

PROGRAMME SPECIFICATION

This document describes the **Master of Arts in Documentary by Practice**. This specification is valid for new entrants from **September 2010**.

The aims of the programme are:

- to develop and deepen students understanding of the nature of filmmaking and particularly documentary filmmaking;
- to develop students ability to produce and direct films to a professional level;
- to provide students with the tools to evaluate their own and their peers' work;
- to provide students with a grounding in the business aspects of documentary filmmaking – proposal writing, budgeting, legal matters, and an awareness of the UK and European documentary market so that they are more equipped to conceive, produce and sell their work;
- to give students greater context to their ideas and work through exposure to a wide range of media material, principally other films, but also art works, books etc.;
- to develop research skills and broaden the critical context of their practice as documentary film makers, and in so doing to deepen students aesthetic awareness of visual and aural forms, so that these then translate into their work;
- to provide the opportunity for students to develop their craft and technical skills working with industry compatible facilities which will offer them a strong foundation for a professional practice as a documentary film maker and harness them with more skills to work in the industry should they so wish.

The programme explores and develops the practice of documentary film making and gives students the opportunity to specialise more deeply in the genre and offers teaching and guidance in a range of practical production skills from the conception of a project, directing, editing, shooting, budgeting and pitching, through to cinematography and editing.

The programme is delivered over one year of full-time study (52 weeks) or two years of part-time study (104 weeks). Whilst being a self-contained degree in its own right, the programme provides suitable and recognised qualifications for entry to PhD study in the same or a closely related field.

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This document provides a summary of the main features of the programme(s), and of the outcomes which a student might reasonably be expected to achieve if full advantage is taken of the learning opportunities provided. Further information is contained in the College prospectus, the College Regulations and in various handbooks issued to students upon arrival. Whilst Royal Holloway keeps all its information for prospective applicants and students under review, programmes and the availability of individual courses are necessarily subject to change at any time, and prospective applicants are therefore advised to seek confirmation of any factors which might affect their decision to follow a specific programme. In turn, Royal Holloway will inform applicants and students as soon as is practicable of any substantial changes which might affect their studies.

Learning outcomes

Teaching and learning in the programme are closely informed by the active research of staff. In general terms, the programme provides opportunities for students to develop and demonstrate the following learning outcomes:

Knowledge and understanding

- an understanding of documentary film genre and its changing boundaries;
- advanced understanding of the changing technologies and the impact on documentary;
- advanced understanding of the processes of making a documentary film from initial concept to final form;
- advanced understanding of the various stages of production and where appropriate the technological developments that are driving them i.e. research, shooting, editing, sound work etc;
- an awareness of the institutions and mechanisms of UK film and television industry;
- a critical knowledge of the current and changing platforms for documentary film from cinema to television and the internet;
- understand more effectively the workings of the industry.

Skills and other attributes

Students following the programme will gain the ability to:

- research and develop ideas for documentary films;*
- research their own ideas more effectively;*
- translate concepts into audio visual compositions;
- develop and execute production strategies;*
- work with computer based technologies to achieve their creative ambitions;*
- work with digital video cameras to realise their creative ambitions;
- to develop their compositional skills – visual and audio as part of a wider aesthetic awareness;*
- analyse their own work in terms of a range of aesthetic criteria;*
- to be able to more critically and effectively evaluate other work, their own and their peers;
- discuss and debate their work within a public forum;*
- to be able to effectively analyse and reflect intellectually on their work in written form;*
- to develop their skills in the writing of proposals for ideas and programmes that best present their concepts;*
- to be able to budget their ideas to industry standard and to have a basic knowledge of how to market and promote them.

* transferable skills

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Teaching, learning and assessment

Teaching and learning is mostly by means of seminar discussions, oral presentations, tutorials, technical classes, guided independent research, practice work projects, evaluation of those projects and a practical dissertation. The strategy is for a balanced programme that both makes students aware of a grammar within the form and showing them how to work within it, whilst encouraging research and creativity that produces work that is innovative and appropriate to a Masters programme.

Assessment of knowledge, understanding and development is typically by the making of practical work, supported by a portfolio and or written reflection. Full details of the assessments for individual courses can be obtained from the [Department](#).

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Details of the programme structure(s)

The full-time programme lasts 52 weeks, beginning in September. It has four elements and students are examined in all four. The brief outline of the programme is shown below; however students can obtain further details from the [Department](#).

Students must take the following:

- (i) MA5301 Ideas to Screen (25%)
- (ii) MA5302 The Documentary Short (25%)
- (iii) MA5303 Foundations of Production (10%)
- (iv) MA5304 Major Documentary Production/Dissertation (40%)

Part-time programme structure

The part-time programme lasts 104 weeks, beginning in September of year one. Part-time students normally take elements (ii) and (iii) in their first year, and elements (i) and (iv) in their second year.

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Progression and award requirements

Progression throughout the year/s is monitored through performance in oral presentations, contributions to seminar discussion and coursework. To pass the programme a student must achieve an overall weighted average of at least 50.00%, with no mark in any element which counts towards the final assessment falling below 50%. Failure marks between 40-49% can be condoned in courses which do not constitute more than 25% of the final assessment, provided that the overall weighted average is at least 50.00%, but a failure mark (i.e. below 50%) in the dissertation cannot be condoned.

The Masters degree with Merit may be awarded if a student achieves an overall weighted average of 65.00% or above, with no mark in any element which counts towards the final assessment falling below 50%.

The Masters degree with Distinction may be awarded if a student achieves an overall weighted average of 70.00% or above, with no mark in any element which counts towards the final assessment falling below 60%. A Distinction will not normally be awarded if a student re-sits or re-takes any element of the programme. In exceptional circumstances a viva may be held for a student at the request of the Examiners.

If a candidate fails in one or more elements s/he will have the option to resubmit the element(s) the following year, but the Department reserves the right to refuse a candidate permission to resubmit if this would entail repeating part of the programme in attendance.

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Student support and guidance

- The Programme Director meets with the students on a regular basis to advise on academic, pastoral and welfare issues. The Programme Director acts as a point of contact for any questions about the programme throughout the year.
- Course coordinators, tutors and dissertation supervisors provide a back-up system of academic, pastoral and welfare advice.
- All students are allocated a personal adviser, with whom they meet at least once a term, and more regularly if required, to discuss all matters relating to their programme and for pastoral support.
- Induction programmes for orientation and introduction to the Department and College occur at the beginning of each academic year.
- All staff are available and accessible through an office-hour system.
- Representation on the Student-Staff Committee.
- Detailed MA handbook and course booklets.
- Extensive supporting materials and learning resources in College and University libraries, as well as the Computer Centre.
- Computing facilities, studio, cameras, sound, editing, and technical support available in Egham.
- Dedicated College Graduate School.
- College Careers Service and Departmental Careers Service liaison officer.
- Access to all College and University support services, including Student Counselling Service, Health Centre, Students' Union and the Educational Support Office for students with special needs.

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Admission requirements

Admission to the programme normally requires a First or Upper Second Class Honours Degree in Media. Applicants will have previous experience in filmmaking either professionally or through a Media degree. A reel of work must be submitted with the application. However, the Department also has considerable flexibility in its admissions and offers policy and strongly encourages applications from non-standard applicants. In some cases where exceptional potential is identified, students without previous experience may be accepted. Students whose first language is not English may also be asked for a qualification in

English Language at an appropriate level. For further details please refer to the [Prospective Students](#) web page. It may also be helpful to contact the [Admissions Office](#) for specific guidance on the entrance requirements for particular programmes.

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Further learning and career opportunities

The Media Arts department is developing a strong research culture and has a growing number of Practice-based MPhil and PhD students. Further study to research degree level, ultimately leading to a PhD, is therefore one option. Advancement in the film and television industries in areas of directing, producing research, editing and camera work would be likely. The transferable skills of the programme mean students can work in a wide range of areas such as IT, research, archives, and visually related fields. The programme's Foundations of Production course is also vocationally targeted to equip students with the wide range of skills which may enable them to form their own production companies. In addition, the College has a Careers Advisory Service at Egham which is open to any students during normal College working hours, or by email at any time. The Department also has a careers adviser. For more details on further learning and career opportunities please refer to the [Careers Service](#).

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Indicators of quality and standards

Royal Holloway's position as one of the UK's leading research-intensive institutions was confirmed by the results of the most recent Research Assessment Exercise (RAE 2008) conducted by the Higher Education Funding Council (HEFCE). The new scoring system for the RAE 2008 measures research quality in four categories, with the top score of 4* indicating quality that is world-leading and of the highest standards in terms of originality, significance and rigour. 60% of the College's research profile is rated as world-leading or internationally excellent outperforming the national average of 50%. The College is ranked 16th in the UK for research of 4* standard and 18th for 3* and 4* research. The Department of Media Arts was ranked joint 6th in the top 10 universities in the country in terms of proportion of 3* and 4* research.

Over the years the Department has won a reputation as one of the most dynamic departments in Media Studies in the country. This reputation has been confirmed by numerous awards, publications and public engagements as well as professional film and television industry work. Staff are leaders in their academic fields, and most maintain professional media careers as directors, producers and screenwriters. They are frequently called upon to serve on national bodies including the Skillset, UK Film Council, BAFTA and BFI advisory committees.

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List of programmes with details of awards, teaching arrangements and accreditation

The programme is taught by staff at Royal Holloway, University of London and visiting speakers, and leads to an award of the University of London. The programme is not subject to accreditation by a professional body. The Banner programme code is given in parentheses.

Master of Arts Programme in Documentary by Practice

MA in Documentary by Practice (1078)

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