

PROGRAMME SPECIFICATION

Name, title and level of final qualification(s)	MFA Theatre Directing (Level 7)
Name and title of interim qualification(s)	N/A
Awarding Body	University of London
Teaching Institution(s)	Birkbeck, University of London
Home school/other teaching departments	Creative Arts, Culture and Communication
Location of delivery	Central London/industry placements.
Language of delivery and assessment	English
Mode of study, length of study and normal start month	Full-time (2 years) October
Professional, statutory or regulatory body	N/A
<u>QAA subject benchmark group(s)</u> <u>Higher Education Credit Framework for</u> <u>England</u>	N/A
Birkbeck Course Code	TMFTTDCT_C
HECoS Code	100697
Start date of programme	Autumn 2003
Date of programme approval	Summer 2003
Date of last programme amendment approval	November 2022
Valid for academic entry year	2026-27
Date of last revision to document	27/10/2022

Admissions requirements

The possession of one of the following:

- 1) minimum second-class honours degree from a UK university (or a directly comparable qualification from a non-UK university) together with some significant experience of professional or professional-level theatre;
- 2) undergraduate- or postgraduate-level diploma from a recognised UK drama school (or a directly comparable qualification from a non-UK drama school) together with some significant experience of professional or professional-level theatre;
- 3) appreciable experience (normally three years' minimum) as a professional or professional-level theatre practitioner.

Main Aims

This course provides its students with a comprehensive practice-based awareness at professional level of the work and functions of the professional theatre director under current conditions. It achieves this through an integrated programme of professional practice and theoretical, critical and contextual study. The course aims:

- to further the creative and intellectual development of its students as independent creative artists by enabling them to develop their directing abilities to a professionally acceptable level;
- to enable students to understand and be able to communicate the nature of the professional practice of directing;
- to develop themselves as autonomous reflective and self-aware artists.

Year One enables the student to acquire an informed experience, knowledge and understanding of the work of the professional director:

- with key collaborators (such as actors, authors, designers);
- in research, analysis and explication;
- within structural and financial realities.

It includes a term's "fieldwork" spent largely exploring the training of the professional actor through regular attendance at an accredited drama school.

Year Two enables the student to exercise and develop her/his skills as a director within an industrial situation (a lengthy secondment to a professional theatre company or companies). During the secondment the student will be given a number of opportunities to work as a director at professional level with actors and other appropriate collaborators in the creation of theatre pieces. In the final term of the Course, students will reassemble as a group to reflect upon and draw together their individual experience of the Course in a final presentation that will encapsulate her/his personal understanding of the role and function of a professional theatre director.

Distinctive Features

The programme is unique in the UK and Ireland, and very unusual in western Europe and the USA, because of its incorporation of professional practice and practitioners into so many aspects of its teaching and learning processes. Its special features include the: inclusion of a six-month industrial secondment to a professional theatre company or companies; occurrence within that secondment of specific production opportunities under professional conditions; extended mentoring relationships between students and professional directors centring on those professional secondments; opportunity for students to establish a relationship with a professional drama school; regular observation of the programme by a highly experienced group of professional directors; participation in the teaching of the programme by a substantial number of experienced theatre practitioners.

Course structure

The Programme operates on a full-time basis over two years, from September to September. The work of each year consists of a series of Units that build over the whole Programme to provide a rich and varied experience of the work and skills of the director.

Year One begins in September and continues through until late June of the following year. This first year enables you to acquire an informed experience, knowledge and understanding of the work of the professional director

- with key collaborators (such as actors, authors, designers)
- in research, analysis and explication
- within structural and financial realities.

Your first year includes a term's "fieldwork" during much of which you will explore the training of the professional actor through regular attendance at an accredited drama school.

Year Two begins at whatever point from July onwards will allow you to embark on your six-month secondment to a professional theatre company (or companies), which is intended to enable you to exercise and develop your skills as a director. (The timing of the secondment will vary from student to student, but it must be completed by the end of May in Year Two.). During the secondment you will be given a number of opportunities to work as a director at a professional level with actors and other appropriate collaborators in the creation of theatre. These opportunities include workshops with professional actors and your directing a short play under full professional performance conditions.

In the final term (June-July) of the Programme, students reassemble as a group to reflect upon and draw together individual experiences of the Programme, incorporating these in final individual presentations that will encapsulate your personal understanding of the work of the professional theatre director.

Course Structure

Level	Module Code	Module Title	Credit	Comp/ Core/ Option	Likely teaching term(s)
Full-Time – 2 years					
Year 1					
7	ENHU001Z7	Programme induction	0	Compulsory	T1
7	ENHU095S7	The Director and the Actor	30	Compulsory	T1
7		Spring Option	30	Option	T2
7	ENHU096S7	The Director and the Author	30	Compulsory	T2
7	ENHU097S7	The Director and the Designer	30	Compulsory	T3
7	ENHU098S7	The Director and the Industry	30	Compulsory	T3
Year 2					
7	ENHU005D7	Dissertation: The Director and the Production	60	Core	T1 & T2
7	ENHU006D7	Dissertation: The Director and Directing	60	Core	T3

Core: Module must be taken and passed by student

- Compulsory: Module must be taken but can be considered for compensated credit (see CAS regulations paragraph 24)
- Option: Student can choose to take this module

How you will learn

A range of lectures, seminars, practical workshops, placements, individual research and fieldwork. Special features include: a six-month secondment to a professional theatre; specific production opportunities under professional conditions; a term of observation and participation at a drama school; working with designers in training at a leading theatre design school; an extended mentoring relationship with a professional director; seminars, lectures and workshops delivered by leading practitioners. The teaching and learning methods enable the students to develop creatively and intellectually and to become independent creative artists able to work in professional theatre.

How we will assess you

The first Programme Unit ('Unit A – Induction') is not formally assessed. Each Programme Unit thereafter offers you at least one opportunity to demonstrate your understanding of the work done in the Unit for assessment. Such opportunities are described as Assessment Outcomes. There are five types of Assessment Outcome that occur at various times during this programme; namely

- Presentation
- Supporting Material to the Presentation
- Practical Project(s) and/or Exercise(s)
- Written Commentary
- Viva Voce Examination

Note that in addition you may encounter another type of Assessment Option in 'Unit C – The Director and Research', depending upon the Option that you select in this Unit.

In many Programme Units you make a live Presentation on some aspect(s) of the Unit's work to demonstrate your knowledge and understanding of the Unit's work. You make this Presentation to the whole year group plus assessors and others as appropriate. You agree the subject of the Presentation in advance with the Course Director, who will explain in each case the parameters that will govern your choice of subject.

After your Presentation you submit Supporting Material to the Presentation for subsequent assessment. This will normally be written material and notes in an appropriate form. However, depending on the Unit and the subject chosen, it may also include illustrative material (such as a portfolio of visual references, for example) if appropriate and if previously agreed with the Course Director.

In some Units you will also participate in or be asked to complete Practical Projects and/or Exercises that will allow you to demonstrate your grasp of the work of the Unit in practice. In 'Unit G – The Director and Production' you are asked to submit a Written Commentary on your final production project. In 'Unit I – The Director and Directing' you participate in a Viva Voce Examination which allows the assessors to obtain a rounded view of your understanding of the work of the professional director.

Learning outcomes (what you can expect to achieve)

The educational and training goals of the programme seek to promote and demonstrate the following qualities, skills, capabilities and values in its students.

Intellectual

An ability to

- reason perceptively and critically
- analyse complicated and/or contradictory issues or events within their context
- reflect analytically on personal practice
- respond positively to unfamiliar or unexpected situations or events, deploying and adapting appropriate skills thereto
- plan discuss and expound strategies and tactics
- analyse and interpret problems with a sensitivity to and awareness of diversities of perspective and background

Practical

An ability to

- plan develop organise and execute complex practice-based projects
- plan execute interpret and expound the results of complex research-based projects
- present results of projects and investigations coherently and persuasively, both in person and in writing
- engage in and lead constructive debate, in the process acknowledging and understanding divergent views, and (where appropriate) construct and implement practicable strategies in response

Personal and Social

An ability to

- take an overall/holistic view of events and situations
- lead and work with and/or within a group
- negotiate and handle conflict with sensitivity and authority
- recognise acknowledge and value diversity
- formulate personal views with a high degree of reflective self-awareness; express and expound these views confidently; assess, respond to and integrate challenges and critical responses to these views where and as appropriate

Careers and further study

Alumni of the MFA Theatre Directing programme have gone on to be teachers and lecturers in universities and drama schools; drama facilitators and workshop leaders; and producers but the vast majority of graduates are working theatre directors: either working as freelance directors, or as artistic directors of their own theatre companies, or as artistic or associate directors of ACE funded theatre companies.

Graduates include: Artistic directors of Liverpool Theatres, Headlong, HighTide, Theatre by the Lake Keswick, Clapham Omnibus, the Unicorn, Curious Directive and Coney; Associate directors of the National Theatre, the RSC, the Royal Court, the Young Vic, the Curve Leicester, Sheffield Theatres and Birmingham Rep.

Birkbeck offers a range of careers support to its students. You can find out more on [the careers pages of our website](#).

Academic regulations and course management

Birkbeck's academic regulations are contained in its [Common Award Scheme Regulations](#) and Policies published by year of application on the Birkbeck website.

You will have access to a course handbook on Moodle and this will outline how your course is managed, including who to contact if you have any questions about your module or course.

Support for your study

Your learning at Birkbeck is supported by your teaching team and other resources and people in the College there to help you with your study. Birkbeck uses a virtual learning environment called Moodle and each course has a dedicated Moodle page and there are further Moodle sites for each of your modules. This will include your course handbook.

Birkbeck will introduce you to the Library and IT support, how to access materials online, including using Moodle, and provide you with an orientation which includes an online Moodle module to guide you through all of the support available. You will also be allocated a personal tutor and provided with information about learning support offered within your School and by the College.

Please check our website for more information about student support services. This covers the whole of your time as a student with us including learning support and support for your wellbeing.

Quality and standards at Birkbeck

Birkbeck's courses are subject to our quality assurance procedures. This means that new courses must follow our design principles and meet the requirements of our academic regulations. Each new course or module is subject to a course approval process where the proposal is scrutinised by subject specialists, quality professionals and external representatives to ensure that it will offer an excellent student experience and meet the expectation of regulatory and other professional bodies.

You will be invited to participate in an online survey for each module you take. We take these surveys seriously and they are considered by the course team to develop both modules and the overall courses. Please take the time to complete any surveys you are sent as a student.

We conduct an annual process of reviewing our portfolio of courses which analyses student achievement, equality data and includes an action plan for each department to identify ongoing enhancements to our education, including changes made as a result of student feedback.

Our periodic review process is a regular check (usually every four years) on the courses by department with a specialist team including students.

Each course will have an external examiner associated with it who produces an annual report and any recommendations. Students can read the most recent external examiner reports on the course Moodle pages. Our courses are all subject to Birkbeck Baseline Standards for our Moodle module information. This supports the accessibility of our education including expectations of what information is provided online for students.

The information in this programme specification has been approved by the College's Academic Board and every effort has been made to ensure the accuracy of the information it contains.

Programme specifications are reviewed periodically. If any changes are made to courses, including core and/or compulsory modules, the relevant department is required to provide a revised programme specification. Students will be notified of any changes via Moodle.

Further information about specifications and an archive of programme specifications for the College's courses is [available online](#).

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