

PROGRAMME SPECIFICATION

MA ANIMATION PRODUCTION

This Programme Specification is designed for prospective students, current students, graduates, academic staff and potential employers. It provides a summary of the main features of the programme and the intended learning outcomes that a typical student might reasonably be expected to achieve and demonstrate if he/she takes full advantage of the learning opportunities that are provided.

Whilst every endeavour has been made to provide the course described in the Programme Specification, the University reserves the right to make such changes as may be appropriate for reasons of operational efficiency or due to circumstances beyond its control. Any changes are made in accordance with the University's academic standards and quality procedures.

This document is available in alternative formats on request.

ARTS UNIVERSITY BOURNEMOUTH

PROGRAMME SPECIFICATION

The Programme Specification provides a summary of the main features of the **MA Animation Production** course, and the learning outcomes that a 'typical' student might reasonably be expected to achieve and demonstrate if he/she passes the course.

Further detailed information on the learning outcomes, content and teaching and learning methods of each unit may be found within this Handbook and the online Unit Information, which is available on your course blog.

<u>Key Course Information</u>	
Final Award	Master of Arts
Course Title	Animation Production
Award Title	MA Animation Production
Teaching institution	Arts University Bournemouth
Awarding Institution	Arts University Bournemouth
Offered in the Faculty of:	Media and Performance
<i>Contact details:</i> Telephone number	01202 363138
Email	fomp@aub.ac.uk
Professional accreditation	Creative Skillset
Length of course / mode of study	1 year full-time
Level of final award (in FHEQ)	Level 7
Subject Benchmark Statement	Art and Design
Language of study	English
External Examiner for course	Andy Joule Falmouth University
	<i>Please note that it is not appropriate for students to contact external examiners directly</i>
Date of validation	April 2013
Date of most recent review	N/A
Date programme specification written/revised	September 2013

Course Description

The MA Animation Production course offers you the opportunity to demonstrate a systematic and critically-informed understanding of current developments in animation theory and practice. Fundamentally based on a tri-partite approach of Practice, Theory and Professionalism – with each element placed in ‘critical dialogue’ with the others – the course will ensure that your research and practice is at the forefront of the discipline.

Animation’s position as an interdisciplinary field that draws from Art and Design, Film, Computing, Fine Art, Graphics (and other areas besides) necessarily means that top-level graduates in the field will have mastered a cross-disciplinary understanding of a range of skills, techniques, theories and discourses. The overall aim of the MA is to enable you to pursue your interests and specialism – whether 2D/drawn, CG, stop motion or other forms of animation – and produce excellent work that synthesises the ‘strands’ of theory, practice and professionalism. The MA Animation Production course is fully embedded within the vibrant studio environment of Animation at AUB. The overriding objective is to enable all Animation students to see themselves as part of a ‘community of practice’ (that includes research and critique, and the building of a ‘production culture’¹), existing not as atomised students ‘doing their own thing’, but as part of a meaningful whole.

Statement of Student Entitlement

- Tutorials – a minimum of one supervisory tutorial per 20 credit unit, 2 per 40 and 60 credit units; totalling 8 over the course. In addition each student is entitled to assessment feedback tutorials apart from Master’s Project; each held at the end of the unit. A tutorial time is allocated up to 45 minutes.
- Request tutorials from visiting lecturers when possible.
- Staff and student-led seminars
- Access to the Quiet Study Room during Library hours including the summer period.
- Access to Animation resources agreed through the Course Team;
- Agreed attendance on relevant undergraduate workshop/resource inductions.
- Attendance at the AUB-wide Research Forum, and Animation Research Pipeline events.

Course Aims

General aims are to produce Master’s graduates with:

- systematic understanding of professional Animation practice at a higher level;
- comprehensive understanding of how their practice can be contextualised in relation to current debates in Animation Studies and related disciplinary fields;
- an ability to play a leading role in the future development of the field;

¹ See John Caldwell (2008) *Production Culture: Industrial Reflexivity and Critical Practice in Film and Television* (Duke University Press)

- an ability to critically evaluate and develop their own and others' research and practice in readiness for work at a higher level ('Level 8' or PhD level work)

More specifically, the course aims to:

1. Provide a stimulating forum for critical debate and interrogation of approaches to Animation practice.
2. Support students in instigating new directions in their work and developing their practice, research and professionalism.
3. Encourage individual students to reflect on their work and critically contextualise it in relation to wider Animation production cultures.
4. Enable students to develop professional maturity and apply this in the changing world of work.
5. Support students in their in-depth exploration of their chosen research area, thereby preparing them for a range of employment opportunities in the creative industries or further study at Doctoral level.

Course Outcomes

By the end of the course you will be able to:

1. Produce high level individual or collaborative work that acknowledges current practices within the wider creative arena of Animation.
2. Demonstrate an in-depth ability to investigate, understand and critique current issues in Animation and provide original insights into contemporary practice.
3. Demonstrate and apply highly developed conceptual, practical and professional understanding of theories, techniques and processes in Animation.
4. Evaluate your individual practice in relation to critical research at the forefront of the discipline and articulate this through the completion of a body of work and its appropriate contextualisation.
5. Show that you have acquired new skills and abilities in communication, presentation, research and independent learning.

Reference Points

UK Quality Code for higher education, including:

- Subject Benchmark Statement: *Art and Design*
- Framework for Higher Education Qualifications (FHEQ)

AUB Regulatory Framework and Postgraduate Assessment Regulations

AUB Creative Learning Plan

AUB Strategic Plan

AUB Employability Framework

Learning and Teaching Strategies

The MA Animation Production course consists of formal teaching (lectures, seminars), group critiques of work-in-progress, production meetings and tutorial support. You will receive specialist support depending on your Learning Agreement for each unit, which is driven by your own interests and direction. The holistic approach to Animation Production that underpins the course – seeing one's work, whether practice, theory or professional studies, as part of a pipeline – necessarily means that your engagement with staff, other students and guest speakers is fundamental. In this respect, independent learning and self-directed study are also vital because you need to orient yourself to, and understand your relationship to, others in the field.

Developing as a professional animator requires a balance of individualised creative skills and open-minded collaborative working and we believe that the environment at the AUB enables this synthesis to happen.

Animation students study in a traditional studio environment that enables students to see each other's creative output develop over time and which offers unique peer learning opportunities for students at all levels. As a student on the MA Animation Production course, you will have the chance to offer leadership in this context and in turn learn to value your own skills and experience and to embrace your position as a senior member of the learning community.

The concept of pipeline and of peer learning extends to our important and regular contact with alumni who make a significant contribution to animation learning both as former students and as professionals.

Assessment

Each unit is assessed separately, and the assessment forms part of the unit. Assessment both provides a measure of your achievement, and also gives you regular feedback on how your learning is developing.

For every unit of your course, we will inform you of what you are expected to learn; what you have to submit; how your work will be assessed; and the deadline for presenting your work for assessment. This is made available through Unit Information, which is on your course blog.

You will receive a final mark for each unit in the form of a percentage, which will be recorded on your formal record of achievement (transcript). Each component of assessment is graded using a notched marking scale, whereby only certain marks are used within each grade. The only marks available within any ten-point band are *2, *5 and *8 (eg 62, 65, 68). These marks correspond to a low, mid, and high level of achievement within each grade band.

All learning outcomes must be passed to successfully complete the unit.

You are assessed, broadly speaking in two ways: formatively and summatively.

Formative assessment provides feedback that will help you to develop your learning. It should be seen as 'ongoing' assessment in the sense that it enables you

to pinpoint strengths and weaknesses and address them appropriately. Formative assessment may take place in tutorials, seminars, critiques and other discussions about your work.

Summative assessment generally takes place at the end of a unit of study. It is an overall evaluation of your acquisition of the skills and knowledge developed in that part of the course.

There will be specific tutorials and formative assessment events once per term to make you fully aware of your progress on the course and monitor your development.

The MA Animation Production course assesses you by examining your practical work in Animation, but also how you interrogate and critically contextualise your practice. You are also expected to engage fully in the professional arena appropriate to your practice. This means that you produce a body of practical work (though exactly what form this takes will be by negotiation), along with contextual documentation, and other written materials. Some units within the MA require critical-theoretical discussion – though this can take the form of a ‘research journal’ rather than an essay (see the Glossary for further explanation of some of these terms).

Distinction

A Master’s Degree with Distinction may be awarded. Only units at Level 7 contribute towards the determination of a Distinction.

For further information on assessment and awards, and the criteria for the award of Distinction please visit: <https://viewpoint.aub.ac.uk>

Course Structure

All students are registered for the award of Master of Arts; however exit awards are available if you leave the course early. If you successfully complete a level of the course, you will automatically be entitled to progress to the next level.

For the award of Postgraduate Certificate (PGCert) you must have achieved a minimum of 60 credits at Level 7; and any specific requirements of the course as outlined in the Course Handbook.

For the award of Postgraduate Diploma (PGDip), you must have achieved a minimum of 120 credits at Level 7; and any specific requirements of the course as outlined in the Course Handbook.

For the award of Master of Arts (MA), you must have achieved 180 credits, of which a minimum of 120 credits must be at Level 7; and any specific requirements of the course as outlined in the Course Handbook.

Course Content

The overall content of the course is driven by a belief in the *tri-partite* notion of practice, theory and professionalism, with these three elements drawn together by students into a synthesis. Therefore, although there are discrete units, as noted below (and mapped in the Course Diagram), these should be seen as fully

integrated. The aim is to engage students in synthetic thinking and equip them to be the leaders in the Animation field in the future. One of the key contextual frames is that of Animation having a 'production culture' as delineated by John Caldwell.² In this respect, the ways in which animators (including student animators) makes sense of, narrativise and critique their own working practices becomes part of the object of scrutiny – and a point of departure for further critical reflection. The other guiding principle for the course is that of the 'Animation Research Pipeline' (based at AUB) which views animation research as an holistic activity modelled on the 'production pipeline'. This does not mean, simply, that we research 'production' or 'practice', but that we view the research process as something that needs to be thought through in relation to these areas, and take on board a synthesis of ideas and influences. As one website relating to an online 'pipeline' puts it:

An animation pipeline handles the flow of data as it travels through the stages of production. [...] Abstractly, a pipeline is both an established set of decisions and a collection of tools developed before production and managed throughout so that the focus for the artist is on the creative and technical challenges not the nuts and bolts of production. By laying this foundation, the pipeline sets the ground rules so that individual work is integrated into the bigger picture of production.³

It is these notions - of research as a 'flow of data' that can then be managed in different ways or 'repurposed' across a range of projects; or as requiring an agreed set of protocols that then enable the required 'focus'; and (perhaps most importantly) of an individual's work being part of a 'bigger production' – that are vital here. This underpins the entire course – and is what will ensure that the graduates from this course go on to make a difference in the future.

Course Units

1. Animation History and Theory (20 credits)

This unit will orient you to the MA course as a whole by outlining some of the key moments of animation history and the main methodologies used to understand animation. Central to such contextualisation will be a critical dialogue with your own practice; although there will be lecture input and seminar discussions, the point will be you to navigate the unit by thinking about how theory and history 'maps onto' your own practical and professional interests.

2. Studio Practice (40 credits)

The 'Studio Practice' unit will be where you will interrogate and prepare for the main practical project work you will do later in the MA course. The unit could therefore work as a 'pre-production' arena where assets like character designs, storyboards, and so on are worked through. Alternatively (if your intention is to produce a Masters Project that does not take the form of 'a film') the 'Studio Practice' unit could involve the development of other work: for example, if you wish to explore concept design and visual development, then the role and function of this would be interrogated during this unit.

² See Caldwell (2008), *Production Culture: Industrial Reflexivity and Critical Practice in Film and Television* (Durham & London: Duke University Press)

³ See <http://openpipeline.cc/pipeline-specification/>

3. The Entrepreneurial Animator (20 credits)

This unit requires you to work through and develop your practical and theoretical interests in relation to the ever-changing world of work. This *may* involve a placement at a studio or other company, but could just as likely entail a research-driven analysis of the ways in which animators need to respond to the 'marketplace'. For example, one 'take' on the 'entrepreneurial animator' could be to examine the contours of animation distribution and exhibition – where a thorough understanding of digital and online forms of delivery would be crucial. Another aspect of such an examination would be to discuss the role and function of animation festivals in securing deals, rights, and getting ideas 'out there'. In this respect, the notion of the 'entrepreneurial animator' is not simply one where you learn how to work in a studio (of whatever kind), or learn some 'business tricks' to help make you successful at the end of the course. It is about you fundamentally challenging and critiquing how animation is made, who funds it, why, for what purpose, for whom, and with what results – all with a view to locating your own practice and approach within this complex and continually changing terrain. This is the absolutely crucial point: the ways in which technology, information flows, labour and other elements of the 'political economy' of the creative industries are arranged are in constant flux, so you need to be not only equipped with knowledge of the 'state of play' at any particular moment, but also equipped with the skills, ability and outlook to intervene and change things. This is the work of the Entrepreneurial Animator.

4. Contemporary Themes in Animation Research (20 credits)

Building on the 'Animation History and Theory' unit, this unit will move on to examine some of the theories and research that are at the cutting edge in Animation Studies. Questions of realism, performance, the changes wrought by digital convergence, as well as shifts in the global political economy of the media (and how animation works within this system) all need to be understood and thought through in relation to your own practical and professional 'prospectus'.

5. Professional Development (20 Credits)

The Professional Development unit affords an opportunity for you to consolidate and refine your portfolio. Developing skills and focusing on criteria and current trends identified by industry is essential in best preparing you for employment. Industry partners, research undertaken by staff and Creative Skillset initiatives have all helped inform and shape the aims of this unit and the 'professionalism' strand of the MA as a whole. You will be guided by tutors through the unit, but with your own unique requirements in mind facilitated through a Learning Agreement. This will support you to best position your 'portfolio pack' to your career aspirations.

6. Master's Project (60 credits)

The Master's Project unit is the culmination of the work of the degree, where you will develop and finalise your 'body of work'. What shape this will take will depend on two things – your developmental work to this point, and your negotiated study plan. The specific outcome will vary according to your own interests – it may be a short film, but it could be visual development/concept work (or some other form of pre-production asset).

Course Diagram

This diagram shows the proposed start/end dates for each unit and shows teaching weeks only; holiday periods are not included. Further information on the structure of each unit will be included in the online Unit Information which is available on your course blog.

Level 7 full-time mode of study (45 weeks over 53 weeks)												
	Term One				Term Two				Term Three			
0	Weeks 1-15				Weeks 16-30				Weeks 31-45			
	OCT	NOV	DEC	JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUNE	JULY	AUG	SEP
Induction	ANF750 Animation History and Theory (weeks 1-15) (20 credits)				ANF753 Contemporary Themes in Animation Research (weeks 16-30) (20 credits)							
	ANF751 Studio Practice (weeks 1-15) (40 credits)				ANF754 Master's Project (weeks 16-45) (60 credits)							
	ANF752 The Entrepreneurial Animator (weeks 1-30) (20 credits)								ANF755 Professional Development (weeks 31-45) (20 credits)			