

Course Outline: MA Film Producing

The course is a three-term, 180-credit MA, with five modules, taught over one year, and addresses all the core competences required of a professional film producer in the industry (creative development, project management and delivery, business affairs and business skills). It is explicitly industry-facing and will deploy a significant number of leading producers as visiting contributors to its faculty. At the same time, it immerses aspiring film producers in the creative hothouse of student directors, screenwriters, and cinematographers at the LFS and its two filmmaking studio buildings in Covent Garden.

MA Film Producing (MAP) includes all the technical skills required of a producer and students will have the opportunity to collaborate across the entire filmmaking programme on up to 180 films. For example, in 2024 the Graduate Showcase comprised over 70 films over five days which screened at a special event at the BFI Southbank. Producers are hugely in demand for this enormous output (the largest of any European film school). However, the MAP course itself does not include practical filmmaking within its curriculum.

Module 1 - Introduction to Film Producing (UK and Global)

Students will learn and research the ecosystem of the film industry. This is a seminar and research-based module in which students learn about and research a key strand within the UK industry (Production, Sales, Facilities, Finance). They then do the same for another leading territory (if they are international students this will normally be their 'home territory'). They then present a 'compare and contrast' analysis to the cohort in front of an external industry advisor. These dossiers form the basis of an 'industry address book' which is researched, shared, developed and refined by each succeeding cohort that passes through the course. Over time we will have built up 'address books' for every major filmmaking hub city from London to Tokyo. Concurrently the module examines the producer's roles and responsibilities in the processes of film and television production. The latter will be focussed both on the independent producer and their role as a creative entrepreneur; and on the role and function of the producer-for-hire.

Module 1 - Assessment:

A set of research documents that detail the profile and work of selected companies in a chosen sector of the UK and global screen industries. The documents should include basic information about each company – founders and key personnel, contact details, ownership, company profile, key works – historical, current and future. In addition, students will present a short analysis of the company and its place within the wider screen sector both locally and on the world stage. The purpose here is that students research a BODY of work made or produced or serviced by each company showing the evolution of that body of work over time by reference to its scale, sourcing and technical complexity (in the case of servicing businesses); or (in the case of production companies) by reference to: genre, visual style; casting choices; finance sources/distribution model.

Portfolio – 100% weighting

Module 2 - Story, Script and Commissioning

In this module students are introduced to the centrality of the producer in the creative as well as business life of a film or television series. Feature films and television series start as ideas and it is a key function of the producer to find, create and develop ideas into stories that become filmable and investable scripts. Through lectures, seminars and practical workshops, students will study the fundamentals of story and script development and learn how the commissioning and development process operates in the industries. Beginning with a classic script-to-screen set text, students will build knowledge of recognising the elements of a successful script, how

to refine and assess a script's potential and how to work with writers, agents and other key creatives in the process. Towards the end of the module, students will create and pitch film or television ideas to a panel for assessment. An additional feature of the module will be the opportunity for film producing students to work (on an optional 'speed-dating' basis) with MA Screenwriting students on exercises involving the development of their scripts (this does not form part of academic assessment).

Module 2 – Assessment

Presentation: Students present their project idea verbally to a panel consisting of an industry professional and a tutor. Students will be assessed on the strength and viability of the idea, the story treatment and the clarity of their verbal presentation.

Treatment: Students will submit a treatment for their proposed project. This written document should include a summary of the story, outline of key scenes, main character descriptions and indication of its tone. The work will be assessed on the strength of the idea and story, the persuasiveness of the prose and the quality of presentation.

Essay – An essay that reflects on the reasons for the choices made in relation to their proposed project and its presentation to the panel. Why the subject, characters, genre, setting and other considerations? Students must also give industry-context and examples of films, TV series or other texts that that have impacted their choices.

Presentation – 25% weighting

Treatment – 25% weighting

Essay – 50% weighting

Module 3 - Scheduling, Budgeting and Production Skills

Using the knowledge gained in the previous module about essential elements of industry standard scripts, students now explore the technical aspects required to enable physical production of a film or television series. Students will be introduced to an existing script and film / TV series episode, which will be used to develop their understanding of approaches to turning words on a page into filmed drama.

Through seminars with tutors and industry specialists, they will learn about script breakdown - how the producer works with the line producer and production manager to create a schedule and budget from the script by breaking it down into its component parts and costing each element, including cast and crew. This is all about making informed and consequential choices – choices relating to who to cast, key creatives, filming strategies and locations – and how they will impact budget and schedule. Students will look at how to approach this breakdown from several perspectives including size of budget (low to high), finance and commissioning source and proposed medium (film, television).

They will also explore approaches to pre-production and production including recruiting personnel and recognising the need to expand opportunities aimed at greater diversity, crew roles and responsibilities, working with a director and actors and maintaining control of the production during the stresses and challenges of film and programme making. Students will be introduced to industry measures to improve sustainability on production including a seminar on the industry's Albert Sustainability guidelines.

Module 3 – Assessment

Production Package - A schedule and budget for a film or television drama series that they wish to propose. The proposal must include: - A description of the film or TV series that they intend to

produce including the thinking behind their scheduling and budgeting decisions - Treatment and story synopsis; key cast; director; locations - A production schedule - Budget top sheet and notes on assumptions underpinning it - Cast breakdown of costs - Proposed crew and costs

Essay – An essay reflecting on the thinking behind the components of their production package. What were their considerations in arriving at the choices that they made? How does one choice – e.g. cast, schedule, sustainability – impact on others and the package overall?

Production Package – 50% weighting

Essay – 50% weighting

Module 4 - Finance, Business Affairs, and Rights Management

Attracting finance, acquiring rights and managing the complexities of cash flow and commercial exploitation lie at the heart of the business of film and high-end television. In this module, students will gain an understanding of the types and sources of UK film and high-end television financing, examining a variety of models and participants, including international finance. Students will gain familiarity with concepts like soft money and equity financing and explore the elements of a workable finance plan. Current industry practitioners will introduce students to the process of modelling film and TV finance, based on case studies and on the scripts and treatments developed and budgeted by students in module 2 and 3.

As part of their understanding of international industry context and career development, students will have the opportunity to spend a short time with film students abroad. If dates coincide, students may also have the opportunity to visit the Berlinale Film Festival which includes a film rights market. Using ‘The Filmmakers Legal Handbook’, students will explore the legal complexities of the acquisition and management of rights. Students will learn about underlying rights in intellectual properties like scripts, books or music, contractual rights with artists and production personnel and the critical importance of securing contracts with contributors, facilities and other production elements. Students will submit a revenue analysis of sample films and high-end television financing and an essay on one aspect of rights management or negotiation for assessment at the conclusion of the module.

Module 4 – Assessment

Revenue Analysis – Students are provided with a group of sales assumptions and the written outline waterfall summaries for several films. Using this information, students will provide a written analysis of the outcomes and their commentary on them. Which are the priority outcomes for investors? What is the overall profitability of the film once investors and others have been satisfied? Who amongst the investors are the winners and losers both in the making and distribution of the film?

A short-form engagement letter for a key creative (writer / director / actor) in a film or TV drama series. The letter should include the terms of the engagement – duration, shooting schedule and remuneration – and the IP and usage rights required by the contracting company.

Essay - An analysis of the terms of the engagement letter and how they were arrived at. In this essay you should examine each of the proposed contractual terms including remuneration, period of engagement and assignment of rights together with obligations to demonstrate understanding of what is at stake for the person being engaged and the contracting company. Your analysis should include reference to comparable examples and understanding of the course set text and other relevant literature.

Revenue Analysis – 25% weighting

Short-form engagement letter – 25% weighting

Essay – 50% weighting

Module 5 - Film and Television Producing – the Creative and Business Project Proposal

This final long module synthesises the elements and understanding of the previous four into one overarching piece of work. Using their recently acquired or amplified knowledge, students will produce a dossier that combines creative elements (story/script, genre, casting and key HODs) with production and business considerations (budget and schedule, finance, legal, contractual, physical production) in a single integrated piece of work. Working with a new script of their own or fellow student's origination, they will build a film or television package, detailing their proposed creative elements including writer, main cast, setting, direction and design together with major business components including budget, finance plan and the acquisition of rights.

The package should demonstrate awareness and actions that address questions of diversity in subject, cast and crew and sustainability in the use of resources. This is a largely self-directed module with students using research and their own initiative to answer the questions that their proposal raises in its creation. How have they been able to effectively use their judgement to implement knowledge gained during the course into the delivery of a package that is commercially consistent across all of its elements – cast / crew / finance / budget / schedule / location? The script itself does NOT form part of the assessment, which is focussed entirely on the packaging of the material and its consistency. Their work will be assessed by a panel presentation and in writing at the conclusion of the module

Module 5 – Assessment

Creative and Business Proposal for a feature film or high-end television project

Presentation – Students verbally present their proposal for a feature film or high-end television project to a panel consisting of an industry professional and a tutor. The presentation gives them the opportunity to be questioned on the creative and business assumptions that lie behind their proposal including any challenges that they foresee in being able to realise it.

Portfolio – A written portfolio of industry-standard documents which together form a proposal for a feature film or high-end television drama project including title, logline and synopsis, budget, cast and creatives, finance plan, key contracts and marketing materials. The proposal must feature a range of financing participants including tax incentive schemes, government funding, private equity and international sales and distribution. The proposal must include rationale for choices with comparisons made to other similar projects.

Presentation – 20% weighting

Portfolio – 80% weighting

Students will benefit from the following learning outcomes:

- Demonstrate in-depth practical skills and knowledge of techniques relevant to the professional skills of film and television production and to demonstrate an advanced understanding of concepts, information and techniques informed by knowledge at the forefront of the discipline;
- Exhibit competence in the knowledge and critical and intellectual abilities relating to the development, pitching and financing of a production;
- Demonstrate an advanced understanding of professional technical processes and practices in the discipline area of a production;

- Take a proactive and self-reflective role in working and to develop professional relationships with others;
- Proactively to formulate ideas and hypotheses and to evaluate these;
- Evaluate current issues and research in the discipline.

After completing the course students will have had the opportunity to acquire the following abilities:

- Professional, including presentation, skills necessary to undertake a higher research degree and/or for employment in a higher capacity in the film industry area of professional practice;
- Critically evaluate their own achievement and that of others;
- Be able to independently and collaboratively solve problems and plan complex production projects independently and collaboratively in unpredictable industry situations;
- Independent learning and the ability to work in a way which ensures continuing professional development;
- Critically to engage in the development of professional/disciplinary boundaries and norms
- Deal with complex issues both systematically and creatively, make sound judgements in the absence of complete data, and communicate their conclusions clearly to specialist and non-specialist audiences
- Demonstrate self-direction and originality in tackling and solving problems, and act autonomously in planning and implementing tasks at a professional or equivalent level
- Continue to advance their knowledge and understanding, and to develop new skill to a high level.