

LEEDS BECKETT UNIVERSITY

Course Specification

MA Documentary Filmmaking

2017-18 (MADOC)

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LEEDS
BECKETT
UNIVERSITY

Faculty of Arts, Environment & Technology

School of Film, Music and Performing Arts

Award and programme title: MA Documentary Filmmaking

Level of qualification: Level 7

Interim awards available:

Award	Title	Level
<i>PGDip</i>	<i>Documentary Filmmaking</i>	7
<i>PGCrt</i>	<i>Documentary Filmmaking</i>	7

Length and status of programme and mode of study

Programme	Length (years) Status (FT/PT/SW)	Mode (campus-based / DL or other)
MA Documentary Filmmaking	18 Months/ 3 Semesters FT	Campus-based

Course Specification

Overview and Aims

Some things never change, like telling a good story. Documentaries have been telling good stories since the days of John Grierson, and they will continue to do so. But today there is a revolution taking place: documentary filmmakers can now finance, distribute and make their films as never before.

Gone are the old gatekeepers, and the days when only broadcasters and distributors could get your film made and seen; there have been fantastic innovations in how we finance and find audiences for our films, new kinds of films and niche, more targeted audiences. For emerging documentary filmmakers, it's not so much about breaking into the industry, it is about *being* the industry and embracing the change.

The MA Documentary Filmmaking course offers emerging filmmakers (the students) the chance to re-think, to create, and to embrace the change; to imagine a great story, and to find

an audience for their financed, graduation documentary film.

MA Documentary Filmmaking will develop genuinely experienced and perceptive practitioners who are able to take on the complex and demanding work of their major documentary project, and who will then be able to move on into highly demanding and competitive film industries.

What is the documentary industry? At the Northern Film School we define this as a wide spectrum of filmmaking activities that includes; broadcasting, cinema, festivals, the internet and new media platforms, education, political and social debate, experimental film, ethnography, wild life, observation, actuality and reality, performance, recording and documenting the world – and all this is for an audience.

The Course is able to call upon industry professionals and practitioners who will contribute regularly through master classes, workshops and mentoring.

Academic Aims

According to the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications: Much of the study undertaken for master's degrees will have been at, or informed by, the forefront of an academic or professional discipline. Students will have shown originality in the application of knowledge, and they will understand how the boundaries of knowledge are advanced through research. They will be able to deal with complex issues both systematically and creatively, and they will show originality in tackling and solving problems. They will have the qualities needed for employment in circumstances requiring sound judgement, personal responsibility and initiative in complex and unpredictable professional environments'. (2014, p. 28) Accordingly the educational aims of the MA Documentary Filmmaking programme are designed to enable the students to:

- a) develop and utilise Master's Level specialist documentary production skills and techniques;
- b) become an individual, collaborative, creative and distinctive documentary filmmaker through experimentation and speculative enquiry;
- c) develop intellectual independence and undertake independent study;
- d) develop a critical understanding of the documentary industry and the wide spectrum of filmmaking activities involved;
- e) build and develop an ethical framework and methodological plan for their own documentary practice by studying classic and contemporary documentaries, genres and key practitioners;
- f) create a documentary film project of originality with a marketing strategy for an intended audience.

g) construct a personal and professional plan to continue as a documentary filmmaker, or to take up higher-level research, upon completion of their MA.

MA Documentary Filmmaking is part of the School of Film, Music and Performing Arts and as such MA students are able to work with fellow students in Music and Performing Arts as well as working with other cohorts from the MA Filmmaking, and BA (Hons) Filmmaking within the Northern Film School. In addition the School now has a number of researchers at doctoral level providing potential new pathways for MA students as well as ensuring a further engagement in experience at different levels.

Course Learning Outcomes

1	possess a high level of individual competence in and understanding of the relevant specialist skills and be able to fully deploy this knowledge in making original, experimental and creative work for an intended audience;
2	engage with and apply a critical awareness of, and responsibility for, the conceptual, contextual, historical, theoretical, ethical and legal dimensions of documentary practice, and relate this to contemporary debates that underpin and inform documentary practice;
3	demonstrate an ability to work effectively with others, through collaboration, collective endeavour and negotiation with an understanding of and respect for the filmmaking process;
4	employ self-knowledge and self-direction to demonstrate originality and cross disciplinary thinking in tackling and solving problems within documentary filmmaking, and apply this knowledge to the evolution of individual and collaborative projects;
5	demonstrate the development of Master's and industry level research skills and methodologies, and construct and apply an independent learning strategy that will enable continuing professional, creative and research development;
6	create a substantial Master's and industry level documentary project as an individual or co-collaborator that illustrates the abilities to: engage in investigation and speculative enquiry; generate creative ideas, concepts and proposals; and use complex and innovative thinking.

Course Structure

	Level 7
	The structure of the MA Documentary Filmmaking course begins at the beginning, with an idea. That idea evolves freely and flexibly; worked on collaboratively through the first two semesters exploring the technical and cultural aspects of the documentary form, culminating in the delivery of the

Master's Project in the final and third semester, with a tailored plan to reach an intended audience in the outside world.

The ideas are supported and cultivated throughout the course by modules that have been specifically designed to encourage cross-disciplinary and developmental thinking and practice.

The Modules

First Semester

All students explore, make and learn collaboratively in the group cohort. There are three modules in the first semester:

Creative Practice 1:

The place where the students' creative filmmaking practice is challenged. Understanding creativity, ideas bending, experimenting with technical aspects and storytelling are all part of the Creative Practice experience. Students get taken outside of their comfort zone. They're allowed to try and fail, to play and make mistakes, but then reflect on the experience in order to not be frightened of experimenting in their practice as documentary filmmakers.

Documentary Practice 1:

In this module students immerse themselves in and become equipped with the specialist skills needed to become a competent documentary filmmaker. As well as basic operation skills there will be discussion and debate about current day practice within each specialism. Student ideas will be incorporated into discussion and where possible into specialist skills exercises. This will help to continually develop the ideas taking on-board the specialist advice. Documentary project ideas will also be developed throughout this module in preparation for the pitching and commissioning of the Master's Projects.

Documentary Research 1:

This is the place where students will watch documentary films and take part in seminars, looking at why filmmakers made the films they did in the way they did. The aim will be to get a better understanding of the tools that can help turn ideas into a film and to understand how to utilise documentary techniques to convey the story, idea, subject and meaning effectively to an audience. There will be an introduction to documentary film theory and research methodologies that underpin best practice for documentary production. Students will also examine their own documentary proposals in order to form a plan for the delivery of their films to an audience. This is the module that stimulates debate about style, form and content of their own work.

Second semester

Mirroring industry practice, students compete for production budgets for their Master's Projects then all films are green-lit through negotiation. Students move into their chosen roles and begin to intensively develop their ideas and skills,

individually or collectively, and will begin to think about relevant platforms, crowd funding and sourcing for their finished films.

Documentary Practice 2:

Having studied the 3 specialisms in semester one students will be in a good place to decide how they want to develop as filmmakers. This module will help shape distinctive documentary makers by their choice of production skills and methods. Advance level workshops will deliver skills to enable the Master's Projects to be completed for festival, broadcast and internet publishing.

Documentary Research 2:

This module will build on Documentary Research 1 by applying some of the ideas and concepts discussed in the first module directly to the student's own work; which approaches work best for which subjects? How will the students come to decisions regarding the style and the ethical perspective of their own work? What justifications can they give for this? This will be the place for students to understand and develop their own framework for their documentary practice in light of established genres and approaches in the documentary form. It will be an opportunity to formulate their own ethical position and consider how this might affect the form they use in their own work.

Master's Project:

A 60 credit module which starts in semester 2 and continues to the end of semester 3: The aim of this module is to turn those initial, semester 1 ideas into audience ready, completed films, or documentary projects. It will be possible for each student to make their own Master's Project working with collaborators in different specialisms. It will also be possible and encouraged for two or more students to collaborate on larger, perhaps more ambitious projects.

Third semester

Students will be shooting, editing and finishing their Master's Project. They will also be thinking about and developing a strategy for their future practice and / or higher-level research once they've completed the course.

The Master's Project continues to completion with guided support from tutors and industry practitioners. Regular work-in-progress screenings and feedback are designed to advance the project and make ready for potential audiences.

Next Project Development:

Students will develop a project and professional plan for their continued practice or higher-level research upon completion of their MA. This project could potentially be individual work, or one in collaboration with colleagues. The module will also help to provide a toolkit that the student will need in order to progress onto the next stage of their professional and personal development.

	Semester 1	Core Y/N	Semester 2	Core Y/N
	Creative Practice	Y	Documentary Practice 2	Y

	Documentary Practice 1	Y	Documentary Research 2	Y
	Documentary Research 1	Y	Master's Project (60-cp runs over s2 & 3)	Y
	Semester 3			
	Master's Project (cont.)	Y		
	Next Project Development	Y		

Learning and Teaching

Details relating to contact hours and other key information sets (KIS) are available on the course page of our Online Prospectus on our website.

Learning and Teaching Approaches

The MA Documentary Filmmaking embraces and adheres to the principles outlined in the Learning and Teaching Strategy document (2011-15) which can be accessed at: www.leedsbeckett.ac.uk/partners/centre-for-learning-and-teaching.htm.

The course employs a learning and teaching strategy that enables students to realise ambitions as practicing documentary filmmakers in an exciting and diverse industry. Practice, research and creative modules work in partnership to develop graduates with cross-disciplinary abilities and practices that help them to find their place in that diverse industry.

The encouragement of collaboration throughout the course, in workshops, exercises and projects, creates a hub of learning that allows knowledge to transfer from tutor to student, from student to student and often from student to tutor. Collaboration is a well-founded practice in documentary filmmaking. The course, modules and tutors encourage this approach at every opportunity to help strengthen and advance the students' documentary practice and projects.

The MA Documentary Filmmaking course also mirrors and teaches best industry practice. The course has strong connections to, and involvement from industry bodies and professional documentary filmmakers who deliver specialist workshops and master classes. The involvement of industry practitioners strengthens the professional ethos of the course and this keeps students informed about current and best industry practice. An example of this is the pitching process for Master's Project ideas where the panel would consist not only of Film School staff who have great experience of the industry but also industry professionals who take part in discussions and give feedback to each student proposal.

Feedback and continuing assessment through all the modules is designed to encourage ongoing improvement in the student's creative and professional practice.

The Film School learning environment is one that positively welcomes and challenges the students to develop their awareness of other cultures, creative styles and society values.

Learning and Teaching Activities

The MA Documentary Filmmaking encompasses a number of key activities including scheduled lectures, seminars, practical workshops, individual and group tutorials, supervision throughout project development, as well as guided independent study.

In the Documentary Practice 1 and 2 modules practical skills workshops and exercises provide the backbone of essential professional skills that equip the students to tackle the creation, development and production of documentary projects to a high standard.

Throughout the two Documentary Research modules seminars and presentations encourage and develop an understanding of contemporary documentary theories and debates that stimulate students to explore possibilities within their own evolving practice. The combination of the Documentary Research and Documentary Practice modules enable students to make an informed choice about the type of documentary practice they wish to pursue.

The learning and teaching approach of the Creative Practice module is to encourage students to find their own filmmaking voice and vision through experimentation and reflection. Film exercises or sketches driven by the students' ideas are designed to experience and develop creative filmmaking and collaboration skills through the combination of; play, risk, experimentation, mistakes, and reflection on the processes to arrive at a greater understanding of their own creativity.

The development of the Master's Projects follows best industry practice. Once the ideas have been developed through workshops and tutorials, the students pitch to a panel, work with conditions and move into production with budgets receiving continual tutor support from development to completion.

Throughout the course students are required to be active learners, whether through the development of their documentary projects, through their presentations of critical theory, where students are expected to present to their fellow students and to engage in discussion about the ideas and concepts raised, or through the process of applying their individual understanding to the documentary projects.

There is an emphasis upon the reflexive process, both as individuals and as collaborators, with the expectation that the insights discovered and explored through this process will be demonstrated visibly and critically through practical application. One of the strengths of the course is that there is not a separation between tutors and lecturers who deliver theory on the one hand, with practitioners providing practical classes on the other. Instead the integration of theory and practice is reflected by the cross-collaboration of the School's academic staff in both areas.

The Film School has developed a strong PhD research programme. PhD students have undertaken research into a number of filmmaking arenas and the introduction of PhD studies into the Film School has succeeded in stimulating increased interest in the significance of theoretical work allied to practice.

Graduate Attributes (UG only)

N/A

Use of the Virtual Learning Environment

Currently MyBeckett is used and additionally the Film School is gradually moving over to using CAGD (<http://cagd.co.uk/about/index.html>) and the MA Documentary Filmmaking will be taking full advantage of this opportunity to develop submissions of portfolios, on line journals, screenings, etc. VIMEO, Dropbox and similar programmes are used for file/video sharing between students and staff. The nature of filmmaking is collaborative and students are encouraged to be proactive in developing their own approaches to file sharing. Module handbooks, course handbooks and assignment briefs are all provided electronically through the VLE.

Module discussion forums and blogs, created on the VLE – CAGD, will be used to help develop discussion around the modules. Tutors and students will be encouraged to post articles, papers or information to share, in a way that will enable students to add to and influence the direction and detail of taught sessions.

Audio-visual material will be heavily used in the teaching of this course, and this will normally be hosted on CAGD to add value to the online presence.

Use of Blended-Learning

The nature of the collaborative process of filmmaking and the fact that the collaboration is practice-based does mean that the majority of learning within the Film School and on the Course itself is either individually face-to-face or through practice based workshops. However there is an increasing use of file-sharing through the use of new technology and this will continue to be a developing process as the Film School as a whole responds to new possibilities presented in this area.

Assessment Strategy

The overarching idea of the MA Documentary Filmmaking course is to help develop graduates who have an informed understanding of specialist, creative and intellectual skills that can be applied to the production of a documentary project for an intended audience (the Master's Project). This process of student development requires continual assessment and feedback of the individual as their documentary practice evolves.

Formative assessment of, and feedback on the specialist, creative and intellectual skills that make up each student filmmaker is a major part of the individual and group tutorial strategy. Tutors keep up to date with the students' preferred or intended practice and students incorporate tutor and sometimes peer feedback into their practice in order to develop as an individual and collaborative documentary filmmaker. The practice of continuous assessment

and feedback takes place throughout workshops, seminars, assignments, exercises, and at all stages of project development through pre-production, production and post-production.

A diverse range of summative assessment methods is used in the seven modules of the course and care has been taken to ration the distinct methods across the three semesters with the aim of not overloading students with the same type of assessment at the same time.

Semester One

Creative Practice: Portfolio (100%)

Documentary Practice 1: Oral Presentation (100%)

Documentary Research 1: Class Presentation, Written Assignment (50%/50%)

Semester Two

Documentary Practice 2: Portfolio (100%)

Documentary Research 2: Oral Presentation, Reflective Journal (50%/50%)

Master's Project: Project Proposal and Work-in-Progress Presentation (20%)

Semester Three

Master's Project: Final Project and Deliverables, Oral Presentation (70%/10%)

Next Project Development: Project and Professional Plan (100%)

Presentation skills are an important attribute for documentary practitioners, whether used to, convince financial funders or, 'on-screen' contributors to invest in their project. This factor is reflected in the MA Documentary Filmmaking course with five out of eleven assessment points requiring an oral presentation.

Assessment will encompass the individual contributions towards collaborative work and the project itself. Abilities and skills will be assessed through a combination of individual portfolios, oral presentations, coursework assignments, class presentations and essays. Knowledge and understanding will be assessed through seminar presentations, essays, portfolios, coursework assignments and oral presentations.

Assessment strategies for the modules.

The Creative Practice module, which is concerned with individual creativity, experimental practice, and collaboration, incorporates ongoing screenings of the student film sketches to tutors and the peer group, who give immediate written and verbal critical feedback. The principle behind this is to help students develop and grow creatively over the semester as they have the opportunity to incorporate and respond to the screening feedback through their final portfolio of films and written reflection.

The Documentary Practice 1 module feeds directly into Documentary Practice 2. The aim of the module is to develop practitioners with a well founded skills based knowledge. In Documentary Practice 1 formative feedback takes place during workshops and tutorials to

help students understand and discuss strengths and weaknesses in the specialist skills. Through an oral presentation at the end of the semester, students put forward a case for which specialist skills they wish to continue to develop. Through this ongoing discussion tutors can help students decide which specialisms they should pursue in Documentary Practice 2 and the Master's Project. The summative assessment for Practice 2 takes the form of a portfolio of writing, supported by still and moving images, that charts the development of the student's evolving practice.

Similarly Documentary Research 1 feeds into the Documentary Research 2 module. Research 1 introduces the body of contemporary documentary knowledge in order to inform students of not only research skills but also the range of genres and practices. Assessment in this module is by student presentation to the class with immediate tutor and peer feedback plus a written assignment at the end of semester in which the student can apply the class presentation feedback. Documentary Research 2 continues to develop and use the knowledge gained from Research 1 by applying the ideas and concepts discussed directly into the student's own work. There is ongoing formative assessment and feedback through tutorials. The summative assessment of Documentary Research 2 is by a reflective journal plus an oral presentation.

For the Master's Projects students may elect to work as an individual filmmaker or co-collaborator. In the case of collaborative projects students will be assessed both in terms of the individual specialist skills contribution to the documentary project and by the overall quality of the Master's Project as a whole. The assessment strategy is aimed at ensuring that where a student's individual contribution and ability is at a higher or lower level than the overall quality of the final project, this individual contribution can and will be separately assessed as represented by the specialist contribution to the final project, the individual presentations and coursework assignments. In addition to formal assessment points, both formative and summative, a continuous process of engagement, based around individual and collective tutorials, together with the provision of a range of tasks ensures that the students themselves are able to monitor their own progress in meeting the course learning outcomes.

Because of the nature of the collaborative process students who may fail and are required to resubmit will have their resubmission requirements determined on an individual basis and appropriate projects or assignments designated according to their individual creative skills enabling them to demonstrate their achievement of learning outcomes for the module. The Northern Film School as a whole has considerable experience in this area and strategies to ensure equitable assessment in collaborative projects have been developed with care and precision. Deliverables, based upon industry accepted standards also form part of the assessable material.

The Next Project Development module is assessed through an individual Project and Professional Plan. Ongoing tutorial supervision and feedback support the development and creation of a plan for each student. The plan can be wide ranging from the development of a documentary project to go into production on leaving the course, through to a professional development plan for further research, or to facilitate a strategy to gain employment in a part of the industry upon graduation.

Feedback on Assessed Coursework

Verbal feedback is provided immediately after presentations of both theoretical and practical work; formative assessment is provided throughout the development process of all projects including the major projects; summative assessment is provided formally with written feedback made available to the students.

Module Assessment Methods

Module Titles	Core (Y)	Portfolio	Oral Presentation	Written assignment	Reflective journal	Project Proposal & Work-in-Progress Presentation	Final Documentary Project including Portfolio of Deliverables	Project & Professional Plan
Creative Practice	Y	100						
Documentary Practice 1	Y		100					
Documentary Research 1	Y		50	50				
Documentary Practice 2	Y	100						
Documentary Research 2	Y		50		50			
Master's Project	Y		10			20	70	
Next Project Development	Y							100

Employability and Professional Context

The course has a strong focus on developing professional and employability skills for the broad documentary industry that demands from new entrants the ability to hit the floor running. The creativity of the course is vital to its development but equally recognizes that students are prepared for an arts industry that is highly competitive, market and commercially orientated, with high professional standards.

Teaching strategies for the course are aimed at ensuring students will develop a reflective and reflexive approach to their practice. They will develop transferable skills which are not only generic but specific to the requirements of the industry, for example:

- the ability to structure and generate projects within a market / commercial perspective
- work effectively, flexibly and professionally to established deadlines
- understanding and working to professional briefs
- entrepreneurial awareness and making effective use of 'insider' and 'embodied' knowledge

- ability to communicate concepts clearly and effectively to both specialist and non-specialist practitioners
- ability to evaluate and use technological and software developments and apply these effectively in practice.

Students will demonstrate considerable advanced practical knowledge within their chosen specialisms, and demonstrate the ability to work professionally, collaboratively and creatively across a range of projects. Students will be assessed on their craft skills as well as upon their collaborative work and project work.

The continuing development of the student's industry practice is reflected in the Next Project Development module where students will be equipped with both the toolkit and a marketable project to move them forward from the academy to industry or higher-level research. Students are also encouraged and supported in the formation of collaborative, entrepreneurial and creative teams that will be able to work together after completion of the course.

Work-Related Activities

N/A

Placement or Work-Related Activity Level:

N/A

Placement or Work-Related Activity Length in Weeks:

N/A

Type of Placement or Work-Related Activity:

N/A

Reference Points used in course design and delivery

All our courses leading to Leeds Beckett University awards have been designed and approved in accordance with UK and European quality standards. Our courses utilise the Frameworks for Higher Education Qualifications (FHEQ) and relevant subject benchmarks (where these are available) and professional, statutory and regulatory body requirements (for professionally accredited courses).

We review our courses annually and periodically, responding to student feedback and a range of information to enhance our courses. Our University is also subject to external review by the Quality Assurance Agency. Our latest report can be found on the QAA website at <http://www.qaa.ac.uk/reviews-and-reports>

We appoint External Examiners to verify that our University sets and maintains standards for awards which adhere to relevant national subject benchmark statements and the FHEQ (UK), ensure standards and student achievements are comparable with other Higher Education Institutions in the UK, with which they are familiar, and ensure that assessments measure achievement of course and module learning outcomes and reach the required standard. External Examiners may also provide feedback on areas of good practice or potential enhancement.

Record of Enhancement

No.	Detail of modification (Provide a brief description of the modification and where the Course Specification has been updated)	Date Effective (Indicate the academic year of entry and course level(s) to which the modification will apply)
	Example Assessment changed from examination to presentation in Module X, see section entitled Module Assessment Methods.	Level 5 from September 2018-19 entry

