



LEEDS
BECKETT
UNIVERSITY

Course Specification

MA Documentary Filmmaking

Course Code: MADOC

2026/27

Award and Title: *MA Documentary Filmmaking (MADOC)*

Applicant Facing Course Specification for 2026/27 Entrants

Confirmed at 11/2025

General Information

Award	Master of Arts Documentary Filmmaking
Contained awards	Postgraduate Diploma Documentary Filmmaking Postgraduate Certificate Documentary Filmmaking
Awarding body	Leeds Beckett University
Level of qualification and credits	Level 7 of the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications, with 180 credit points at Level 7 of the Higher Education Credit Framework for England.
Course lengths and standard timescales	Start dates will be notified to students via their offer letter. The length and mode of delivery of the course is confirmed below: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• 18 Months (Full Time, campus based)
Part time study	There is no part-time option available for this course.
Location(s) of delivery	The majority of teaching will be at City campus but on occasion may be at Headingley campus.
Entry requirements	Admissions criteria are confirmed in your offer letter. Details of how the University recognises prior learning and supports credit transfer are located here: https://www.leedsbeckett.ac.uk/student-information/course-information/recognition-of-prior-learning/ Admissions enquiries may be directed to: AdmissionsEnquiries@leedsbeckett.ac.uk .
Course fees	Course fees are confirmed in your offer letter. A breakdown of any additional costs is included on the online prospectus entry for this course. Fees enquiries may be directed to Fees@leedsbeckett.ac.uk .

Policies, Standards and Regulations

<https://www.leedsbeckett.ac.uk/our-university/public-information/academic-regulations/>

Standard regulations apply to this course.

Professional Accreditation or Recognition Associated with the Course

Professional body

N/A

Timetable

Timetables for Semester 1 will be made available to students during induction week via:

- i) The Student Portal (MyBeckett)
- ii) The Leeds Beckett app

Any difficulties relating to timetabled sessions may be discussed with your Course Administrator.

Key Contacts

Your course director Dr Laura Taylor

Your course administrator Adnan Khanzada, FilmCourseAdmin@leedsbeckett.ac.uk

Course Overview

Some things never change, like telling a good story. Documentaries have been telling good stories since the days of John Grierson, and they will continue to do so. But today there is a revolution taking place: documentary filmmakers can now finance, distribute and make their films as never before.

Gone are the old gatekeepers, and the days when only broadcasters and distributors could get your film made and seen; there have been fantastic innovations in how we finance and find audiences for our films, new kinds of films and niche, more targeted audiences. For emerging documentary filmmakers, it's not so much about breaking into the industry, it is about being the industry and embracing the change.

The MA Documentary Filmmaking course offers emerging filmmakers (the students) the chance to re-think, to create, and to embrace the change; to imagine a great story, and to find an audience for their financed, graduation documentary film.

MA Documentary Filmmaking will develop genuinely experienced and perceptive practitioners who are able to take on the complex and demanding work of their major documentary project, and who will then be able to move on into highly demanding and competitive film industries.

What is the documentary industry? At the Northern Film School, we define this as a wide spectrum of filmmaking activities that includes; broadcasting, cinema, festivals, the internet and new media platforms, education, political and social debate, experimental film, ethnography, wildlife, observation, actuality and reality, performance, recording and documenting the world – and all this is for an audience.

The Course is able to call upon industry professionals and practitioners who will contribute regularly through master classes, workshops and mentoring.

Aims

The aims of the programme are to:

According to the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications: Much of the study undertaken for master's degrees will have been at, or informed by, the forefront of an academic or professional discipline. Students will have shown originality in the application of knowledge, and they will understand how the boundaries of knowledge are advanced through research. They will be able to deal with complex issues both systematically and creatively, and they will show originality in tackling and solving problems. They will have the qualities needed for employment in circumstances requiring sound judgement, personal responsibility, and initiative in complex and unpredictable professional environments'. (2014, p. 28) Accordingly the educational aims of the MA Documentary Filmmaking programme are designed to enable the students to:

- a) develop and utilise Master's Level specialist documentary production skills and techniques;
- b) become an individual, collaborative, creative and distinctive documentary filmmaker through experimentation and speculative enquiry;
- c) develop intellectual independence and undertake independent study;

- d) develop a critical understanding of the documentary industry and the wide spectrum of filmmaking activities involved;
- e) build and develop an ethical framework and methodological plan for their own documentary practice by studying classic and contemporary documentaries, genres and key practitioners;
- f) create a documentary film project of originality with a marketing strategy for an intended audience;
- g) construct a personal and professional plan to continue as a documentary filmmaker, or to take up higher-level research, upon completion of their MA.

MA Documentary Filmmaking is part of the Leeds School of Arts and as such MA students are able to work with fellow students in Music & Sound, Performing Arts, Creative Technologies, Art & Design, Fashion and the School of Architecture, as well as working with other cohorts from BA (Hons) Filmmaking, MA Curation and Film Exhibition and MA Screenwriting: Feature Film and Continuing Series within the Northern Film School. In addition, the Northern Film School now has a number of researchers at doctoral level providing potential new pathways for MA students as well as ensuring a further engagement in experience at different levels.

Course learning outcomes

At the end of the course, students will be able to:

1	Possess a high level of individual competence in and understanding of the relevant specialist skills and be able to fully deploy this knowledge in making original, experimental and creative work for an intended audience.
2	Engage with and apply a critical awareness of, and responsibility for, the conceptual, contextual, historical, theoretical, ethical and legal dimensions of documentary practice, and relate this to contemporary debates that underpin and inform documentary practice.
3	Demonstrate an ability to work effectively with others, through collaboration, collective endeavour and negotiation with an understanding of and respect for the filmmaking process.
4	Employ self-knowledge and self-direction to demonstrate originality and cross disciplinary thinking in tackling and solving problems within documentary filmmaking, and apply this knowledge to the evolution of individual and collaborative projects.
5	Demonstrate the development of Master's and industry level research skills and methodologies, and construct and apply an independent learning strategy that will enable continuing professional, creative and research development.
6	Create a substantial Master's and industry level documentary project as an individual or co-collaborator that illustrates the abilities to: engage in investigation and speculative enquiry; generate creative ideas, concepts and proposals; and use complex and innovative thinking.

Teaching and Learning Activities

Summary

The MA Documentary Filmmaking encompasses a number of key activities including scheduled lectures, seminars, practical workshops, individual and group tutorials, supervision throughout project development, as well as guided independent study.

In the Documentary production module practical skills workshops and exercises provide the backbone of essential professional skills that equip the students to achieve the creation, development and production of documentary projects to a high standard.

Throughout the Documentary Development module seminars and presentations encourage and develop an understanding of contemporary documentary theories and debates that stimulate students to explore possibilities within their own evolving practice. The combination of these modules enables students to make an informed choice about the type of documentary practice they wish to pursue.

The learning and teaching approach of the Creative Concepts and Creative Practice modules is to encourage students to find their own filmmaking voice and vision through experimentation and reflection. Film exercises or sketches driven by the students' ideas are designed to experience and develop creative filmmaking and collaboration skills through the combination of; play, risk, experimentation, mistakes, and reflection on the processes to arrive at a greater understanding of their own creativity.

The development of the Master's Projects follows best industry practice. Once the ideas have been developed through workshops and tutorials, the students pitch to a panel, work with conditions and move into production with budgets receiving continual tutor support from development to completion.

Throughout the course students are required to be active learners, whether through the development of their documentary projects, through their presentations of critical theory, where students are expected to present to their fellow students and to engage in discussion about the ideas and concepts raised, or through the process of applying their individual understanding to the documentary projects.

There is an emphasis upon the reflexive process, both as individuals and as collaborators, with the expectation that the insights discovered and explored through this process will be demonstrated visibly and critically through practical application. One of the strengths of the course is that there is no separation between tutors and lecturers who deliver theory on the one hand, and with practitioners providing practical classes on the other. Rather, the integration of theory and practice is reflected by the cross-collaboration of the School's academic staff in both areas.

The Film School has developed a strong PhD research programme. PhD students have undertaken research into a number of filmmaking arenas and the introduction of PhD studies into the Film School has succeeded in stimulating increased interest in the significance of theoretical work allied to practice.

This course is predominantly delivered via live face to face lectures, seminars and tutorials. In a small number of cases, live online sessions will be used. This facility means that we are able to access expertise outside of the region, enhancing and extending our teaching and learning content.

Your modules

This information is correct for students progressing through the programme within standard timescales. Option modules listed are indicative of a typical year. There may be some variance in the availability of option modules. Students who are required to undertake repeat study may be taught alternate modules which meet the overall course learning outcomes. Details of module delivery will be provided in your timetable.

Level 7

Compulsory modules

Module title	Credits	Semester/ teaching period
Creative Concepts	20	1
Documentary Production	40	1
Masters Project	40	2 and 3
Documentary Development	40	2
Creative Practice	20	2
Next Project Development	20	3
Number of credits of compulsory modules	180	

Assessment and Scheduled Learning and Teaching Activities

The assessment balance and overall workload associated with this course are calculated from core modules and typical option module choices undertaken by students on the course. They have been reviewed and confirmed as representative by the Course Director, but applicants should note that the specific option choices students make may influence both assessment and workload balance.

A standard module equates to 200 notional learning hours, which may be comprised of teaching, learning and assessment, any embedded placement activities and independent study. Modules may have more than one component of assessment.

Assessment

Level 7

This course is assessed predominantly by practical assessment with some coursework.

Workload

Overall Workload	Level 7
Teaching, learning and assessment	136 hours
Independent study	664 hours
Placement	-