

MA Documentary Film

Programme Specification 2019/20

Awarding Body	University of the Arts London
College	London College of Communication
School	University of the Arts London
Programme	Film and Television (L043)
FHEQ Level	Level 7 Masters
Course Credits	180
Mode	Full Time
Duration of Course	15 months
Valid From	September 1st 2019
QAA Subject Benchmark	Communication, media, film and cultural studies
UAL Subject Classification	Animation, interactive film and sound
JACS Code	P500 - Journalism
UCAS Code	N/A
PSRB	N/A
Work placement offered	N/A
Course Entry Requirements	<p>An applicant will normally be considered for admission if they have achieved an educational level equivalent to an honours degree.</p> <p>Applicants should have a proven interest in documentary films and a keen desire to make documentary films. You should know what kinds of documentary interest you and why you have an ambition to deepen your involvement in documentary film study and production.</p> <p>Successful applicants have generally made their own videos and have some experience of filming, but we can also consider candidates without a production background who demonstrate exceptional film ideas and directing potential. We often have applications from mid-career photographers or producers in related fields.</p>

Your experience is assessed as a learning process and tutors will evaluate that experience for currency, validity, quality and sufficiency. Your educational level may be demonstrated by:

- Honours degree;
- Possession of equivalent qualifications;
- Prior experiential learning, the outcome of which can be demonstrated to be equivalent to formal qualifications otherwise required;
- Or a combination of formal qualifications and experiential learning which, taken together, can be demonstrated to be equivalent to formal qualifications otherwise required.

APEL (Accreditation of Prior Learning)

Applicants who do not meet these course entry requirements may still be considered in exceptional cases. The course team will consider each application that demonstrates additional strengths and alternative evidence. This might, for example, be demonstrated by:

- Related academic or work experience
- The quality of the personal statement
- A strong academic or other professional reference
- OR a combination of these factors

Each application will be considered on its own merit but we cannot guarantee an offer in each case.

Language requirements

All classes are conducted in English. If English is not your first language, we strongly recommend you let us know your English language test score in your application. If you have booked a test or are awaiting your results, please indicate this in your application. When asked to upload a CV as part of your application, please include any information about your English test score.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• IELTS 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 can check you have achieved the correct IELTS level in English on the Language Requirements page. <p>For further details regarding international admissions and advice please visit the International Applications page.</p>
Selection Criteria	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Evidence that you have knowledge and awareness of documentary film culture, practice, directors, films and debates• Evidence of an understanding of what goes into making a good documentary idea and a keen desire to make your own authored documentary films

Awards and Percentage of Scheduled Learning

Year 1

Percentage of Scheduled Learning	18
Awards	Credits
Postgraduate Certificate	60
Postgraduate Diploma	120

Course Aims and Outcomes

The Aims and Outcomes of this Course are as follows:

Aim/Outcome	Description
Aim	Contextualise documentary film practices within broad historical, ethical and legal frameworks applicable to diverse sectors, from broadcast documentary to documentary cinema, activism and gallery contexts.
Aim	Develop your documentary film knowledge and techniques for professional application, career opportunities and enhancement.
Aim	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.
Aim	Develop your abilities in self-reflection, problem-solving, analysis and evaluation through both theoretical engagement and practical application.
Aim	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 rigor in supporting reflexive documentation.
Outcome	Conduct a rigorously planned and academically informed self-directed Major Project, supported by a critical, evaluative, reflexive and analytical report. (Enquiry, Knowledge, Realisation, Communication, Process)
Outcome	Use the full range of documentary-making skills for a successful production - from research to camerawork, producing, editing and promotion of your film. (Enquiry, Knowledge, Realisation, Communication, Process)
Outcome	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. (Enquiry, Knowledge, Realisation, Communication, Process)

Outcome	Critically engage in theoretical perspectives on documentary and evaluate contemporary discourse on representation. (Enquiry, Knowledge)
Outcome	Apply a broad range of research strategies to a variety of different projects in a diverse range of formats. (Enquiry, Process, Realisation)
Outcome	Contextualise documentary film practices within an historical framework that understands documentary's evolving relationship in the in the digital media world. (Enquiry, Knowledge)
Outcome	Apply concepts of narrative to the creation of a documentary film (Knowledge, Enquiry, Communication, Process)
Outcome	Analyse the ethical and legal debates relating to documentary film practices within a legal framework. (Enquiry, Knowledge, Communication)
Outcome	Engage in critical self-reflection and peer review, developing your skills in evaluation and communication. (Enquiry, Communication, Realisation, Process)

Distinctive Features	
1	The course takes a broad and creative view of documentary film, from mainstream documentary film to gallery installations, documentary cinema, activist or guerrilla documentary with the freedom to explore the use of animated or dramatised sequences. Successive external examiners of this MA describe it as leading the field in the UK nationally.
2	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. Your study will be framed by lectures and seminars on ethics, law, and documentary film history.
3	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 documentary film festival screenings, award nominations, television commissions and prizes.
4	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.
5	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, film-making 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, television and NGO/charity sectors. The Course team regularly publish and produce film and television programmes, as well as maintaining links with other specialist institutions and the industry. Specialist guest lecturers from the industry who teach on the course know the industry at a national and international level, thus ensuring that the course reflects ongoing developments in the documentary sector. MA Documentary Film has a reputation for developing reflexive and thoughtful practitioners highly attuned to the context of production and the ethical responsibilities of the documentary director.
6	The course maintains links with a range of venues and film festivals. You are actively encouraged to attend screenings at venues such as the BFI Southbank, The Dothouse and Renoir cinemas, community screenings, Tate Modern and Tate Britain, the ICA, Rich Mix and festivals such as the Sheffield International Film

	<p>Festival (SIDF) IDFA, The Open City Festival, The Open City Festival and many others. We particularly encourage students to attend a documentary festival such as SIDF or the Open City documentary Festival in the summer term. You are also encouraged to use specialist libraries such as the British Film Institute's Reuben Library nearby on the Southbank.</p>
7	<p>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. We strongly recommend that you do not try to work – even part-time – whilst on this MA, especially during term-time. Our experience is that students enjoy the MA and achieve better if they resolve financial issues before coming to us.</p>
8	<p>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.</p>
9	<p>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 phase of the course emphasises 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 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) or higher education.</p>

Course Detail

The course is designed to enable you to direct and produce, shoot and edit original documentary actuality footage, culminating in a creative, individually authored documentary film for the Major Project. In so doing you will have the chance to develop a full 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 researching a documentary, 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.

We are committed to teaching, learning and assessment designed to enhance, nurture and recognise your employability, individuality and entrepreneurship.

Enterprise and employability within a creative education in arts, design and media is about the integration of practice, behaviours and qualities that enable you to develop and sustain a rewarding professional life.

The curriculum is designed to communicate and open up the possibilities of your own creativity by developing your career aspirations and professional awareness for enterprise and employability, whether for the creative and cultural sector or beyond.

Enterprise and employability is about more than getting a job, it is about enabling you to find, make and take opportunities and to meet your aspirations in a changing world, whether as a successful creative professional, innovator, practitioner, employee and/or entrepreneur in the UK and globally.

Course Units

The course is made of six units that interleave documentary filmmaking practice with conceptual work on the history and theory of Documentary Studies. They closely relate and support one another. The more you wrestle with the defining questions of Documentary Studies, the better your thinking will be when you're filmmaking; conversely, the more fully you develop your filmmaking practice, the richer your experience will be to engage with thinking and ideas.

Unit 1.1 Documentary Process and Practice. This unit introduces documentary film making to equip you with the core skills of documentary film production. You will be inducted into

documentary camerawork, directing and editing and be encouraged to take on different team roles as appropriate including producing, directing, camera, sound recording and editing.

Concurrent with this is **Unit 1.2, History and Theory**, that positions documentary production practices within a cultural, historical, social and political context. The MA is conceived as a place where theory, history and practice meet, inform and influence one another — you will learn to approach practice-led enquiry and research so that you develop practical skills alongside the facility to ask key questions about documentary practices. This blended approach is employed to build a confidence in moving past the familiar to the unknown, through close readings of documentary texts and films alongside reflexive examination of your own work.

This period of study concludes with submission of a group film and academic essay.

Unit 2.1 is the Collaborative Unit. Building on the collaborative work of your group film, this Unit is designed to enable you to reflect on how you identify, form and develop collaborative working relationships with a range of potential partners. Filmmaking is an inherently collaborative activity as we know from each term's work but some individuals arrive at this MA with experience only as self-shooters in documentary. Although there are times when this approach is effective, the emphasis on collaboration in this Unit enables you to develop a deeper understanding of each singular specialism in documentary filmmaking and how to work effectively with colleagues specialising in particular areas (e.g. sound recording or camerawork). You're encouraged to independently initiate opportunities to socialise your research and film ideas through building relationships with key stakeholders associated with your practice e.g. viewers, commissioners, producers, fellow practitioners/researchers, subject or technical experts etc. This may take the form of meetings, on-line groups, location visits, projects, interviews, focus groups, field trips etc. These activities may take place locally or remotely, and is an excellent opportunity for you to establish links with documentary industry partners within the thriving film culture here in London.

Unit 2.2 Documentary Practices: Taster Film & Pitch & Critical Context starts a nine-month period of making your graduation film. After a period of exploration and experimentation in previous production units, you now identify the documentary film idea you would most like to make for your Major Project, research it, develop a style and make a Taster Film as part of an assessed pitch and proposal for the graduation film.

Unit 3.1 Documentary Practices: Ethics & Methodologies gives historical and theoretical support and context to your documentary practice, further deepening an understanding of documentary production practices with a sharper focus on documentary ethics and legal frameworks. We explore theoretical and conceptual questions alongside the ethics and

practices of documentary filmmaking for example where the relationship between filmmakers and their subjects have long been debated. Key areas include: aesthetic practices and styles; ethics of different types of documentary practice; the kinds of audiences addressed and the spaces of exhibition of documentary films. The Unit builds on Unit 1.2 where students situate their chosen enquiry in cultural, historical, social and political contexts. This is a key opportunity to design and develop your own research ideas. For some this has led to successful PhD thesis proposals and publications in Documentary Studies.

Unit 4 is the Major Project that features your graduation film. Building on Unit 2.2, this Unit is where you fashion your voice as an author and director, creating a film as a sole-credit director that will support – even underpin - your career development. Here you make your graduation film - the culmination of your documentary practice on the MA. A great graduation film is an effective calling card in the industry.

You are encouraged to track your progress in making the film through keeping a self-reflective journal throughout the research and production process. This will support you in both refining the film and in producing a critical, analytical and evaluative report on your experience in research and production.

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

The University will use all reasonable endeavours to provide the Course and the services described in this Output. There may be occasions whereby the University needs to add, remove or alter content in relation to your Course as may be appropriate for example the latest requirements of a commissioning or accrediting body, or in response to student feedback, or to comply with applicable law or due to circumstances beyond its control. The University aim to inform you of any changes as soon as is reasonably practicable

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