

Royal Holloway, University of London

Course specification for a postgraduate award

MA Theatre Directing

Section 1 – Introduction to your course

This course specification is a formal document, which provides a summary of the main features of your course and the learning outcomes that you might reasonably be expected to achieve and demonstrate if you take full advantage of the learning opportunities that are provided. Further information is contained in the University prospectus, and in various handbooks, all of which you will be able to access online. Alternatively, further information on the University's academic regulations and policies can be found [here](#). Further information on the University's Admissions Policy can be found [here](#).

The MA Theatre Directing degree provides an opportunity to develop a professional theatre directing practice through practical hands-on training with industry professionals, exploring areas such as Contemporary British Theatre, Black British Theatre, site-based performance, contemporary performance making and concept & dramaturgy. Fully integrated in the department and working with BA Drama with Acting students to realize projects, the MA supports its students to become confident professional makers with strong links to industry networks.

The course is delivered in a single stage, equating to a full-time 52-week course, with five mandatory modules. The core Theatre Directing module is taught through intensive workshops in the autumn term and between spring and summer terms, with the other modules taught on a weekly basis through autumn and summer term. On successful completion of the course a student should have an understanding of the area of the MA at a level appropriate for a postgraduate qualification. Whilst being a self-contained degree in its own right, the course provides suitable and recognised qualifications for entry to PhD study in the same or a closely related field.

While Royal Holloway keeps all the information made available under review, courses and the availability of individual modules, especially optional modules are necessarily subject to change at any time, and you are therefore advised to seek confirmation of any factors which might affect your decision to follow a specific course. In turn, Royal Holloway will inform you as soon as is practicable of any significant changes which might affect your studies.

The following is a brief description for some of the most important terminology for understanding the content of this document:

Degree course – Also referred to as 'programme', this term refers to the qualification you will be awarded upon successful completion of your studies. 'Courses' were formerly known as 'programmes' at Royal Holloway.

Module – This refers to the credits you will study each year to complete your degree course. Postgraduate taught degrees at Royal Holloway comprise 180 credits. On some degree courses a certain number of optional modules must be passed for a particular degree title. 'Modules' were formerly known as 'course units' at Royal Holloway.

Section 2 – Course details			
Date of specification update	May 2025	Location of study	Egham & London
Course award and title	MA Theatre Directing	Level of study	Postgraduate
Course code	2974	Year of entry	2026/27
Awarding body	Royal Holloway, University of London		
Department or school	School of Performing and Digital Arts	Other departments or schools involved in teaching the course	
Mode(s) of attendance	Full time	Duration of the course	One year (52 weeks) full-time
Accrediting Professional, Statutory or Regulatory Body requirement(s)	N/A		
Link to Coursefinder for further information:	https://www.royalholloway.ac.uk/studying-here/	For queries on admissions:	https://royalholloway.ac.uk/applicationquery

Section 3 – Degree course structure				
3.1 Mandatory module information				
The following table summarises the mandatory modules which students must take in each year of study				
Module code	Module title	Credits	FHEQ level	Module status (Mandatory Condonable MC or Mandatory Non-Condonable MNC)
DT5121	Theatre Directing	60	7	MNC
DT5203	Making Performance	30	7	MNC
DT5122	Concept & Dramaturgy	15	7	MC
DT5123	Contemporary British Theatre	15	7	MC
DT5130	Masters Dissertation or Project in Performing and Digital Arts	60	7	MNC
This table sets out the most important information for the mandatory modules on your degree course. These modules are central to achieving your learning outcomes, so they are compulsory, and all students on your degree course will be required to take them. You will be automatically registered for these modules each year. Mandatory modules fall into two categories: 'condonable' or 'non-condonable'. In the case of mandatory 'non-condonable' (MNC) modules, you must pass the module before you can proceed to the next year of your course, or to successfully graduate with a particular degree title. In the case of mandatory 'condonable' (MC) modules, these must be taken but you can still progress or graduate even if you do not pass them. Please note that although Royal Holloway will keep changes to a minimum, changes to your degree course may be made where reasonable and necessary due to unexpected events. For example, where requirements of relevant Professional, Statutory or Regulatory Bodies have changed and course requirements must change accordingly, or where changes are deemed necessary on the basis of student feedback and/or the advice of external advisors, to enhance academic provision.				

Section 4 - Progressing through each year of your degree course

For further information on the progression and award requirements for your degree, please refer to Royal Holloway's [Academic Regulations](#).

Progression throughout the year/s is monitored through performance in summative or formative coursework assignments. Please note that if you hold a Student Visa and you choose to leave (or are required to leave because of non-progression) or complete early (before the course end date stated on your CAS), then this will be reported to UKVI.

All postgraduate taught students are required to take and pass the non-credit bearing Moodle-based Academic Integrity module SS1001 in order to be awarded. The pass mark for the module assessment is stated in the on-line Academic Integrity Moodle module. Students may attempt the assessment as often as they wish with no penalties or capping. Students who otherwise meet the requirements for award as stipulated in the [Academic Taught Regulations](#) but fail to pass the Moodle-based Academic Integrity module will not be awarded.

Section 5 – Educational aims of the course

The aims of this course are to:

- to develop and deepen students' understanding of the nature of drama and performance through the close study of plays and other forms of 'texts' for staging;
- to teach students to appreciate and practice a specialist professional discipline;
- to explore theatrical conventions and to allow students to draw critically upon their experiences of theatre-going in their theatre-making;
- to develop skills in planning, coordinating and managing a team of creative practitioners;
- to allow students to shape what is a relatively flexible syllabus to realise a variety of personal objectives.

Section 6 - Course learning outcomes			
In general terms, the courses provide opportunities for students to develop and demonstrate the following learning outcomes. (<i>Categories – Knowledge and understanding (K), Skills and other attributes (S), and Transferable skills (*)</i>)			
Course Learning Outcome	Term 1	Term 2	Term 3
Integrate directing skills and insights to create an independent directing project for public presentation.	Recognise a range of theatrical conventions.	Demonstrate a familiarity with a wide range of spatial forms used in modern performance such as site-based, immersive and outdoor performance.	Generate and assemble a theatre production plan with a creative team.
Demonstrate a broad and detailed understanding of the process of preparing a script for production.	Prepare a text for staging.	Formulate a stage concept, using relevant dramaturgical tools.	
Design a professional methodology for theatre directing.		Devise exercises that engage with the issues surrounding the ways in which theory influences practice and performance.	
Use space creatively, with an enhanced understanding of how space conditions meaning, and of the possibilities open to a maker of theatre.			
Reflect insight, both theoretical and practical, into the role of the director in historical and contemporary theatre practice.	Critically deconstruct theatrical performances from a variety of theoretical positions.	Develop a perception of the complex nature of performance history and the strengths and limitations of various approaches to its recording and transmission.	
Demonstrate critical understanding of the operating contexts of contemporary theatre.	Develop an awareness of the scope of theatre studies and its methodologies of research.		
Research and write an extended dissertation or director's log on a specialist topic (either historical, practical or theoretical), treating it critically and analytically.	Use web-based research resources. Undertake research and write critically about a variety of topics. Present seminar material through a range of media.	Undertake and critique bibliographic inquiry including considering the usefulness of a range of research resources.	Understand the application of contextual and theoretical modes of inquiry.

Section 7 - Teaching, learning and assessment

Teaching and learning is delivered by means of seminars and workshops. These would typically combine periods of seminar discussion and practical exploration. Where possible, these are student-led, with participants being encouraged to devise exercises engaging with the relevant issues and to direct their fellow-students in these experiments. Opportunities to visit theatrical performances and rehearsal rooms are also an important part of the programme, and students are encouraged to use these as a basis for discussion and to deconstruct the performances they have seen from a variety of critical positions.

Assessment is by a variety of means including an essay (both theoretical and critical), dramaturgical portfolios, etudes (practical directing exercises), practical projects as well as a final dissertation of 12-15,000 words or a director's log (30 mins recorded etudes plus 8000-word Dissertation). Practical projects are sometimes carried out in a group and may include an element of assessment for an individual's contribution to group working and direction.

Contact hours come in various forms and may take the form of time spent with a member of staff in a lecture or seminar with other students. Contact hours may also be laboratory or, studio-based sessions, project supervision with a member of staff, or discussion through a virtual learning environment (VLE). These contact hours may be with a lecturer or teaching assistant, but they may also be with a technician, or specialist support staff.

The way in which each module on your degree course is assessed will also vary, however, for the assessments listed as 'summative', you will receive a mark for it which will count towards your overall mark for the module, and potentially your degree classification, depending on your year of study. On successful completion of the module you will gain the credits listed. 'Coursework' might typically include a written assignment, like an essay. Coursework might also include a report, dissertation or portfolio. 'Practical assessments' might include an oral assessment or presentation, or a demonstration of practical skills required for the particular module

More detailed information on modules, including teaching and learning methods, and methods of assessment, can be found via the online [Royal Holloway Curriculum Catalogue](#). The accuracy of the information contained in this document is reviewed regularly by the university, and may also be checked routinely by external agencies, such as the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA).

Section 8 – Additional costs

There are no single associated costs greater than £50 per item on this degree course.

These estimated costs relate to studying this particular degree course at Royal Holloway. General costs such as accommodation, food, books and other learning materials and printing etc., have not been included, but further information is available on our website.

Section 9 – Indicators of quality and standards	
QAA Framework for Higher Education Qualifications (FHEQ) Level	7
Your course is designed in accordance with the FHEQ to ensure your qualification is awarded on the basis of nationally established standards of achievement, for both outcomes and attainment. The qualification descriptors within the FHEQ set out the generic outcomes and attributes expected for the award of individual qualifications. The qualification descriptors contained in the FHEQ exemplify the outcomes and attributes expected of learning that results in the award of higher education qualifications. These outcomes represent the integration of various learning experiences resulting from designated and coherent courses of study.	
QAA Subject benchmark statement(s)	http://www.qaa.ac.uk/quality-code/subject-benchmark-statements
Subject benchmark statements provide a means for the academic community to describe the nature and characteristics of courses in a specific subject or subject area. They also represent general expectations about standards for the award of qualifications at a given level in terms of the attributes and capabilities that those possessing qualifications should have demonstrated.	

Section 10– Intermediate exit awards (where available)		
You may be eligible for an intermediate exit award if you complete part of the course as detailed in this document. Any additional criteria (e.g. mandatory modules, credit requirements) for intermediate awards is outlined in the sections below.		
Award	Criteria	Awarding body
PG Diploma	Passes in at least 120 credits, with fails of between 40% to 49% for up to 40 credits condonable (with the exception of any course specific requirements).	Royal Holloway and Bedford New College
PG Certificate	Passes in at least 60 credits with no condonable fails	Royal Holloway and Bedford New College