

# **MA Documentary Film**

Programme Specification 2021/22

<b>Awarding Body</b>	University of the Arts London
<b>College</b>	London College of Communication
<b>School</b>	University of the Arts London
<b>Programme</b>	Film and Television (L043)
<b>FHEQ Level</b>	Level 7 Masters
<b>Course Credits</b>	180
<b>Mode</b>	Full Time
<b>Duration of Course</b>	1 year
<b>Valid From</b>	September 1st 2021
<b>Course Entry Requirements</b>	<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> <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:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Honours degree;</li> <li>• Possession of equivalent qualifications;</li> <li>• Prior experiential learning, the outcome of which can be demonstrated to be equivalent to formal qualifications otherwise required;</li> </ul>

- 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.

- 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](#).

For further details regarding international admissions and advice please visit the [International Applications page](#).

### **Selection Criteria**

Offers will be made based on the following selection criteria, which applicants are expected to demonstrate:

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Evidence that you have knowledge and awareness of documentary film culture, practice, directors, films and debates</li><li>• Evidence of an understanding of what goes into making a good documentary idea and a keen desire to make your own authored documentary films</li></ul>
<b>Scheduled Learning and Teaching</b>	<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 asynchronous on-line learning. This is often described as blended learning.</p> <p>Definitions of our learning and teaching modes can be found <a href="#">here</a>.</p>

# Awards and Percentage of Scheduled Learning

## Year 1

<b>Percentage of Scheduled Learning</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>Awards</b>	<b>Credits</b>
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	Contextualise contemporary documentary film within the creative, historical, ethical, legal and sustainable frameworks and practices.
Aim	Develop your documentary film knowledge of the traditional documentary canon whilst advancing cross-cultural inclusive and diverse ideas and approaches as a documentary filmmaker.
Aim	Equip you with the advanced skill-base and methodologies to develop treatments and documentary films with festival and impact strategies where appropriate.
Aim	Develop your abilities in self-reflection, problem-solving, analysis, evaluation and sustainable practice through both theoretical engagement and practical application.
Aim	Acquire the creative skillset to author or co-author your major project that reflects innovative, distinctive thinking, academic rigor and a sustainable approach to creative documentary filmmaking.
Outcome	Critically evaluate documentary film practices in a theoretical contextual framework, addressing ethics, sustainability and contemporary discourses of representation. (Enquiry)
Outcome	Apply your knowledge of documentary film practices and methods to treatments, proposals, pitching, creating documentary films and supporting documentation in line with professional practices. (Knowledge)
Outcome	Synthesise documentary research, creative and technical skills towards a successful sustainable production. (Process)
Outcome	Develop critical self-reflection skills and peer evaluation for dynamic and innovative narrative for a diverse audience. (Communication)
Outcome	Author or co-author a documentary film supported by a critical, evaluative, reflexive and analytical report aligned to your professional future. (Realisation)

<b>Distinctive Features</b>	
1	<p><b>Specialist Knowledge:</b> MA Documentary Film is situated within the Film and Television Programme and is part of the London College of Communication's (LCC) CILECT accredited Screen School that delivers 18-undergraduate and post-graduate courses, spanning across screenwriting, film and television, documentary, animation, VFX, games, sound and VR production. MA Documentary Film leads with a creative, eclectic 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. This specialist provision is committed to documentary storytelling giving students the opportunities and experiences to meet the emerging and evolving sectors of the screen industries.</p>
2	<p><b>Practice and Theory:</b> Although located within a practice-based programme, the synthesis of theory and practice culminates in compelling films, addressing significant social issues with creativity and flair, enhancing success and employability, and many achieve documentary film festival screenings, award nominations, television commissions and prizes. 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.</p>
3	<p><b>Community of Practice:</b> Collaboration is at the core of building a diverse community of film practitioners and practices for sustainable filmmaking and creativity - with unique collaborative opportunities within and cross courses, the Screen School and throughout the College and University community. On MA Documentary Film, developing collaborative projects allows you to pursue specific areas of interest and frame your documentary ideas within other contexts of other disciplines.</p>
4	<p><b>Professional expertise:</b> There are alumni, professional creatives and technical experts that contribute to the School and its Programme Areas. This is exemplified by the inspirational talks, live projects and workshops delivered from a disparate range of filmmakers. Your work will be guided by an experienced staff team of practitioners, educators, researchers and guest practitioners, who link to specialist institutions, the broadcast industry, the independent sector and the festival circuit at a national and international level to ensure the course reflects ongoing developments in the documentary sector.</p>
5	<p><b>Graduate Attributes:</b> The course is modelled to generate graduates who are flexible and resilient, capable of working independently or as part of a team. You will develop the skills and behaviours required to work professionally as documentary directors, becoming competent technically in your ability to operate</p>

as self-shooters and editors, having acquired the editorial skills to originate and pitch original documentary ideas. You'll have the optional opportunity to graduate with the BAFTA Albert Certification for sustainable production. Across the course you will be encouraged to make new connections, exchange ideas and build working relationships, expanding your understanding of the creative landscape beyond your own field of study.

## Course Detail

MA Documentary Film is a leader in exploring the traditions of the documentary film genre and its modes of production. Integrating practice with theory, you'll analyse filmmaking critically, historically and conceptually within a practical context.

Documentary has the power to investigate and inspire - to reveal the human experience, call the powerful to account and help effect lasting change.

As a student of documentary film, you'll be naturally inquisitive and interested in the lives of others, committed to understanding the world that surrounds you, and keen to examining the most pressing issues of our time.

On this course, you'll undertake the roles of producer, director, camera operator, sound-recordist and editor. You'll learn how to self-shoot, to work in teams, and to direct and produce for broadcast, independent and web media.

For your Major Project, you'll develop ideas in ways that suit your work best. From identifying characters, stories and locations to shooting and editing with a particular visual style, you can choose to be the author of your work or to collaborate with peers.

### What to expect?

- You'll become grounded in direction, camerawork and editing, and learn key artistic and technical skills alongside sustainable practice for a successful documentary filmmaker.
- You'll contextualise theoretical and ethical debates surrounding the documentary form to compliment and nourish your growing practical skills in documentary filmmaking.
- You'll introduce your work to the competitive British and international documentary filmmaking circuits.
- You'll enhance your career prospects, gaining valuable vision, opportunities and skills including guidance on pitching for funding and commissions.
- In return, you'll need to be committed to the practice, ready with strong ideas, and open to constructive and supportive criticism so that you can push boundaries in your thinking, writing and reflection alongside making films.

### Work experience and opportunities

You'll collaborate with external partners for projects and live briefs. Previously, we've worked with a variety of partners, including a collaboration with the Independent Film Trust, collaborating on the Coldharbour Project, an oral documentary series. We have a long, successful history of graduates finding freelance work as directors, self-shooters

and editors with companies ranging from *The Guardian*, Century Films and True Vision, to the BBC, Channel 4 and Channel 5.

The Screen School at London College of Communication belongs to the BAFTA albert Education Partnership, which provides graduates with the opportunity to understand the professional and personal relevance of sustainability.

As a Documentary Film student, you'll have the opportunity to undertake an optional assignment to achieve BAFTA albert Graduate Certification, where you'll learn about topics including sustainable production solutions, the role of – and opportunities for - responsible businesses, and how to create content with a strategic environmental purpose.

### **Mode of study**

MA Documentary Film 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**

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

Whether contextual or practice-based, all units on MA Documentary Film are mandatory. The contextual lectures with screenings and seminars are timetabled to a regular weekly pattern. Throughout the terms, your production-based classes, as well as your individual and group assignments, will vary your timetable according to the nature of the production.

### **Autumn, Term 1**

#### **Documentary Development (40 credits)**

You'll be introduced to documentary filmmaking and equipped with the core practice skills of documentary film production. You'll be encouraged to research, develop and pitch a documentary idea which you'll go on to produce as your Major Project film.

#### **Documentary History and Theory (20 credits)**

This unit positions documentary production within a historical and theoretical context.

### **Spring, Term 2**

## **Documentary Development [Continued]**

### **Documentary Ethics and Methods (20 credits)**

You'll explore the relationship between filmmakers and their subjects, questions of representation, and the ethics and practices of documentary filmmakers.

### **Collaborative Unit (20 credits)**

With a focus on student-driven collaboration, you'll identify and develop collaborative working relationships with a range of possible partners, from postgraduate student colleagues on your course to external parties.

### **Major Project [60 credits]**

This unit initiates the production and direction of an individually authored or co-authored documentary film of up to 20 minutes, which is accompanied by a portfolio of research, a proposal and a treatment.

## **Summer, Term 3**

### **Documentary: Contemporary Discourses (20 credits)**

This unit weaves together analysis of present-day issues faced by the documentary film business and brings up-to-date examination of contemporary approaches to storytelling and the documentary form.

### **Major Project (Continued)**

## **Autumn, Term 4**

Your Major Project will resume, culminating with a critical and analytical report which contextualises your documentary film while articulating a promotional and impact strategy aligned to your future professional plans.

If you are unable to continue or decide to exit the course, there are two possible exit awards. A Postgraduate Certificate will be awarded on successful completion of the first 60 credits and a Postgraduate Diploma will be awarded on successful completion of the first 120 credits.

## **Learning and Teaching Methods**

- Workshops

- Lectures
- Screenings
- Tutorials
- Self-directed study
- Unsupervised collaborative assignments
- Peer review

### Assessment Methods

- Essays
- Presentations
- Taster film
- Pitches
- Critical and evaluative reports
- Documentary film
- Research dossier

### Reference Points

The following reference points were used in designing the course:

- Research into Competitor Courses (see appendix)
- Discussions with Industry Practitioners / Potential Mentors
- Student Focus Group (see appendix)
- Informal Discussions with potential Collaborator Course:
- The College Learning and Teaching Strategy
- The College Assessment Strategy
- The College approach to Personal and Professional Development
- The Learning and Teaching policies of the University of the Arts London
- University of the Arts London Level Descriptors
- Framework for Higher Education Qualifications
- QAA Film Production Benchmark statement
- Course student consultation
- Industry panel feedback
- Industry practice BFI Diversity Standards contractual requirements  
<https://www.bfi.org.uk/inclusion-film-industry/bfi-diversity-standards>
- Industry practice ALBERT environmental sustainability for film and TV
- <https://wearealbert.org/>

# 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	Documentary Development (40 Credits)																	S																				PG Summer Break	Start of Undergraduate Year																							
		Documentary: History and Theory (20 credits)									S																																																				
													Collaborative Unit (20 credits)									S																																									
													Documentary Ethics & Methods (20 credits)									S																																									
																						Documentary: Contemporary Discourses (20 credits)									S																				PG Overlap Period with new year intake												
													Major Project (60 credits)																													Major Project cont.											S										

*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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