

LEEDS BECKETT UNIVERSITY

Course Specification

MFA Filmmaking

2017-18 (MFAFM)

www.leedsbeckett.ac.uk



LEEDS
BECKETT
UNIVERSITY

**Faculty of Arts, Environment & Technology
School of Film, Music and Performing Arts**

Award and programme title: MFA Filmmaking

Level of qualification: Level 7

Interim awards available:

Award	Title	Level
MA	Filmmaking	7
PG Dip.	Filmmaking	7
PG Cert.	Filmmaking	7

Length and status of programme and mode of study

Programme	Length (years) Status (FT/PT/SW)	Mode (campus- based / DL or other)
MFA Filmmaking	5 semesters across 2 academic years (additional summer semester in Y2) FT	Campus-based

Course Specification

Overview and Aims

The industries of film are ever expanding and changing, creating new opportunities and audiences, but the competition to enter the field becomes increasingly more intense. Finding

a way to get noticed is difficult, and the filmmaker has to be able to present many skills up front. These include:

- familiarity with the technology and techniques of filmmaking.
- an understanding of the various specialist filmmaking roles.
- a critical engagement with current industry debates.
- a sophisticated level of storytelling ability.
- an original, creative sensibility.
- sound decision-making and problem solving abilities.

The MFA provides the learning opportunities needed to develop these qualities, and the space to put them to remarkable use.

The first three semesters of the MFA encapsulate taught sessions and workshops, intensive collaboration and working in a specialist role in order to create professional, industry-level work. These three semesters also challenge the notions of film through research and development, always thinking ahead to the next project.

The final two semesters push this approach further, enabling the student to forge a bespoke learning programme within a supportive environment. This is the opportunity to emerge with a strong show-reel, targeted at a career goal. Not only is the work expected to be of industry standard, it also has to reflect the creative concerns of the individual, making it stand out from the crowd.

This philosophy is illustrated in diagram 1.1 below.

Sem 1	Module 1 (40)		Module 2 (20)
	Specialist Collaboration in Filmmaking		Developing Research
Sem 2	Module 3 (20)	Module 4 (20)	Module 5 (20)
	Advanced Collaborative Filmmaking	Research Project	Film Project Development
Sem 3	Module 6 (40)		Module 7 (20)
	Collaborative Film Project		Next Project Development
Sems 4/5	Modules 8 (80) & 9 (40)		
	Major Film Project		
	Film Project Journal		

1.1 Five semester, nine module MFA structure, bracketed figures indicate credit points per module.

The 'Film Industries'

'Film' is a commonly used term that has become applied to the moving image irrespective of the originating format. Thus, it covers analogue and digital work that is made and distributed across many platforms and type of venue. These include, but are not limited to, cinema, television, galleries and internet. Companies and individuals involved in film production can be doing so for any number of these formats and outlets. Equally the

funding and revenue from these works is many and varied, as are the roles that an individual can follow.

The course and modules are designed to be deliberately non-prescriptive in their definition of 'film', allowing the ability to embrace any potential form of work –screenplays, development documents, films, web-based projects – anything which the student(s) may deem useful to their own development. There is an emphasis on specialist roles in collaboration, collaboration being a term interpreted within given circumstances, usually project dependent. The course also presents film creation in a number of learning situations that move from highly structured to self-guided and self-taught modes of delivery. Thus the initial semesters of the course are heavily planned and timetabled, giving way to a looser structure, allowing the individual to shape a chosen path of independent research. Within this design, the student will be able to understand 'film' as a whole series of potential creative outputs (e.g. screenplays, proposals, short works, features, multi-part pieces) and with many possible platforms for presentation (e.g. cinema, television, festivals, screenwriting contests, websites and so forth). Therefore, the academic and creative practice contained in this course prepares students for the film industries as defined above.

Widening research and practice

As part of the School of Film, Music and Performing Arts, MFA students are able to work with other cohorts within the film school at BA (Hons) level, as well as students in music and performing arts. In addition, the School now has a number of practice-based researchers at doctoral level, providing potential new pathways and opportunities for MFA students both during and after the course. The ethos of this environment is very much founded on the understanding that research (academic insight) and creative practice (professional expertise) combine to underpin creativity. Working within, and emerging from, this ethos will give MFA graduates an edge in a highly competitive discipline.

These educational aims have been designed with the *Framework for Higher Education Qualifications* (2014) in mind, which states that: 'Much of the study undertaken for masters 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.'

Course Learning Outcomes

1	Understand and deploy specialist filmmaking skills and techniques, showing an awareness of how the various specialisms integrate in the creation of industry-level activity.
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2	Critically engage with and apply contemporary debates in filmmaking practice, presenting an informed and cogent approach to the discipline and its underlying concepts.
3	Work effectively with others in collaboration, balancing personal responsibility and group dynamics within filmmaking practice.
4	Use originality and initiative in problem-solving, dealing with complex issues systematically and creatively.
5	Demonstrate research skills, independent learning ability and self-direction in the undertaking of film-related projects.
6	Combine complex and innovative thinking with sound judgment in the creation of a visual storytelling work suitable for industry presentation.
7	Demonstrate creative leadership abilities, informed by critical and analytical authority.
8	Combine expert with original understanding as an advanced, independent thinker.
9	Formulate innovative filmmaking concepts, drawn from an incisive and systematic approach to seeking alternative methodological solutions.

Course Structure

Level 7
All modules are 20 credits unless otherwise stated.
<p>Semester 1. (PG Cert) Students are provided with a thorough introduction to the requirements of the Film School and the expectations of professional filmmaking, practising collaborative and creative filmmaking through experimentation and speculative enquiry (Specialist Collaboration in Filmmaking, 40 credits). In addition, they will research elements of the wider context of filmmaking and present their findings. (Developing Research)</p> <p>Semester 2. (PG Dip) Students will continue to develop their research methodologies and their comprehensive appreciation and application of the connections between cultural, social and economic contexts of filmmaking (Research Project). There will be a focus on the research and development of a complex film project, with an intensive period of developing, experimenting and exploring. (MA Film Project Development) Additionally, they will add to their experience of</p>

filmmaking skills and practice though being involved in supervised film production work (**Advanced Collaboration in Filmmaking**).

Semester 3. (MA)

The **Collaborative Film Project (40 credits)** will see the realisation of complex works showing a high level of professional creativity, the utilisation of skills at a high level and the demonstration of sophisticated and critically aware conceptual understanding in both concept and execution. Through the **Next Project Development** module students will research and prepare for work or study beyond the MA level, whether this is a move into industry or preparation for a project to be made at a higher level of research and study.

Semesters 4 & 5. (MFA)

The **Major Film Project (80 credits)** will be a substantial, original piece of work that demonstrates and challenges the accrued knowledge and skills of the individual filmmaker/student. It will be completed to professional standards and be, in effect, 'industry-ready'. The **Film Project Journal (40 credits)** will chart the research, development and creation of this work, and show the in-depth, reflexive skills of the filmmaker/student. This work will 'point the way' for the student's career of investigation and innovation.

Semester 1	Core	Semester 2	Core
Developing Research	Y	Research Project	Y
Specialist Collaboration in Filmmaking	Y	Advanced Collaborative Filmmaking	Y
		Film Project Development	Y
Semester 3	Core	Semesters 4 & 5	Core
Collaborative Film Project	Y	Major Film Project	Y
Next Project Development	Y	Film Project Journal	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 MFA Filmmaking embraces and adheres to the principles outlined in the Learning and Teaching Strategy (2011-15) document 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 aims to engage students in both critical/reflexive activity and practical/specialist skill acquisition with an emphasis on the value of this inter-relationship. In this way it aims for vocational and academic success.

To meet learning outcomes and build a film portfolio students are involved in a dialogue of personal development. Feedback and continuing assessment during the development of projects is an underlying principle of each module's progress.

The course provides an active learning environment for students based upon the values of the academic community, which is also embedded with the entrepreneurial and creative philosophy (see below) of the filmmaker and which will provide the students with the full experience of the collaborative creative environment. The learning environment is one that positively welcomes and challenges the students to develop their awareness of other cultures, creative styles and society values.

The approach to Assessment, Learning and Teaching is grounded upon the following principles:

- The provision of an all-round contextual understanding of the filmmaker's craft; including the development of individual creativity, with a strong theoretical and cultural awareness whilst exploring and developing the professional and craft specific skills required.
- Providing an environment in which students collaborate in creative and professional partnerships whilst maintaining individual integrity.
- A commitment to the development of entrepreneurial awareness through the provision of industry-based events, networking with industry professionals and ensuring that academic staff are committed to sharing their professional and creative knowledge.
- Encouraging the development of innovative subject material, challenging students to explore new content, new methods of practice, and to push the boundaries of experience and knowledge.
- Developing partnerships that will provide a sustainable framework for continuing international creative collaboration.

Learning and Teaching Activities

The MFA Filmmaking encompasses a number of key activities including scheduled lectures and seminars, individual tutorials, project supervision, practical classes and workshops as well as guided independent study. Experimentation in both practice and in thought is specifically encouraged and throughout the course students are required to be active learners, whether through the creation of their projects, their journals or through presentations. These activities will invite discussion and feedback, which will in turn create further development. This emphasis on the reflexive process, both as individual and as collaborator is based upon the expectation that the insights discovered and explored will be made visibly and critically manifest through practical application.

One of the strengths of the course is that there is no separation between tutors delivering critical analysis and practitioners providing practical classes. Instead, the integration of 'theory' and 'practice' is reflected by the cross-collaboration of the school's academic staff in both areas. Similarly the emphasis upon the collaborative process ensures that insights in the differing areas of specialist understanding will be incorporated into, and influence the understanding of, fellow students' practical and theoretical understanding.

Research is a key characteristic of the course, as the practice of filmmaking is founded upon developing an understanding of the form through ongoing individual and group research. In terms of formulating a project, making it and reflecting upon its nature (and that of the developing film industries), research is the lynchpin. Consequently, there is a series of modules through the programme that encourage and develop this skill. This is also something which staff and students on the PhD programme are engaged in, and able to share with MFA students (more details on the nature of this research can be found in box 57 'Research and Scholarly Activity' below)

The Film School has developed a strong PhD research programme with PhD students undertaking research into a number of filmmaking arenas. The introduction of PhD studies into the Film School environment has already succeeded in stimulating an increased interest in the significance of theoretical work allied to practice and it is intended that the MFA Filmmaking will contribute to this strategy. This strategy is exemplified within the MFA in the activity initiated in the modules 'Film Project Development' and 'Next Project Development', both of which steer the student towards a period of research and exploration in the development of a film. There is then a provision for these projects to then be realised in the 'Collaborative Film Project' and 'Major Film Project' modules respectively, which allows for a further period of creation, learning and critical analysis which would be recorded and discussed within a reflexive journal, either as part of the module, or as a module running alongside the activity (i.e. The 'Film Project Journal' module.)

Graduate Attributes (UG only)

N/A

Use of the Virtual Learning Environment

Currently, the outgoing MA Filmmaking uses MyBeckett and is piloting the use of CAGD (<http://cagd.co.uk/about/index.html>). The MFA Filmmaking will be taking full advantage of opportunities to develop the submission of portfolios, on line journals, screenings, etc. using VIMEO, Dropbox and similar programmes. GoogleDocs and Prezi are also 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 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 MyBeckett or 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 often 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 modern 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 MFA encapsulates three contained awards (PG Cert., PG Dip. and MA) and a target award (MFA). The learning outcomes have been devised to clearly divide these award points, each one encapsulating the previous one, and being incrementally more advanced. A range of assessment methodologies have also been employed; the rationale is detailed below to illuminate the underlying strategy.

Modules which would permit the student to graduate with the PG Cert. upon successful completion are assessed upon three learning outcomes. These learning outcomes are bedrock skills for the subject area, and are recurrent through the course on the basis that the student will continue to re-visit, re-evidence and expand their understanding of them as they gain experience. In the PG Cert. assessment methodology there is a spread of activity across modules – a portfolio of film work, an assessment of specialist skills as evidenced through workshop activity and an oral presentation of research. Again, these are germane to a filmmaker and learner - encompassing presentation, self-review and review by others of the act of creation – and are re-current through the awards levels.

Modules which would permit the student to graduate with the PG Dip. upon successful completion are assessed upon five learning outcomes, two new ones being added to the initial three. Both of the new outcomes have an expectation that the individual creative skills of the student will be displayed at this point, and modules are designed to evidence this. Assessment methods are likewise recapitulated and expanded, with a research report and a project plan as additional products from the study process. The assessment elements in 'Advanced Collaborative Filmmaking' and 'Film Project Development' will be assessed, in part, on their individual creative elements to reflect the additional learning outcomes.

The contained MA would enable the student to complete an award at this point with a high-quality, collaborative film project, and this forms a significant element of the assessment methods at the MA point. The learning process of this work is also evidenced and assessed in a reflexive journal. Additionally this stage has an assessed project and professional plan, intended to enable the student's future progression. The MA credit adds a sixth learning outcome alongside the five already present in the course. This outcome stresses the expectation that the student has mastered and can meet the demands of industry, innovation and complexity found within professional film and filmmaking.

Through the assessment process of the course up to this point, it is recognised that work which is undertaken in collaborative groups can at times be significantly affected by the

actions or abilities of an individual. Where a module's activity is heavily collaborative (e.g. 'Specialist Collaborative Filmmaking', 'Advanced Collaborative Filmmaking', 'Collaborative Film Project') the assessment process has been split between differing methods in order to allow for the ability to reflect the individual contribution within the group. This is not the case within the (MFA target) 'Major Film Project' module, however, as the progress and development of this work will be based upon individual tutorial and development, much as in the progress of a practice-based PhD.

The MFA target award assesses on the basis of seven learning outcomes. It expects proficiency in all six already introduced in the other stages, plus it challenges the student to identify hithertofore unexplored aspects of their filmmaking, and for them to create work demonstrably advanced in nature from that previously undertaken. It expects that at this stage an integrity will be visible within the student's activity, and as such the assessed elements are all focused around a single, sustained piece of work: the work itself, a reflexive journal upon its creation, and a complementary presentation or *viva*.

Note: due to the complex nature of the collaborative process students who fail such a module and are required to resubmit will have their resubmission requirements determined on an individual basis. Appropriate projects or assignments will be designated, according to their individual creative skills enabling them to demonstrate their achievement of the learning outcomes for the given module. The Course external examiner consulted with in the process of determining a suitable assessment activity and to maintain quality and standards. The Film School as a whole has considerable experience in this area and strategies to ensure equitable individual re-assessment in modules involving collaborative projects have been developed with care and precision.

Feedback on Assessed Coursework

Formative feedback is provided throughout the creation process, and this can be either in verbal or written form and be delivered either to individual or groups of students, dependent upon the activity in question. A lot of this is delivered *ad hoc*, but some modules contain a structure of drafting, feedback, re-drafting common to filmmaking practice and delivered accordingly.

Following the final, assessment presentation in the 'Developing Research' or 'Film Project Development' it is likely that the student(s) will be questioned further about the work and some verbal feedback offered.

Summative assessment on all modules is provided formally with written feedback made available electronically to the student. Where the element under assessment, usually a film project, is the work of a collaborative group, all students will receive the same feedback notes. Otherwise, feedback will be individually tailored.

In respect to the 'Major Film Project' and 'Film Project Journal' it is recognised that the work undertaken in these modules will be heavily interlinked. Supporting tutorials throughout the two semesters will include verbal feedback relevant to both modules. The student will determine a schedule of delivery which will allow for agreed points of feedback, written

and/or verbal, and, where the project does not go according to plan due to situations beyond the student’s control, it will be possible to negotiate an appropriate completion strategy with the tutor/course leader.

Module Assessment Methods

Module Titles (all level 7)	Core (Y)	Oral Presentation & supporting material	Reflexive Journal & supporting material	Portfolio	Research Project Report	Workshop Activity	Project and/or Professional Plan	Completed Film Project & deliverables.
Developing Research	Y	100						
Specialist Collaborative Filmmaking	Y			50		50		
Research Project	Y				100			
Advanced Collaborative Filmmaking	Y			50		50		
Film Project Development	Y	50					50	
Collaborative Film Project	Y		30					70
Next Project Development	Y						100	
Major Film Project	Y							100
Film Project Journal	Y	30	70					

Employability and Professional Context

The course has a strong focus on developing professional and employability skills in an industry which 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 oriented, with high professional standards.

Teaching strategies for the course are aimed at ensuring that students will develop a reflective and reflexive approach to their cultural practice. They will develop key skills that are not only generic but also specific to the requirements of the industry. Examples of this include: 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; the ability to communicate concepts

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

Students will demonstrate considerable and advanced practical specialist knowledge within their own filmmaking specialisms, and demonstrate the ability to work collaboratively across a range of projects. Students will be assessed upon their individual skill as well as upon their collaborative work, as can be seen within the professional filmmaking context. Students will also be encouraged and supported in the formation of collaborative entrepreneurial and creative teams that have the potential to work together after the completion of the course.

The MFA, and the film school itself, has a number of ongoing key partnerships which aids the connection between the students and the current employment market. Examples of these key partnerships include:

Prime Studios. The film school has an ongoing arrangement with these studios, using their professionally built spaces to deliver teaching within the film and television industry environment itself. Prime is based with the Kirkstall Road area, which also has numerous media companies, many of whom are staffed by Film School alumni. This environment allows for valuable contact opportunities.

Provision Ltd. This equipment hire company supplies additional kit for school projects. It is also a meeting point for students and industry, where they can get to know and work with professionals, and become engaged with external film activities.

Other World. This company is frequently used by students seeking the final sound design and mix 'polish' for their film projects. They are a professional studio using high-end equipment with trained operators and an example of a company who get to know our students as talented, creative people and help to further their career path aspirations.

Many alumni from the film-related postgraduate courses have gone on to successful careers across the wide range of professional opportunities and open to them on completion of study. A small number of the many examples are:

Mark Herman, writer/director (*Brassed Off*, *The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas*);

Tallah Al-Muhanna, director (*The Man Inside*, *Disportrait*);

Dominic Lees, director (*The Bill*, *Casualty*, *Outlanders*);

Philip Robertson, cinematography (*Tess of the D'Urbervilles*, *Holby City*, *Werewolf: The Beast Among Us*) Oscar nominated;

Fernando Reyes Allendes, cinematography (*Lord of the Rings: The Two Towers*, *Elysium*);

Fabian Wagner, cinematography (*Game of Thrones*, *Victor Frankenstein*, *Churchill's Secret*);

Susan Everett, screenwriter (*Hinterland*);

Faisal A. Qureshi, screenwriter (*Coronation Street*, *Homefront*, *Five Lions*);

Jeremy Dyson, screenwriter (*The League of Gentlemen*, *Psychobitches*, *Tracey Ullman's Show*);

Diarmuid Scrimshaw, producer (*Tyrannosaur*, *This is England*);

Kim Crowther, producer (*Coronation Street*, *Midsomer Murders*);

Peter Baumann, director (*SOKO 5113*) Student Oscar Award recipient;

David Danisovsky production accountant (*Assassin's Creed, The Selfish Giant, 24: Live another Day*);

Hannah Gawthorpe, production designer (*Happy Valley, Last Tango in Halifax, Safe House, Swallows and Amazons*)

Our alumni tracking process will continue to record the successes of past students, and the MFA students will become a key group in this ongoing process. Promotion of alumni achievements is currently happening through Twitter, Facebook and the University website and other similar platforms will be adopted as they evolve.

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

