coverage for producers to assessing material for sales and distribution acquisitions execs.

3. Scheduling and Budgeting on Movie Magic*

This two-part **module** takes the students through the thinking behind and practical execution of creating a schedule and budget for a feature film. In the scheduling module they will learn how to break down a script, become aware of and understand how to solve the creative and practical problems which have to be dealt with when scheduling a feature film or television programme, and create their own schedule using the Movie Magic programme. The budgeting module then takes them through the different areas of the budget, guiding through the planning and thinking process, and how to approach the crewing, union agreements, cast, post production, delivery and all other requirements of the budgeting of a feature film. The students will put this into practice by budgeting their previously completed schedule.

4. Television Drama (Cross-specialisation module with Writers) *

This **module** aims to give the student producers the understanding and experience of the principles and practice of developing TV serials within current TV commissioning parameters. They will work with writing students to create an original proposal for a viable TV series, together with episode outline, which is then presented to, and assessed by, external tutors including TV commissioning executives.

Alongside and in between these modules the range of workshops and seminars includes:

“Springboard” Cross Specialisation Introductory Workshops (duration - 1 week)

- an introduction to film and television, looking at cinematic language 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 relate to the way filmmaking puts across narrative ideas

Making a Film

This workshop takes the students through all the stages of making a film, from development through to completion, using short film scripts which the students will adapt from existing material. One of these scripts will be filmed, with a professional director but crew roles taken by the students. The workshop covers production design, cinematography, location management; crew structure and roles; casting; editing, sound recording and sound design, and delivery, with the students gaining both theoretical and practical experience, and an understanding of the producer's role at each stage.

Digi Fiction

The producers will play a consultative and supervisory producing role on the director lead project strand, which was previously known as 'Expanded Cinema'. This allows them to occupy a role similar to that of an industry executive (development executive during development; production finance executive, akin to a completion bond executive, during pre-production and commissioning executive role during post-production commenting on the edit). This project is shot under specific constraints and is supported by production management students. It is not intended that the producers should themselves become involved in the line production of the film, which is limited in length to 15 minutes in final running time. In return for their consultative and executive work, the producers will receive an executive producing credit on the film.

Animation Techniques & Development

Several seminars and workshops over the year will give the students a conceptual and practical introduction to the techniques in animation, and the different story forms and ways of developing animation ideas. Most of these will be in collaboration with animation directors, with an opportunity also for the producers themselves try their hand at animation.

Health & Safety (duration – 1 x day, plus written work and risk assessments)

Aim

To give students a knowledge of the basic principles of Health and Safety in the film and television industry.

Learning Outcomes

By the end of the module students should:

- be able to accurately assess health and safety risks
- be able to complete risk assessments and a safetyreport on their First and Second year films.

Ideas and Storytelling Workshop

During the spring, producers, directors and writers attend a joint residential workshop focussing on collaborative storytelling, followed by further idea/story workshops leading to the development of the First Year Film.

Management and Leadership Workshops

A number of workshops and seminars spread over the 2 years, with aim of equipping the producers with the knowledge and personal understanding to function effectively as team leaders, managers and entrepreneurs.

Music Management Workshop

This workshop introduces students to the principles and practise of music composition for film and TV, and to the legalities and agencies involved in music copyright and royalty collection.

Interactive Games Workshop

Led by the Games department, this is a collaborative workshop, with games designers, writers, production designers, VFX and sound. The aim of this workshop is to create and realise a convincing short interactive drama sequence where the player's interactions determine what happens to the character(s) in the scene.

Year Two

During the second year, producing students undertake (and in the case of Dissertation, complete) three modules. The three modules are:

1. Producing one animation and one fiction graduation film (together – The 2nd Year Production Module).

This module comprises the making of two films – a live action project (Summer Fiction Film) and an animated film (Animation Film).

Summer Fiction Film

(Cross Specialisation Module with Fiction Direction, Screenwriting, Cinematography, Sound, Design, Editing, Music, Production Management)

This provides for students to develop, budget, cast, shoot, edit, mix and deliver a professional standard fiction film of not less than 15 minutes. The process includes development over 15 weeks, commencing at the beginning of Second Year followed by 5 weeks' pre-production, 7-8 days shooting, 5 weeks editing and 5 days mixing). This exercise includes full post-production including VFX, ADR, pick-ups (where required), full sound mix to industry standard, and complete delivery (including licensing in of external material, clearances, etc.).

Animation Film

(Duration: development commences at end of first year and production runs throughout second year. Cross Specialisation Module with Animation Directors, Screenwriting, Cinematography, Production Design, Sound, Editing & Music)

This provides for students to develop, budget, cast, shoot edit mix and deliver a professional standard animation film and concludes with full delivery. It trains students in the use of various animation techniques, and commences with script develop and animatic proposal for approval.

2. The Business of Film and Television

In this year the students also undertake and complete a comprehensive Business of Film and Television module, which comprises eight inter-related study segments which conclude with the delivery of a Business and Marketing dossier at the end of the year. The assessment of this takes place at the very end of the 2nd year with a viva. This module gives students a grounding in all aspects of the financing, sale, legal process, marketing, international launch and distribution of film, and of high end television drama, including up-to-date analysis of current market and financing conditions, and the practical and negotiation skills required to make an internationally distributed feature film/TV series. The module is assessed on the basis of students' coursework notes and their final Business and Marketing Dossier at the end of the year.

This comprises the following eight components:

a) Industry research: *the 'career directories'*.

This comprises four pieces of research, staged over eight months, and encourages students to build tools for their future career (and future recruitment). Working singly or in pairs the students create a detailed directory (with editorial background and commentary) of Talent Agents UK and USA (January); of Sales Agents (March); of Film Production Companies UK (June); and of Television Production Companies UK (August).

b) The Pre-Cannes 'Atelier' - with students from Le Femis (France)/Ludwigsburg Film Akademie (Germany -- (duration - 2 weeks))

This two-week workshop puts the producing students together with their peer group from the French and German schools and includes extensive seminars on film finance, international sales, co-production, licensing and contracting and prepares students for their Cannes Film Festival work experience opportunity (see c) below).

c) The Territory Analysis Project

Each student researches and prepares a detailed dossier on an individual territory – trying to summarise all aspects of that territory's film business ecology – from box office and audience taste through to key production financiers, fiscal incentives and subsidy systems and the distribution landscape for its output. Each student then presents their dossier at a day-long seminar chaired by a senior figure from the industry, in a group format, prior to their Cannes immersion (see 3 below).

d) Cannes Film Festival Immersion (duration – 5-7 days according to availability and work experience requirements)

Places students as 'shadows' in Cannes to active members of the film industry in order that they can

see/experience first-hand the entrepreneurial side of making films and witness the business of buying and selling, marketing and distribution first hand in a live festival/market context. Followed by extensive de-brief and discussion of learnings as a group

e) Film Finance, Film Business Plans, Co-Production and Film Market Seminars

This extensive 9-week long series of seminars and tutorials, which occupies most of the autumn schedule in Year 2, introduces students to all aspects of the financial and business process of independent film financing, including: the requirements of financiers; the role of sales estimates; calculation of recoupment; likely sales outcomes; the methodology of co-production the use of the European Convention and bi- lateral treaties, collection and banking issues that arise in the financing of films.

The series includes recent case histories, with finance and sales outcomes broken down case-by-case. It teaches the value chain, and gives a basic understanding of how royalty deals at territorial level feed into international recoupment 'waterfalls'.

f) The Business of Television Drama

A bespoke two-week workshop within the autumn schedule of Year 2 (see e, directly above) which introduces students specifically to the TV Drama landscape, including an analysis of schedules and commissioning tastes and output for each cornerstone broadcaster / pay TV / VoD company. This covers the full pathway of high-end drama from development through commissioning, multi-party financing, and international licensing and rights distribution. Contributors include a wide range of current executives and producers across the broadcast drama industry.

g) The Legal Process around film development, Director, Writer and Actor Contracts (duration: 2 – 3 days)

Trains students in how to understand and manage all the main development & production, sales and distribution contracts which a producer has to negotiate in the course of setting up a film, including options, insurances, banking requirements, etc.

h) Business and Management Skills (multiple seminars spread over one term)

Introduces students to:

- setting up and running a production company
- tools of business analysis / commercial history and current landscape of the industry
- finance plans
- SWOT analysis
- negotiation skills

This includes a day of study with Shipleys (accountants).

The eight segments of the Business of Film & Television module (see a)-h) above) feed into and underpin the Business of Film Exam/Dossier at the end of the year, in which students present (for

final module assessment) a proposal for the underlying rights, finance, marketing, presentation, and launch of a feature film internationally (to include a worked example of the film as an international co-production). This is normally (but not always) modelled on producer students' own development project, and students must pass a viva on the dossier to a panel of tutors and an external industry expert.

3. Producing Dissertation/Research Project

During the year (and for completion by 7th May), the students also complete their Dissertation module (the outline of which dissertation is delivered at the end of Year 1).

As part of the work necessary to qualify for an MA, each student is required to produce an independent research project/dissertation. This runs from January of the 1st Year to May of the 2nd Year. Following discussions with the Head of Producing Department and Screen Arts tutors in the first half of 1st year, students deliver 500-word outline proposal by 22nd June of the 1st year; 2000-word detailed proposal and structure by 9th November of 1st Year (students may not progress into 2nd year if they fail to deliver this). Full draft dissertation (including sources and bibliography) must be delivered by 27th April of 2nd Year and following discussion with tutors, final version of dissertation by 26th May of 2nd Year.

The aim should be to undertake original research of an investigative nature, which extends the boundaries of specialist knowledge within particular areas of producing.

The dissertation may encompass any aspect of producing, but should focus primarily on the aesthetic and creative aspects of films and filmmaking, rather than the business or practical sides of production. Students are advised to use the dissertation to help explore and develop their own interests and identities as creative film producers.

More specific areas might include:

- detailed history of a project with an analysis of crucial production choices and their relation to the creative process
- examination of the career and experience of a producer, with a critical analysis of the body of films he/she has produced

Additionally, during the second year they continue to develop their own projects and have a series of seminars with industry specialists both in film and television.

Publicity & Marketing

Student producers will be taught how to understand and engage with the tools and requirements of publicity for marketing across all media; how to plan the film or TV programme's "identity" and in collaboration with their creative team and their fellow Marketing MA students develop its logo style, poster image and the marketing and publicity strategy. This will be put into practice through the creation of a press pack for the Grad Projects.

Meet The Industry

This consists of a series of meetings with industry figures at the end of Year 2, including sales agents, financiers, producers, and talent agents in their place of work, to prepare students for their onward path into the industry.