

MA Visual Effects
Programme Specification 2021/22

Awarding Body	University of the Arts London
College	London College of Communication
School	Screen
Programme	Moving Image and Digital Arts (L060)
FHEQ Level	Level 7 Masters
Course Credits	180
Mode	Full Time
Duration of Course	1 year
Valid From	September 1st 2021
Course Entry Requirements	<p>An applicant will normally be considered for admission if they have achieved an educational level equivalent to an honours degree in either animation, illustration, visual communication, graphic design or closely related subject, and present a portfolio of moving-image work. However, we do not exclude candidates who have graduated from other less strongly aligned disciplines.</p> <p>This educational level may be demonstrated by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Honours degree (named above); • 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. <p>APEL (Accreditation of Prior Learning)</p> <p>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:</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Related academic or work experience • The quality of the personal statement • A strong academic or other professional reference • OR a combination of these factors <p>Each application will be considered on its own merit but we cannot guarantee an offer in each case.</p> <p>Language Requirements</p> <p>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.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • IELTS 6.5 (or equivalent) is required, with a minimum of 5.5 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. • For further details regarding international admissions and advice please visit the International Applications page.
Selection Criteria	<p>Offers will be made based on the following selection criteria, which applicants are expected to demonstrate:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sufficient prior knowledge and experience of and/or potential in animation, live action and VFX practice to be able to successfully complete the programme of study, and have an academic or professional background in a relevant subject. • Knowledge of visual culture and an ability to engage in critical discussion.
Scheduled Learning and Teaching	<p>During your course you will engage with learning and teaching that includes both online and face-to-face modes. The advertised scheduled activity for the course will be delivered through a combination of live, synchronous and</p>

	<p>asynchronous on-line learning. Scheduled learning and teaching activity may include lectures, seminars, studio and workshop briefings, tutorials, external visits and project briefings.</p>
--	---

Awards and Percentage of Scheduled Learning Year 1

Percentage of Scheduled Learning	25
Awards	Credits
Postgraduate Certificate (Exit Only)	60
Postgraduate Diploma (Exit Only)	120
Master of Arts	180

Course Aims and Outcomes

The Aims and Outcomes of this Course are as follows:

Aim/Outcome	Description
Aim	To provide a creative and intellectually challenging educational experience that will enable you to develop the range of skills necessary to progress onto a successful career in a relevant profession, or alternatively a research degree.
Aim	To support you in the development of a flexible, inclusive and responsive approach to your studies encouraging independent thinking and the ability to see things differently.
Aim	To prepare you for employment in the relevant VFX and post production industries by enabling you to acquire a range of professional and technical skills in response to industry needs.
Aim	To enable you to acquire a range of creative practice and professional skills necessary for the development of independent/entrepreneurial practice within relevant industries.
Aim	To develop an innovative attitude to creative practice that can anticipate future technological, international, economic and business challenges in the VFX industry.
Aim	To equip you with a comprehensive and critical understanding of the core principles and technology of VFX that underpin your creative projects within a theoretical framework.
Aim	To respond to the growth in working across disciplines that has occurred in the creative industries in order to develop practitioners who can work in dynamic interdisciplinary teams and contexts.
Aim	To locate VFX within a historical, cultural and critical context in order to facilitate a stimulating learning experience. This will develop a creative, innovative and critical approach to your studies and chosen specialism.
Outcome	Use a variety of advanced cognitive, creative and practical skills to identify and critically investigate appropriate primary and secondary sources relevant to VFX (Enquiry);
Outcome	Examine and critically interpret research material and demonstrate this understanding in order to inform visual and written outcomes (Enquiry);

Outcome	Demonstrate an understanding of, and practically apply, critical contextual knowledge of VFX and its wider areas of influence (Knowledge);
Outcome	Problem solve, take risks, challenge preconceptions, experiment and test ideas, materials and media to develop complex ideas in order produce VFX sequences (Enquiry);
Outcome	Demonstrate use of appropriate design, theoretical, technical and media skills to produce advanced VFX practice (Realisation);
Outcome	Show clarity of purpose, appropriate selection of media, awareness of precedent and sensitivity to the needs of the audience in the production and presentation of ideas (Communication);
Outcome	Manage your learning through critical reflection, planning, self-direction, subject engagement, and commitment and be able to place your work in a professional context (Process);
Outcome	Work independently and collaboratively with your peers and filmmakers or with those from different disciplines (Process).

Distinctive Features	
1	<p>Programme Community through Collaboration in the Screen: working alongside filmmakers and animators to understand the importance of team working and their role in the production pipeline, reflecting the film and television industry. This is a central significant skill that we seek to develop and nurture. Adapting a creative idea or vision from the static to a seamless and photoreal moving image requires a keen understanding of film language as well as a discerning empathy for the experience of the audience, whilst collaborating with a different range of disciplines. The course will be established within the Screen School programme which enables not only access to the production resources in these areas, but access to a broad range of industry speakers from these disciplines and the opportunity to develop peer group relationships which enable collaboration across disciplines, especially with production designers, scriptwriters, directors and cinematographers.</p>
2	<p>Specialism and Visual Voice: Students are encouraged to see themselves as specialists in their field, pushing the boundaries of what is possible within the world of Visual Effects. Students are stimulated to create unique media and visual effects experiences and to express themselves through their own unique style, while developing desirable high- end technical specialist skills underpinned by a breadth of technical and creative knowledge.</p>
3	<p>Learning from the Professionals: London is the home of world leading practitioners in VFX, as well as visiting directors, producers and cinematographers who can give masterclasses and lectures, directly inspiring and immersing the students within a field that is constantly evolving. Understanding and responding to the current trends in VFX practice will be a key part of developing a relevant skillset, towards working in the industry as a team member, or independent artist. Observing a practitioner’s presentation methods can also ameliorate the students’ ability to present ideas, pitching to clients and debating their own work as well as that of their peers, essential soft skills that they must acquire to function as a team member in the industry. LCC’s close proximity to Soho in London makes it very convenient for industry speakers and ALs to visit, and will facilitate mentoring opportunities and work placements for students. Regular peer and industry reviews of ‘dailies’ build up resilience and ability to present work in a professional context, as the ability to receive feedback is as important as being able to present.</p>
4	<p>Technical skills development: the expectation is that applicants come with a basic skillset and fluency in either 2D or 3D CGI and compositing and have sought to do an MA VFX in order to build in areas of specialism and experimentation with the new technology collaborating across the Screen School. Pre-sessional training can be provided by using structured use of freely available online resources. Through engagement with a range of industry professionals and permanent teaching staff,</p>

	students will have access to workshops that build in complexity from intermediate to advanced levels across VFX compositing, 2D and 3D CGI skills, as well as image and data acquisition, motion capture and lighting and shooting on greenscreen.
5	Creative and scientific problem-solving skills: students will be encouraged to nurture ideas and solve problems in their work through projects and workshops in research, experimental image and filmmaking. They will apply a critical understanding and application of scientific principles of nature, 2D and 3D specialist software for creating visual effects, as well as life drawing and film language, games and immersive experience to their practice.
6	Project Management and multidisciplinary planning: students will learn about effective time and project management, and develop their own project management skills through the planning and delivery of individual and collaborative projects during the course. In addition, the students will be given the skills to interpret work through multiple formats and methods reflecting the demands for efficient delivery of VFX, by planning effectively using different tools to save processing power and rendering time through data-efficient problem solving.
7	Professional practices within a strong studio culture: The course is firmly rooted in mastering the solid fundamentals of VFX, such as photorealistic design, simulations, camera optics, movement and light. The course ensures that students are equipped with both a technical and critical skillset that allows them to produce a portfolio of innovative VFX practice from within the film, game and animation fields. Studio practice within a baseroom will encourage peer-learning and good attendance, modelling the studio practices of established VFX companies.
8	Industry Links: Through existing and future networking opportunities with the VFX industry (from alumni and course tutors) the students will get opportunities to form relationships with established studios. Industry mentoring or shadowing could provide a classic artisan apprenticeship relationship that's fluid and flexible enough to accommodate inherent industry unpredictability. Live Briefs are an excellent opportunity for students to build a body of work, receiving professional feedback while linking with future collaborators and employees. Building strong relationships with the VFX industry can also future-proof the course in terms of being in-the-know of current practices and trends, as well as, in time, creating a network of graduates who will attract and mentor future applicants.
9	Portfolio Building: The practice-based nature of the course is derived from the understanding that the primary tool for successful graduate progression in this field is the portfolio of work. The course aims to give students the opportunity to build a strong portfolio of critically agile work over the course that will enable them to progress to their chosen destinations. These projects may manifest themselves

	<p>in the portfolio as collaborative outcomes working as matchmove artist, matte painter, compositor, or digital sculptor. Live briefs will help the students learn from actual client feedback and also spark future employment opportunities.</p>
10	<p>Learning through live-action studio workshops: LCC has the advantage of having TV studios and cinematographers/photographers to teach the principles of lighting and shot framing in the real physical world in order for students to understand and translate the properties of light, texture and lensing into the digital realm.</p>

Course Detail

MA Visual Effects at London College of Communication is taught as a specialist subject within the broad and experimental visual practice of animated visual communication.

The course explores the theoretical and historical contexts that inform how audiences perceive reality and photorealism. You'll be introduced to a range of technical and conceptual approaches to VFX animation.

You'll also explore technologies and processes by producing short-form animation across the VFX spectrum, to set briefs.

Real world studio lighting and camera workshops will provide a tangible foundation for the principles of virtual digital 3D VFX.

What can you expect?

As students on the course, you'll be encouraged to see yourself as a specialist in your field that can push the boundaries of what's possible within the world of VFX animation.

You'll develop high-end specialist skills underpinned by a breadth of technical knowledge.

Throughout the course, you will create unique media and immersive experiences, whilst developing your own distinct style. London is the home of world-leading practitioners in VFX; you will benefit from lectures and masterclasses from visiting directors, producers and cinematographers and have access to our TV studios.

You'll learn the principles of lighting and shot framing and how it works in practice as well as translating the properties of light, texture and lensing within the digital realm.

This course also supports progression to research at MPhil/PhD level, as well as to advanced self-directed practice.

Mode of Study

MA Visual Effects is in Full Time mode which runs for 45 weeks over 15 months. You will be expected to commit 40 hours per week to study.

Course Units

You will respond to briefs that are set to test the learning in the units described below. Each course is divided into units, which are credit-rated. The minimum unit size is 20 credits. The MA course structure involves five units, totalling 180 credits.

Autumn, Term 1

Visual Effects Fundamentals (40 credits)

The course starts by teaching the past, present and future of VFX to give a thorough grounding in the sector, before moving on to equip you with the main skills, knowledge and processes required to create convincing VFX.

This unit introduces you to the advanced technologies that make VFX possible and the processes behind digital image creation.

You'll explore technologies and processes by producing short-form animation across the VFX spectrum, to set briefs.

Studio lighting and camera workshops will provide a tangible foundation for the principles of virtual digital 3D VFX.

Design for Animation, Narrative Structures and Film Language (20 credits)

This unit is shared with [MA Animation](#) and [MA 3D Computer Animation](#) and provides an opportunity for interaction and peer-to-peer learning both in the classroom and online.

Spring and Summer, Terms 2 and 3

Advanced and Experimental VFX animation techniques (40 credits)

This unit advances skills in rendering and composition tools, procedural effects such as fire and tornadoes, and how to build digital creatures and characters.

CGI elements will be generated using one or more techniques covered in the unit (e.g. particle effects, procedural elements, fluids, etc.), before being integrated into the shot.

You'll develop a breadth of knowledge across different tools and media, whilst identifying a particular specialism that you wish to pursue in Term Three.

Collaborative Unit (20 credits)

You will work with others in a team to complete all the requirements of the brief. The aim is to integrate complex CGI elements into the supplied footage seamlessly so it is difficult to distinguish these elements from the live action.

The key is to demonstrate skills that will be recognised as those used in professional VFX production. This project will demonstrate your ability to select the correct the techniques

from the range that you've studied.

You'll show how you can manage your time and resources to deliver a professional project to a given deadline.

Autumn, Term 4

Final Major Project VFX and Thesis (60 credits)

You'll take the knowledge, skills and experience from the first two phases of the course and bring this together in the production of a collaborative interdisciplinary or self-directed longer form project and associated thesis.

You'll produce an ambitious VFX project that will demonstrate your in-depth critical awareness of the subject area, as well as your practical skills in production management.

Your thesis is a 5000-word reflective report that will show that the design and production process that has been carried out in this project is one that exhibits the required characteristics for a master's degree.

It should discuss the decisions that have been made and placed in the context of current industry practice and research in the area, and it should reflect on the process and the final video to identify its strengths and weaknesses.

It is an opportunity for you to demonstrate the depth of critical understanding of your field and to show that you can objectively analyse your own work.

Learning and Teaching Methods

- Lectures
- Seminars
- Critiques
- Technical workshops
- Software training

Assessment Methods

- Portfolios
- Submission
- Written research and critical reports
- Presentations and formal critiques
- Exhibition
- Written thesis

Reference Points

The following reference points were used in designing the course:

UAL's Learning, Teaching and Enhancement Strategy- <http://www.arts.ac.uk/about-ual/teaching-and-learning/about-the-exchange/teaching--learning-strategy/>

The College and Screen School policies and initiatives - <http://www.arts.ac.uk/lcc/about-lcc/screen-school/>

FHEQ Level descriptors - <http://www.qaa.ac.uk/en/Publications/Documents/qualifications-frameworks.pdf>

UAL Creative Attributes Framework <http://www.arts.ac.uk/about-ual/teaching-and-learning/careers-and-employability/creative-attributes-framework/>

Course Diagram

Level 7																																																																								
Week	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	32	33	34	35	36		37	38	39	40	41	42	43	44	45	46	47																								
Unit	Start of Undergraduate Year	1.1 Visual Effects Fundamentals (40 credits)											S																										PG Summer Break	Start of Undergraduate Year																																
		1.2 Design for Animation, Narrative Structures and Film Language (20 credits)											S																																																											
													2.1 Advanced and Experimental VFX Animation Techniques (40 credits)																			S																																								
													2.2 Collaborative Unit (20 credits)										S																																																	
																																				3.1 Final Major Project and Thesis (60 credits)													PG Overlap Period with new year intake												3.1 Final Major Project and Thesis											S

S = Summative Assessment

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

© 2021 University of the Arts London