

Course Outline: Directing & Producing Television Entertainment

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

In recent years, the course has evolved to include a range of popular unscripted television forms – from pure Entertainment (*Gladiators, The 1% Club, The Masked Singer*) to Factual Entertainment formats (*Gogglebox, Come Dine with Me, The Repair Shop*) and reality formats (*The Great British Bake-Off, The Apprentice, Married at First Sight*).

The ambition is that students successfully completing the MA will take their place alongside other former graduates working on these and other notable unscripted TV shows.

At the same time, the course is alert to and aims to keep pace with the changes that are taking place across the industry – new technologies, new hybrid programme forms, new platforms etc. – and reflect these changes in this curriculum.

Year 1

The first year contains the following four assessed modules:

- Module 1: Factual Entertainment Production
- Module 2: Summer Multi-Camera Studio Show Development
- Module 3: Summer Multi-Camera Studio Show Production
- Module 4: The 5 O'Clock Show

Module 1: Factual Entertainment Production

Michelangelo developed his craft by sketching classical Greek and Roman sculptures to understand form and develop his technique; this module has a similar inspiration and purpose.

Working together as a group, the students produce an episode of a notable Factual Entertainment show to understand how it is made. In 2024, the students will produce an episode of the Studio Lambert / Channel 4 hit, *Gogglebox*. The learning outcomes of this module focus on the casting of real people (a crucial component of unscripted television) and the producing of their performance on camera.

Working in pairs, the students are required to source suitable contributors (siblings, couples, best friends, work colleagues etc.) to participate in the show and then record with them in their homes using a remote camera rig across a single day. The students subsequently log and perform a 'paper edit' of their rushes before sitting in with a

professional editor as they cut the show, incorporating graphics, music and commentary. The completed show is screened as part of a group review with relevant tutors and subsequently screened for the school.

Module 2: Summer Multi-Camera Show – Development

TV is an ideas business, and this module brings together the core skills of its key proponent, the Development Producer. Here, the students learn how to devise and develop an idea for a new TV show: how to create a deck (a visually appealing proposal, which explains the idea); how to create a 'sizzle' (a short video promo created using found footage); and how to effectively pitch your idea.

Working individually the students must create a deck and a sizzle for a new studio-based TV show of their own imagining and pitch it to a panel including the Head of TV Entertainment. From these pitches, 4/5 shows will be chosen to be produced in the TV studio in the next module.

Module 3: Summer Multi-Camera Show – Production

Working in Director/Producer pairs determined by the Head of TV Entertainment, the students produce the successful pitches from the previous Development module. They are responsible for all aspects of the production, including casting and scripting, they must work with Motion Graphics students to create titles and other graphic elements, with a professional set designer to create a suitable set and staging etc.

Ultimately, each show is rehearsed and then recorded in the TV studio over consecutive weeks, with the rest of the student group taking up supporting roles – from stand-ins to Autocue operators.

When the recordings are complete, the students receive Avid training and are then tasked with editing their show to time under the supervision of a professional editor. All produced shows are then screened as part of a group review with the relevant tutors and subsequently screened to the school.

Module 4: The 5 O'Clock Show

After the summer break, the students are tasked with producing a stripped week of live programmes from the studio, featuring studio guests, VT inserts and live music. The show will air on the NFTS ring main and be shared on the internet. Working in Director/Producer pairs determined by the Head of TV Entertainment, the students are responsible for all aspects of the show, including casting, scripting, budgeting, the shooting of VT inserts, the creation of graphic elements (working with Motion Graphics students), the devising of a suitable set and staging (working with a professional set designer) etc.

Other Elements

Foundation

Foundation is a week-long series of contextual sessions which explains, variously, the history of UK television since 1936; the key programme genres; the life cycle of a TV show from initial conception and development to production and beyond; and the main production roles, with specific reference to the director and producer.

Springboard

Springboard is a cross specialisation introductory workshop which examines cinematic and televisual language through the prism of storytelling: how do the assorted crafts of cinema and television - screenwriting, cinematography, editing, sound, music - each contribute to the communication of narrative ideas?

TV Studio Familiarity

This two-week workshop sees students spend one week in the classroom learning about the grammar and etiquette of studio production and a second week in the studio taking it in turns to direct, vision mix, and floor manage across a series of familiar TV scenarios – a children’s show, a chat show, live music etc. Here the students develop core studio skills, how to plot camera positions, prepare a camera script etc.

Year 2

Year 2 is dominated by the Graduation Project, which sees the students working in Director/Producer teams to devise and then produce an original idea with a significant budget attached.

The second year contains the following two assessed modules:

- Module 5: Sky Pitch
- Module 6: Graduation Project

Module 5: Sky Pitch

Students receive a commissioning briefing from a Sky executive in respect of one of Sky’s channels (for example, Sky Arts, Sky Max etc.). The students then have several weeks in which to devise a suitable idea for the channel, creating both a deck and a sizzle. The students then visit Sky TV in Osterley and take it in turns to pitch their ideas to Sky’s commissioning team and receive feedback on their verbal pitch, deck and sizzle. This is about as close to a real-world experience of programme development as you can get.

Module 6: Graduation Project

On returning from their work experience, the students begin the pre-production of their graduation projects. This process continues throughout the summer and is supported by a cast of visiting tutors, the choice of tutors is determined by the specific nature of the production and the individual needs of the students.

The grad productions are filmed across consecutive weeks in September/October. A post production period of four weeks follows, with the completed shows - with a duration of no longer than 25 minutes - delivered by the end of November.

Irrespective of who in each team may have conceived the idea, the format will be attributed to both students in the form of a ‘Format Created by’ credit or similar. This joint ownership reflects the creative efforts of both students across the development, production and post production stages.

Other Elements

Factual Entertainment Development

This module focuses on the Factual Entertainment genre and features a series of seminars from creatives with experience of developing Factual Entertainment programmes. It is intended as something of a 'palette cleanser' after a first year dominated by production and a useful preparation for the following Sky Pitch.

Factual Entertainment Production Challenge

This is a quick turnaround Factual Entertainment production challenge, which sees the students receive practical workshops on directing and self-shooting before being despatched in pairs to shoot and then edit a location-based sequence in which actors dramatise a familiar TV scenario.

Grad Commissioning Committee

A Grad Commissioning Committee, convened by the Head of TV Entertainment and comprised of experienced TV creatives hear pitches from the Grad Director/Producer teams at fortnightly intervals across a six-week period. At each meeting the teams must propose three different original ideas for potential production. The Committee constructively appraises the ideas and eventually, at the final meeting, commissions one idea for the teams to make as a joint graduation production.

Work Experience

Prior to commencing the production of their graduation project, the students undertake a work experience with a production company, in either development or production. This process is managed by the Head of TV Entertainment and the aim is to secure experiences which speak to the individual student's ambitions. Work experience enables the student to participate in a professional environment, obtain valuable hands-on experience and forge useful industry contacts that they can call on in the future. Note: is not possible to guarantee the duration of work experiences, as they are subject to the production companies own production schedules.

Careers Clinic

The MA concludes with a Careers Clinic, which sees the students receive advice on how best to present their CV and 'speed date' with Talent Executives.

Dissertation

Students are required to complete a dissertation as part of the MA. There are two dissertation options: (1) a written dissertation of between 7,000 and 10,000 words; or (2) a video essay of between 15 and 20 minutes in duration.

The purpose of the dissertation is to give the student the opportunity to undertake independent research, explore the nature of their discipline through working on a subject of their choice and increase their knowledge of the creative aspects of film, television or games. It provides the student with the time and opportunity to think about and develop their ideas on the aesthetic and conceptual aspects of their work at the NFTS, and to reflect critically on their own and others' practice.

Work starts on the dissertation in the first year, where students identify and agree a suitable subject with the Screen Arts and Departmental dissertation tutors in spring.

They then submit a 500-word dissertation proposal by mid-June. This is followed in early November by a 2,000-word chapter and detailed progress report/plan (if preparing a written dissertation) or a minimum five minutes of edited material and detailed outline/timeline (if preparing a video essay). Students cannot progress into the second year unless this is completed and considered satisfactory.

In the second year, students continue working on their dissertations, submitting a full first draft, receiving tutor feedback on this before submitting the final draft. Specific deadlines for each stage in the second year vary from course to course according to each department's work commitments.