

Course outline: Producing

The MFA in Producing is a specialisation within the broader **MFA in Film, Television and Games**.

The course will focus on five core areas of Producing for Film and Television:

- Intellectual property & finding ideas
- Development
- Financing & business affairs
- Physical production
- Market awareness & audience

During their time at the National Film and Television School, students will produce at least three short films to industry standards, including one animation

Year One

The first year contains five assessed modules, and a wealth of other exercises and workshops:

- Module 1 – Fundamentals
- Module 2 – Developing for Film & TV
- Module 3 – Without Words
- Module 4 – First Year Film
- Module 5 – IP for High End TV

Module 1: Fundamentals

This module, held in Term 1, serves as a foundational course in physical producing. It features masterclasses and seminars focused on crew roles and responsibilities, as well as the producer's role, and their relationships with writers and directors.

This module also encompasses budgeting and scheduling. In the scheduling segment, students will learn how to break down a feature film script. They will gain hands-on experience by creating their own schedule using the Movie Magic Scheduling software.

The budgeting component guides students through the various elements of a budget, emphasising the planning and decision-making processes involved. Topics covered include crewing, casting, post-production, delivery, and other essential requirements for budgeting a feature film. Students will apply their knowledge by budgeting for the schedule they previously completed, in Movie Magic Budgeting software.

This module will provide a solid foundation for physical production, setting students up for success in their first filmmaking exercise, *Without Words*.

Module 2: Developing for Film & TV

The Developing for Film & TV module, which spans both years of the course, equips Producing students with essential skills to enhance their critical thinking. Students will learn to evaluate creative material and make informed creative decisions. The module covers the core principles of development, including how to identify and discuss promising content, while also providing students with the opportunity to develop their own projects to a professional standard. This hands-on experience fosters a deep understanding of the development process and prepares students for successful careers in the industry.

Producing students will learn how to write script reports, manage creative relationships, understand narrative structure, provide constructive feedback to writers, and craft compelling pitch documents. These competencies will prepare them for effective collaboration and leadership in the industry.

In parallel, students will develop their own projects. At the start of the course, each student will bring in ideas and materials for a potential film or TV development portfolio. They will learn to identify strong content and evaluate how it aligns with both their personal taste and the market landscape.

Module 3: Without Words

This is a collaboration with Directing Fiction students and other departments on a short filmmaking exercise with intentional limitations on actors, time, budget, location and film stock. The Directing Fiction students will write scripts that work smartly within these limitations, supported by Producing students, with the aim of getting the most from the resources available. This film gives students an opportunity to collaborate with a small team of students from other disciplines to work on a project from inception, through production and post production before embarking on First Year Film.

Module 4: First Year Film

This module encompasses the complete process of developing, budgeting, scheduling, producing, post-producing, editing, and delivering a 7-10 minute fiction film, all of which is executed during the autumn term. Scripts will be crafted by Writers and collaboratively developed by teams of Producers, Directors, and Writers, while also involving Cinematography, Production Design, Editors and Sound Design, PMs, ADs and Location Sound. Composers will provide the music, and the films will be edited and mixed by the end of the year.

The module introduces students to the full spectrum of creative development and team leadership, guiding them through the journey of bringing a film from inception to delivery (note that post-production will not include ADR or pick-ups). Students will gain insights into editing, picture and sound post-production, and understand the requirements for completing and delivering a film.

Module 5: IP for High End TV (Cross-specialisation module with Writers)

In this module, Producers and Writers will collaborate to develop an outline for a high-end TV series or single drama, based on a piece of intellectual property sourced by the Producers with guidance from tutors. This hands-on experience reflects current industry practices focused on working with writers to develop intellectual property.

Producers will partner with Screenwriting students to create a compelling proposal for a viable TV series or single drama, complete with an episode outline. This collaborative work culminates in a presentation to external tutors, including TV commissioning executives, providing students with valuable industry feedback and insights

Other Seminars

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Alongside and in between the Modules there are a number of exercises, workshops and seminars including:

Springboard Cross Specialisation Introductory Weeklong Workshop

A cross-school and interdisciplinary 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.

Animated Campaigns

This workshop gives the students a conceptual and practical introduction to techniques in animation, and the different story forms and ways of developing animation ideas. Further seminars and workshops are anticipated throughout the year, typically in collaboration with the Directing Animation students, in order to build Producing students' knowledge of animation techniques and development prior to starting to develop their Animation Graduation Film.

Health & Safety

Training in the principles of Health and Safety, including procedures and process for risk assessments and necessary documentation to give Producing students a knowledge of the basic principles of Health and Safety in the film and television industry, so that they can accurately assess health and safety risks, and can complete both risk assessments and a safety report on their First Year Films and Graduation Films.

Year Two

During the second year of the course Producing students focus on putting their learning into practice by producing two films, completing their business learning, the continuation of Developing for Film and TV, and preparing to enter the industry.

The second year contains the following two assessed modules:

- Module 5 – Graduation Film (Fiction Graduation Film & Animation Graduation Film);
- Module 6 – The Business of Film and Television

Other workshops and seminars are also included during the year, providing valuable further opportunities to learn including taking part in the filmmaking exercise Digi Fiction.

Module 5 - Graduation Films

Part 1 - Grad Fiction Film

(Cross Specialisation Module with Fiction Direction, Screenwriting, Cinematography, Location Sound, Design, Editing, Sound Design, Finishing and Colour, Composing, Production Management and Assistant Directors)

Students will produce a professional-standard fiction film with a runtime of at least 15 minutes (but no more than 20 minutes). The process spans 11 weeks of development, beginning at the start of Year 2, followed by 4 weeks of pre-production, 6 days of shooting, 5 weeks of editing, and 6 days of mixing. This comprehensive exercise encompasses full post-production, including VFX, ADR, pick-ups (as needed), and a complete sound mix to industry standards. Additionally, students will manage all aspects of delivery, including licensing of external materials and obtaining necessary clearances.

Part 2 - Animated Film

Development commences at end of Year 1 and production runs throughout Year 2. (Cross MFA in Producing
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Specialisation Module with Animation Directors, Screenwriting, Cinematography, Production Design, Sound, Editing & Composing)

Students will produce a professional-standard animated film. This module trains students in a variety of animation techniques, starting with script development and the creation of an animatic proposal for approval before moving into production. Through this process, students will gain hands-on experience and a comprehensive understanding of the animation workflow.

Module 6 - The Business of Film and Television

This module comprises several key areas of study and culminates in the Autumn Business Focus, where students present a comprehensive Business Dossier based on their individual Developing for Film & TV projects. The instruction includes a mix of seminars, lectures, and tutorials led by industry professionals, ensuring robust engagement with real-world practices. Throughout the module, students receive formative assessments and ongoing feedback to aid their development.

Key topics include co-production, television commissioning, film sales and distribution, recoupment, and contract negotiation. Through this comprehensive approach, students will acquire the critical skills and knowledge necessary to navigate the complexities of the industry effectively.

Key Areas of Study

1. **The Business of Development:** Students explore how to secure funding for development in film and HETV, budget for development costs, and manage development projects while assessing risk. This section emphasises the importance of intellectual property and the legal and ethical considerations in adapting real-life stories.
2. **The Business of High-End TV:** Each student researches a specific UK TV channel to analyse commissioning preferences and tariffs. This segment also covers the UK indie model, co-production, financing, and the intricacies of budgeting and scheduling for high-end television.
3. **The Business of Film:** Students learn about various financing options, including equity and debt models, and how these elements interact within the traditional film finance framework.
4. **The Business of Animation:** This part focuses on the thriving UK animation industry, covering financing, marketing, licensing, and merchandise, providing insights into navigating this dynamic sector.
5. **Cannes Film Festival Work Experience:** Students gain hands-on experience by working alongside film practitioners at the Cannes Film Festival, witnessing the live processes of buying, selling, financing, and marketing films.
6. **Autumn Business Focus:** This series of seminars and tutorials delves into financing and business affairs across the film and HETV value chain. It culminates in the creation of the Business Dossier, presented to industry panels for assessment, allowing students to showcase their work and receive professional feedback.

Producing Dissertation

During the year the students also complete their Dissertation module (the outline of which dissertation is delivered in Year 1).

As part of the work necessary to qualify for an MFA, each student is required to produce an independent written dissertation or video essay. This runs from the start of the 1st Year to April of the 2nd Year. Following discussions with the Producing Department Dissertation Tutor, and Screen Arts tutors in the first half of the 1st year, students deliver 500-word outline proposal by June of the 1st year; 2000-word detailed proposal and

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structure by November of 1st Year (students may not progress into 2nd year if they fail to deliver this). Full draft dissertation of 7,000-10,000 words (including sources and bibliography) must be delivered by February of 2nd Year and following discussion with tutors, final version of dissertation by April of the 2nd Year.

An alternative option of a twenty minute video essay is also available to MFA students.

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 practice, 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