

## PROGRAMME SPECIFICATION

This document describes the **Master of Arts in Screenwriting for TV and Film (Retreat Programme) (MASTFiR)**. This specification is valid for new entrants from **April 2011**.

The aims of the programme are:

- To develop and deepen students' understanding of the nature of film and television fictional screenwriting;
- To develop students' ability to write film and television fiction screenplays to a professional level, able to be produced for UK and overseas film and television markets;
- To provide students with the tools to critique their own and their peers' work, and to assess the potential and progress of screenwriting projects at various stages;
- To give students a critical and historical understanding of the aesthetic traditions of the UK film and television industries; to encourage students to question the norms of current film and television production and seek to develop an original and informed voice within it;
- To familiarise students with current business and work practices and institutions within the UK film and television industries, and give them the opportunity to discuss creative and business issues with speakers from the industry and the 'independent sector'.

This programme aims to teach both film and television screenwriting at a high level, and provide an industry context for study of the current norms of UK cinema and television.

MASTFiR is delivered over two years of part-time study (104 weeks) or one year of full-time study (52 weeks) and consists of six blocks of study, supported in the interim periods by online tutorials and discussion. It will provide an atmosphere appropriate for intensive and concentrated learning and group interaction, with dedicated distance-learning support during the interim periods. As well as teaching at Egham, MASTFiR includes periods of study in appointed Writers' retreats in Yorkshire Dorset and Shropshire, and discussion with industry experts in RHUL's Central London teaching space.

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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 programmes provide opportunities for students to develop and demonstrate the following learning outcomes:

### *Knowledge and understanding*

- A broad and detailed understanding of the nature of the film and television screenplay- how it signifies, how it communicates meaning to the film producer, director, actor and to the audience.
- Advanced understanding of the processes of writing a screenplay, from initial concept to final draft.
- Advanced understanding of the various stages of script development and how each is documented- outlines, treatments, pitch documents and so on.
- Critical knowledge of the current genres and trends in film and television and how they have evolved in recent years, particularly in the context of economic and market developments in these industries.
- An understanding of the UK film and television industries, including their structure, institutions and working practices.
- A broad understanding of the group nature of writing and development, and how the roles played by the various parties- producer, script editor, director and so on- shape and influence the screenplay.

### *Skills and other attributes*

Students following the programme will gain the ability to:

- Develop original fictional ideas, which can be developed into cinema/TV screenplays able to be produced for the UK and other markets.
- Write outlines, pitches, and treatments of these ideas.\*
- Write Film and TV screenplays in a variety of screenplay lengths and formats (feature film, single TV drama, series, serial) to a professional level.
- Recognise the film/televisual potential in other primary source material- novels, plays and so on- and to be able to translate this into screenplay material in an original and distinctive way.
- Hone their research skills in order to fully translate their screenwriting ideas into practice.\*
- Be able to discuss and debate their ideas within the group (Development Lab) and with staff and visiting industry professionals, and respond constructively to feedback and criticism. \*
- Give constructive verbal and written feedback on their peers' work.\*
- Learn the fundamental skills of co-writing and produce co-written work for formative assessment.\*
- Develop a basic awareness of the production consequences of their writing: staging, location, production values, genre, audience, marketing, rights, censorship.\*

\* transferable skills

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### **Teaching, learning and assessment**

Teaching and learning are concentrated into six periods of intensive learning in a residential context. Much care has been given in constructing a balance of different course elements across each learning block, to maximise learning outcomes. MASTFiR is taught by a mix of lectures, seminars, screenings, individual and group writing exercises and group workshop analysis. Students will also receive a number of tutorials, some in person during teaching blocks, and some online in the interim periods. There will additionally be a dedicated Moodle site for the group, with course material, noticeboards and the facility for students to read and critique each others' work in progress. Assessment of knowledge and understanding is typically by coursework in the form of script writing or screen plays. 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 programme is delivered as six blocks, each of five-and-a-half days, spread over a two-year period, beginning in April, with distance learning tutorials and support in between. The learning blocks are residential: two at RHUL Egham Campus; two at residential writers' retreats (options include the John Osborne and Ted Hughes Arvon Centre retreats, and private venues in Dorset and the Cotswolds), and two in Central London, which will focus mainly on the film and TV production and industry issues. MASTFiR

will be taught by a mix of lectures, seminars, screenings, individual and group writing exercises and group workshop analysis.

The programme 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) MA5800 Script Craft (0%)
- (ii) MA5801 Story and Theme (60%)
- (iii) MA5802 Development Lab (15%)
- (iv) MA5803 Contexts: Current British Film and Television Practice (25%)

For the fourth element, students will register for MA5803, but there will be the option to complete a placement and submit a report on their experiences. Successful completion of the placement and the report will result in a transfer to:

MA5803P Contexts: Current British Film and Television Practice (PLACEMENT) (25%)

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### **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 final project and in MA5800: Script Craft 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.

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### **Student support and guidance**

- Personal Advisers: All students are allocated a Personal Adviser with whom they meet when based at Egham or Bedford Square, and whom is contactable throughout the year during office hours. The Advisers role is to advise on academic, pastoral and welfare issues. The Personal Adviser will normally be a member of RHUL Media Arts postgraduate teaching staff, but not the students' own Course Convenor or Tutor.
- Staff will be available via their e-mail addresses, which are published in the programme handbook.
- There will be a high degree of intra-student contact and support via the dedicated Moodle site.
- Detailed student handbook and course resources will be available both in the Media Arts Office and on the dedicated website.
- Extensive supporting materials and learning resources are available in College libraries and computer centre.
- The College Careers Service and Departmental Careers Service Liaison Officer can offer individual careers advice and support.
- Students have access to all College and University support services, including Student Counselling Service, Health Centre and the Educational Support Office for students with special needs.

- The Postgraduate Staff-Student Committee meets three times per year with elected representatives from all Media Arts postgraduate courses. Minutes of these meetings are posted in the Department and communicated by e-mail.

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### **Admission requirements**

Applicants will typically have at least a good upper second-class Honours degree in Literature, Theatre or Media or a related discipline, or an equivalent overseas qualification. However students with degrees in other subjects will also be considered, as will those with relevant professional or creative experience in writing, the media or related fields such as radio and theatre.

Prospective students will submit two examples of creative writing, for preference pieces intended for film or television film/TV format, though other forms of creative writing such as short stories or plays will also be acceptable.

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 of RHUL is developing a strong research culture and has a growing number of Practice-based M Phil and PhD students. Further study to research degree level is therefore one option. Advancement in the film and television industries in areas of writing, development, agency and production would be likely. Other areas of media-related careers which would be enhanced by this degree are work for bodies such as for the British Film Institute and the UK and regional Film Councils; for Festivals and for other training programmes in the field. The MASTFiR programme will raise issues of career progress at various points throughout the course, especially in Block Four which deals with the structure and practice of the film and TV industries. 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 6<sup>th</sup> in the top 10 universities in the country in terms of proportion of 3\* and 4\* research.

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

The programme is taught by staff of Royal Holloway, University of London (with 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 Screenwriting for Television and Film (Retreat Programme)**

MA in Screenwriting for Television and Film (Retreat Programme) (1503)

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