

Course outline: Directing and Producing Science and Natural History

The MA in Directing and Producing Science and Natural History is a specialisation within the broader MA in Film and Television.

The course takes students on a two-year journey of discovery; starting with the history of wildlife and science programmes, through the many stages of production from brainstorming an original idea; to the finished film. As we progress, the necessary skills for each stage will be taught, with a strong emphasis on 'learning through doing'. At each phase, students should add to their film-making abilities, through teaching and practice, so that they will be confident, competent directors and producers after 24 months.

The course provides theoretical and practical support for students developing their professional practice. Their learning will be enhanced by screenings of a range of historical and contemporary science and wildlife documentaries. Theoretical analyses of these documentaries will take place alongside the intensive practical training, bolstering the students' abilities. The students will be encouraged to deconstruct the films, both their structure and style. There will be discussions about the nature of storytelling in film making, leading the students to formulate their own views and opinions on the subject. In addition, theoretical and ethical issues specific to science and wildlife, such as the use of altered camera speeds, the place of sound design, the treatment of scientists' work, the use of captive animals, the care of animals and the validity of reconstructions, will be discussed.

Year One

Part A: Science Documentary, producing an interview insert – The unit provides an introduction to making science documentaries. Students will work collaboratively to produce a short science interview.

Part B: Wildlife Documentary, producing a wildlife behaviour sequence – This unit has 2 strands. It looks at the special skills required for wildlife documentary, and it takes students through the important process of pre-production for their 10-minute first year films. Students will produce long lens, macro and time-lapse camerawork plus short wildlife sequence and write a reflection on their learning outcomes.

Part C: Short Form documentary production – This unit is broken into 2 strands with students participating in both:

1. **Production:** Students will make either a short (10 minute) wildlife or science documentary.
2. **Planning and approval of 2nd year film:** students should discuss with their tutors their intended 2nd year film and commence initial research.

Dissertation

Students will decide on the topic for their dissertation and write an outline

Work Placement

Students will have the opportunity of working in a major independent production company specialising in science or wildlife film making.

Year Two

In Year Two, students are supported in making their final films. This work is supported by regular tutorials with the Head of Department, Mentors and visiting tutors as appropriate.

Graduation Project – The Graduation Project will be a film made to full professional standards, able to be transmitted without additional external input.