

Course outline: Diploma in Assistant Directing and Floor Managing

This unique 13-month Diploma course aims to give you the skills, experiences and capabilities for a successful future career as a First, Second, Third Assistant Director and/or Floor Manager and Assistant Floor Manager. It is delivered in partnership with the BBC Academy.

Being an Assistant Director or Floor Manager is a demanding role that requires a level head, self-confidence and strong communication skills to ensure a production is delivered successfully. As part of the AD and FM team, you will be responsible for the efficient operation of the shooting set / television studio, serving as a liaison between the crew and creatives on set and assisting / facilitating the director's vision.

The course represents a steady progression beginning with basic production skills and ending with you undertaking a key role on a graduation fiction, and / or television project. At each stage additional skills are added through specific workshops (e.g. Scheduling, Working with Supporting Artistes, Negotiating Difficult Situations, etc.) to provide a comprehensive education that is of great value in understanding and communicating with other industry professionals.

You will primarily learn through the personal, practical experience of working on a series of varied film and TV productions. Each production cycle is monitored and assessed, your own reflection and feedback is sought and tutor feedback is given to you in individual tutorials.

The course teaches role-specific, industry-recognised skills and techniques used by Assistant Directors and Floor Managers of all grades – from how to read a script and identify the key elements within each scene to creating breakdown sheets and the principles of scheduling. There are also many workshops which extend classroom learning, including understanding the roles of other film departments, working with cast and supporting artistes and applying health & safety in real-world scenarios. Experience is then further developed by working closely with professional assistant directors on set and tutorials with other industry professionals.

Course Elements

The course consists of a logical progression of classes, practical workshops and modules, taught and overseen by industry professionals run over three terms starting in September each year. Teaching usually takes place from Monday to Friday from 9.30am until 5.30pm each week. It combines practical experience on fiction films, commercials and TV Entertainment shows, augmented by workshops, seminars and other industry-specific learning. You will collaborate with those working in other specialisms at the School to make films and TV entertainment shows. All production costs are met by the School.

Knowledge is imparted and experience gained through workshops and production experience. Further key training is given in Health & Safety (the Production Safety Passport) and First Aid. 10 days' work experience in a professional environment is encouraged and supported where possible. You will also be offered training sessions on working as a Freelancer and furthering your career.

You will compile a personal folder (part of your Graduation Portfolio) of written work submitted during the course and your final assessment will be based on this as well as your performance in your Progress Reviews.

Induction and Introduction to Assistant Directing and Floor Managing (Term 1)

The first few weeks of the Course will be dedicated to introducing you to the varied roles on NFTS productions, to the role of Assistant Directors and the preparation needed for your first practical module, First Year Film, which starts mid-September. This period will also include your formal First Aid and Health & Safety training. Introduction work for Floor Managing and the first FM module (Five O'Clock Show) will commence in late-October.

Core Modules and Workshops

There are 8 core modules that you will study and work on over the three terms whilst at the School. More information about what you will learn on each module is provided in the Module Brief for that individual module. Included as part of these core modules, or as a supplement to them, are a number of core workshops.

Modules

Term One

- First Year Film
- Scheduling
- The 5 O'Clock Show

Term Two

- Digi Fiction
- Graduation Portfolio

Term Three

- Beyond Time (TBC)
- Summer Multi-Camera Module (subject to availability)
- Grad Fiction Films

Workshops

- Breaking down a script and developing a shooting schedule;
- Interpreting the Scene;
- How to use relevant industry software (e.g. Movie Magic Scheduling and Final Draft);
- The impact of budget, cast availability and script coverage on the shooting schedule;
- Leading a technical recce;
- Set and Studio Floor protocols and etiquette;
- Liaising with the production office to create call sheets, movement orders, and other production paperwork;
- Managing a set or studio floor with confidence during a shoot;
- Managing talent;
- Technical Familiarity Workshops – sound recording, cinematography, lighting, VFX;
- Health and Safety Training (Production Safety Passport) incl. Risk Assessments and Method Statements.
- First Aid Training

Production Experience (subject to availability/opportunity)

You will have the opportunity to work on several film or television projects, including at least one Graduation project. Decisions about which projects are assigned are on a negotiation-basis between the tutor and students and are also dependent on the timing of productions and their requirements. These include:

- First Year Fiction Film
- Sky Studio Productions - TBC
- 5 O'Clock Show (simulated live TV show)
- Commercials - depending on availability.
- Digi Fiction Film
- Interpreting the Scene
- Beyond Time
- Summer Multi-camera Show - depending on availability.
- Graduation Fiction Film
- TV Graduation Project

Each student's Graduation portfolio is made up of working on several significant productions in various Assistant Directing / Floor Managing roles.

By the end of the course, you will have evidence of work in:

- pre-production paperwork;
- practical experience on a set and in a TV studio, including managing crew;
- production logistics (e.g. overseeing locations, movement orders etc.);
- producing production schedules.

Other Components of the Diploma

Optional Productions

In addition to the productions that are mandatory during the year, there are often many opportunities to work on additional student and external projects and you are encouraged to do so when time permits with the Head of Department's consent.

Health and Safety for Assistant Directors and Floor Managers

Health and Safety (H&S) is an integral part of technical workshops and production. All training is in line with the industry recognised Production Safety Passport scheme and delivered by a specialist member of School staff and the Mark Milsome Foundation.

Business Skills for Freelancers

A series of Business Skills seminars, including CV preparation, interview training and working as a freelancer are delivered as part of the Diploma in preparation for future work in film and TV production.

Work Experience

We encourage you to complete ten days of external / professional work experience, although it is not mandatory. All work experience should test the skills and capabilities you have gained whilst on the course.

You will be given tutorials on how to find work experience and some initial contacts to start the process. Further tutorials are given to support this process as required. This assessment is added to the information given to the Industry Reviewer and forms part of the discussion at your Final Review.