

Programme Specification 2016/17

Awarding Body	University of the Arts London (UAL)
Teaching Institution	London College of Communication
Final Award	MA Documentary Film
Relevant QAA Benchmark Statement	Communications, Media, Film and Cultural Studies
Date of production/revision	July 2016

The course is designed to enable you to direct and produce, shoot and edit original documentary footage, culminating in a creative, individually authored documentary film for the Major Project. In so doing you will have the chance to develop a broad range of practical skills, including researching, writing, camera work and sound recording, producing and editing. This is situated within the context of a creative and critical understanding of the theory, methodology and practice of each stage in documentary film-making from conception to thinking about audiences. The course covers each stage of documentary film production from writing treatments, proposals and creating Taster Films to producing, directing shooting, promoting and exhibiting your film.

The design of the course meets the terms and conditions for the award of the title of Master of Arts Documentary Film as approved by the University of the Arts London.

Course Aims

The aims of the course identify the rationale underlying your educational experience and own personal achievement from studying on the course and its effect upon your long term achievement and career.

This course aims to:

- Contextualise documentary film practices within broad historical, ethical and legal frameworks applicable to diverse sectors, from broadcast documentary to documentary cinema, activism and art.
- Develop your documentary film knowledge and techniques for professional application, career opportunities and enhancement.
- Equip you with the skills and methodologies to create documentary films, including developing your basic skills in camerawork and editing, creating 'Taster Films' and writing treatments and dossiers, and engaging in documentary practices to industry standards.

- Develop your abilities in self-reflection, problem-solving, analysis and evaluation through both theoretical engagement and practical application.
- Equip you with research and production skills to create a self-directed major film project that reflects your distinctive thinking and analysis, synthesis and evaluation of documentary practice, whilst reflecting academic rigour in supporting reflexive documentation.

Course Outcomes

The outcomes that you will have demonstrated upon completion of the course, are (the applicable university marking criteria are in brackets at the end of each course outcome):

- Conduct a rigorously planned and academically informed self-directed Major Project, supported by a critical, evaluative, reflexive and analytical report. **(Research / Analysis / Subject Knowledge / Technical Competence / Communication and Presentation / Personal and Professional Development / Collaborative and / or independent professional working)**
- Use the full range of documentary-making skills for a successful production - from research to camerawork, producing, editing and promotion of your film. **(Research / Analysis / Subject Knowledge / Technical Competence / Communication and Presentation / Personal and Professional Development / Collaborative and / or independent professional working)**
- Apply your knowledge of documentary film practices and methods to the creation of films, treatments, proposals, 'Taster Films' research dossiers and supporting documentation in line with professional practices. **(Subject Knowledge / Research / Communication and Presentation / Technical Competence / Collaborative and / or independent professional working)**
- Critically engage in theoretical perspectives on documentary and evaluate contemporary discourse on representation. **(Analysis / Subject Knowledge)**
- **Apply a broad range of research strategies to a variety of different projects in a diverse range of formats.** (Analysis / Experimentation / Research / Technical Competence)
- Contextualize documentary film practices within an historical framework that understands documentary's evolving relationship in the digital media world. **(Analysis / Research / Subject Knowledge)**

- Apply concepts of narrative to the creation of a documentary film (**Subject Knowledge / Experimentation / Communication and Presentation / Collaborative and / or independent professional working**)
- Analyse the ethical and legal debates relating to documentary film practices within a legal framework. (**Research / Analysis / Subject Knowledge / Communication and Presentation**)
- Engage in critical self-reflection and peer review, developing your skills in evaluation and communication. (**Analysis / Communication and Presentation / Personal and Professional Development / Collaborative and / or independent professional working**)

Learning and Teaching Methods:

The above programme outcomes are taught using the following learning and teaching methods:

- Workshops
- Lectures
- Screenings
- Tutorials
- Self-Directed study
- Peer review

Assessment Methods:

The above programme outcomes are assessed using the following assessment methods:

- Essays
- Presentations
- Taster Tape
- Pitches
- Critical and Evaluative Reports
- Documentary Film
- Research Dossier

Reference Points

The following reference points were used in designing the course:

- The Learning and Teaching policies of the University of the Arts London
- The College policies and initiatives
- Level descriptors
- Benchmark statements

Programme Summary

Programme structures, features, units, credit and award requirements:

Each course is divided into units, which are credit-rated. The minimum unit size is 20 credits and the maximum is 60 credits. The MA Documentary Film course structure involves 6 units, totalling 180 credits.

MA Documentary Film is delivered over a four-term period starting in September and completing in December of the following year. It is an intense and fast-moving programme which requires students to work to rigorous deadlines through research, production and exhibition stages.

Distinctive features of the course:

The distinctive features of the course are the course's identity. Delineating these helps to describe our aspiration to offer a unique, exclusive and exciting experience for you.

The course takes a *broad* and creative view of documentary film, from mainstream television documentary to gallery installations, documentary cinema, activist, NGO or guerrilla documentary and hybrid forms drawing on animation and docudrama. It leads the field in exploring a full range of methodologies that have brought new innovation to documentary film.

You will be introduced to methodologies, as well as the theories, contexts and methods for specific forms of documentary filmmaking. You will also learn how to compile research dossiers to support your films and explore the relevance of specific forms of research. Your study will be framed by lectures and seminars on documentary film history, ethics, law, and production. The *synthesis* of theory and practice has enhanced the success and employability of our alumni from whom there are many examples of successful projects culminating in engaging and even compelling films, many of which address significant social issues with creativity and flair and have resulted in many festival screenings, award nominations and prizes.

In addition to the course units on history, theory and practice of documentary film, you will be able to develop collaborative projects that allow you to pursue specific areas of interest and frame your documentary ideas within other contexts.

You will work with a highly qualified and experienced team of practitioners, educators and researchers who deliver the course. The MA makes the most of the documentary industry in and around London, engaging with London as a media centre rich in stories, research opportunities, work experience and expertise. LCC embraces and contributes to London as a global city, drawing strength from London's internationality and diversity. Staff are drawn from a combination of academic backgrounds and the documentary film and television industries. The full course team regularly publish and produce film and television programmes, as well as maintaining links with other specialist institutions and the industry. The specialist guest lecturers from the industry who teach on the course represent the industry at an international level, thus ensuring that the course reflects ongoing changes and developments within the documentary film and television industries. MA Documentary Film has a reputation for developing reflexive and thoughtful practitioners highly attuned to the context of production and responsibilities of the documentary director.

The course maintains links with a range of venues and film festivals, and you are actively encouraged to attend screenings at venues such as the BFI Southbank, The Dothouse and Renoir cinemas, Tate Modern and Tate Britain, the ICA and Rich Mix and festivals such as the Sheffield International Film Festival, IDFA, The Open City Festival, BritDocs and many others. You are also encouraged to use specialist libraries such as the British Film Institute's Reuben Library nearby on the Southbank.

One of the differences you will experience between working at postgraduate level and working at undergraduate level is that you will be expected to timetable and manage your own learning to a much greater extent at postgraduate level. Your success on the course will depend, to a great extent, on how rigorously and responsibly you take this self-direction and how well you respond to tutorial advice. The level of self-management required of you will increase throughout the course.

Terms one and two of the course, will provide you with a detailed knowledge of creative documentary film making methods and practice, contextualised within a historical, critical and theoretical framework. You will explore contemporary

documentary film practice alongside documentary histories. You will be encouraged and guided to develop your ability and skills to write treatments and proposals, shoot, direct and edit short films individually and in groups. Your ability to work both in groups and independently is equally important to your progress. The knowledge and skills that you acquire on the course will enrich your ability to work in documentary film environments within television, film or related industries and sectors. The documentary film-making skills you develop are sought-after and highly marketable which can lead to work in many other fields.

In terms three and four of the course, you will further your knowledge and extend your experience and practice of documentary film making by conducting a self-directed Major Project including your individually authored documentary film. This project should emerge from your own documentary film interests and is likely to be linked to your career aspirations and creative goals. In conducting this research, you will need to employ a set of skills and knowledge that are appropriate to both academic study and documentary film production. In this term your initiative and ability to work independently becomes increasingly important, as does that of working as part of a team in shooting and directing films. This term of the course also places emphasis on your ability to engage in the process of peer review and self-reflection. By engaging in and completing a self-directed major research project, you will be well placed to move into a challenging documentary film-making role, on either a full-time or freelance basis. You may also see the MA as a pathway into full-time research, a higher research degree (MPhil / PhD).

Recruitment and Admissions

Admission Policy/Selection Criteria

The MA Documentary Film course team recognise that applicants come from a broad spectrum of backgrounds from across the world. The course attracts students who apply direct from an Honours Degree course or those with other equivalent qualifications. The course also attracts students who have already completed a PhD or post-doctoral research and mid-career professionals who are looking to develop their authorship in documentary. The course team welcomes students with relevant practical experience or those who may have worked in industry.

Students are admitted to the course having fulfilled the necessary entry requirements and on the basis of their potential to benefit from the programme.

Entry Requirements

Typically, a good 1st degree 2:1 or above is preferable (in any subject). Exceptionally candidates can APEL (Accreditation Prior Experiential Learning) if they can demonstrate a significant record of documentary practice, with evidence of academic potential (see detailed APEL Document for specifications).

0.1 This educational level may be demonstrated by:

- a) Possession of the qualifications named above
- b) Possession of equivalent qualifications
- c) Prior experiential learning, the outcome of which can be demonstrated to be equivalent to formal qualifications otherwise required, (as indicated by at least three years of experience which has led to a demonstrable level of expertise in the understanding and use of graphic design) or
- d) A combination of formal qualifications and experiential learning which, taken together, can be demonstrated to be equivalent to formal qualifications otherwise required.

Other Entry Routes

If you do not have the required qualifications, but do have professional experience you may be eligible to gain credit for previous learning and experience through the AP(E)L system. Your experience is assessed as a learning process and tutors will evaluate that experience or currency, validity, quality and sufficiency.

Language Requirements (International/EU)

- International and EU students: In the case of applicants whose first language is not English, then an overall IELTS score of 7.0 (or equivalent) is required, with a minimum of 6.0 in each of the four skills.
- If your first language is not English you should check you have achieved the correct IELTS level in English. Further information is available on the Language Requirements page: <http://www.arts.ac.uk/study-at-ual/language-centre/language-requirements/>
- International Applicants – Visit the Support for International Students page <http://www.arts.ac.uk/lcc/courses/support-for-international-students/> for contact details for International Admissions.

Admission with Academic Credit

0.4 An applicant may be considered for admission at a point in the course later than the start of the planned programme of study, provided that

the applicant has fulfilled, in a way judged to be equivalent, the requirements of the intended programme of study prior to the proposed point of entry.

- 0.5 In order for an applicant to be admitted under 1.4 above, the University must be satisfied that by successfully completing the remaining part of the course, the applicant would have fulfilled the objectives of the course and have the opportunity to attain the standard required for the award.

To see the university's Regulations on Admissions, please go to the following link: <http://www.arts.ac.uk/study-at-ual/academic-regulations/course-regulations/1-admissions/>

Deferred Entry

For Home/EU applicants, the Course Leader will determine whether deferred places are available for the course. If you wish to defer your place, it is advisable to indicate this on your application form and/or discuss this with the admissions team and course leader before/after applying at the earliest opportunity. In all cases, deferred places will only be held for one year.

International applicants are normally permitted to defer entry to any programme of study for one year only, after which they will be asked to re-apply.

Admission Procedures

Applications for this course are assessed on the basis of qualifications and the personal statement and your portfolio of work.

If more information is required, a member of the course team may contact the applicant and in some cases, may request the candidate to attend an interview.

Student Selection Criteria/What do we look for?

The team will also consider three key elements when making a decision on your suitability to join the course:

- 1) Firstly they will look at your qualifications (or projected results).
- 2) Secondly, they will review your academic or personal reference.
- 3) Then they will scrutinise your personal statement (including documentary film proposal or 'treatment')

The personal statement is a very important part of your application and should demonstrate to the team that you have thought very carefully about why you want to study on this course.

You should take great care when writing your personal statement to ensure that it is well written, clear and free of any spelling mistakes. It is your biggest chance to impress the team by demonstrating your appreciation of what the course can offer you and how you feel it might help you in the future. It is also an opportunity for you to state what you feel you would bring to the course. Through their personal statement, applicants should show a strong interest in Documentary Film. This can be demonstrated through work experience, studying and personal experience and their ambitions for personal development as a student at the LCC.

Portfolio Advice

Applicants should submit a documentary film idea or 'treatment' to discuss at interview. Most candidates also submit links to previous film practice, but this is not essential.

Interview Advice

All eligible applicants are interviewed before a place can be offered. Applicants submit a documentary film 'treatment' to discuss at interview, to assess storytelling and film-making potential. Directing potential is essential. Specific camera and editing skills are helpful but not essential to demonstrate at application stage. Strong communication skills and ability to work in teams is central.

Interviews will take place either in person or via video-skype. The team regard this as essential to assess communication skills and aptitude detailed above.

We encourage applicants to attend open days and our regular screenings at LCC to help give a sense of the culture of the MA Course and College, especially our post-graduate degree shows.

If you are invited for interview you can prepare yourself in advance by thinking of questions that you may have for the tutors and also re-familiarising yourself with your personal statement- from which the interview questions will probably arise.

Minimum UAL Entry Requirements

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