

MASTER OF ARTS IN CREATIVE PRACTICE

PROGRAMME OVERVIEW

The programme offers artists, designers and filmmakers a creative and critically informed environment in which to develop and consolidate their practice. The programme will support experimental and interdisciplinary enquiry through a range of media and approaches initially based around four strands or themes: (a) contemporary art studio practice, (b) digital cultures, (c) film and lens based media, and, (d) socially engaged practice and civic engagement. Other strands/themes may be added in future years.

Contemporary art studio practice

This strand focuses on the development of contemporary artworks through a studio based practice. The role and function of the studio has evolved in recent years from its traditional definition as a place where artworks are conceived and fabricated to a space of enquiry that is more akin to a study or laboratory. Students are encouraged to consider these evolutions and debates within their individual practices and to develop research projects that are speculative, open and ambitious. The studio practice strand is open to all avenues of artistic practice that require the specifics of a studio in order to develop research to its full potential. Creative practitioners from clearly defined and medium specific areas, such as Painting, Sculpture, Ceramics, Printmaking, Textiles and Photography, are encouraged as well as people who have developed an inter-disciplinary approach.

Film and lens based media

This strand encourages an exploration of the visual language of film through a contemporary creative practice. Students are able to explore the possibilities of narrative or non-narrative film by way of the poetic documentary, experimental film, or creative narrative. Other options include animation using stop motion, and green screen or mixed media using real time with digital animation and 4D design. The student will engage in a hands on practical approach with a clear understanding of the process required to complete a feature or series of small projects through the medium of film.

Digital cultures

This strand offers students the opportunity to explore and engage in inter-disciplinary creative media design. The creative artist will use digital technology as an essential part of the creative presentation. Computer graphics, CGI, web designs, computer animation, gaming and storytelling are some of the options open to students choosing this field of study. This strand will culminate with students presenting a public exhibition of a digitally designed final project. All students practicing film or digital art will be supported with an advanced observation of visual language, visual storytelling, linear versus nonlinear structure, composition, symbolism, ethics, and rhetorical techniques required for the process of creating a professional standard exhibit for a public final film or digital art screening.

Socially engaged practice and civic engagement

In recent decades, socially-engaged practices have made significant inroads in bringing an ethical dimension to art practice within the broader social sphere. This strand focuses on the social dimensions of art practice and the expanding cultural remit of the artist. Emphasis is placed on projects initiated and realised through engagement, collaboration and/or participation between the artist or artists and identified social groups, participants and organisations. Audiences are increasingly engaging as co-creators, collaborators and participants, and this strand draws upon critically informed models of practice such as relational aesthetics, dialogic exchange and new activist strategies. This strand also encourages an expansive role of the artist in the civic arena. This can include the artist working in a curatorial capacity, developing visual art and cultural policy, public art practices, and, working with artist-led initiatives and other cultural groups and organizations in multiple contexts.

These strands are developed through a common modular structure. The MA in Creative Practice is a year-long 90 credit course consisting of the following modules:

- Themes and Issues in Creative Practice (10 credits)
- Professional Development (10 credits)
- Research and Innovation (10 credits)
- Research Project & Thesis (60 credits) Elective
- Creative Practice Projects (30 credits) Elective
- Minor Thesis (30 credits) Elective

The largest module, 'Research Project & Thesis' (60 credits), concentrates on the student initiating a research proposal which will then be guided and developed to completion by the end of the course. There are two elements to this module. First, a practice-based element where the student focuses on developing their art, film, digital media or socially engaged practice to completion. The second element seeks to critically contextualize their practice through the written form, taking into consideration the wider social and cultural fields in which their practice will perform. Teaching proceeds through one-to-one and group tutorials. The merit of this approach is that it balances the value of problem solving and project development unique to each student project through one-to-one tuition with the evaluation of the project through peer review and critiques. Each project is subject to critique, questioning and proposed developments from multiple perspectives, balanced between the tutor's expertise and wider, interdisciplinary concerns. The project culminates with the production of a final exhibition, film screening or project presentation, and a written thesis.

The two elements can overlap to greater or lesser extent depending on the project and the individual requirements. This flexibility permits the offering of an alternative elective group, two 30 credit modules in place of the 60 credit module. These two modules largely mirror the overlapping elements structure of the large module, however they can also be taken independently. This flexibility allows the opportunity of an exit from the MA programme with a 60-credit Post-Graduate Diploma. The first 30- credit module is 'Creative Practice Projects' and the second 30-credit module is 'Minor Thesis'. A student exiting with the PG Diploma would undertake the Creative Practice Projects module and the three 10-credit taught modules.

The Themes and Issues module (10 credits) concentrates on providing a student with a broad range of existing creative practices, themes and debates through a series of lectures, field trips and symposia. Students will work collaboratively to present joint seminars presentations on a selected theme or issue. Again, this opens the student to multidisciplinary perspectives and new, unconsidered avenues of thought.

The Research and Innovation module (10 credits) focuses on the 'how' and the 'why' of research methodologies and the means of validation available. It also seeks to situate creative practice within innovation and entrepreneurial frameworks. It equips students with a knowledge and confidence in working with a range of methodological approaches and perspectives characterizing contemporary creative practices. This will provide the foundations for students to locate their practice within the wider competitive field, taking cognisance of new strategies for research, innovation and entrepreneurship. This will proceed through a series of lectures and workshops that will culminate in the student presenting an overview of their research through the seminar format (as an element of the workshop series) and the production of a research and innovation strategy, defined by a series of proposals for future development in their creative practice. The aim is to integrate practical concerns and a critical contextualization; an integration that will be underpinned by a thorough understanding of methodological concerns and strategies for innovation.

The Professional Development module (10 credits) addresses the need for the student to acquire knowledge and develop skills appropriate to creative enterprise - network development, costing, project management, funding applications and availing of opportunities. Teaching proceeds through lectures and workshops where students can develop these practical skills, knowledge of their cultural field and funding potentials for career development. Students will also produce a web-based platform to promote their work and a completed project proposal addressing funding and resource requirements for a creative project, e.g. socially engaged/exhibition/film or digital project.

Inter-disciplinary Practice - Interpretation

Our interpretation of inter-disciplinary practice refers to the combination of viewpoints, ideas, processes, methods, skills, materials and technologies from disciplines traditionally seen as separate. We see individuals having the opportunity to develop inter-disciplinary practice through the addition of new approaches and consequent enhancement of their own core disciplinary approaches. We will foster the development of this type of interdisciplinary practice in a number of ways.

- Group project work combines people from different disciplines on project teams. Through the experience of working together collaboratively students have the opportunity to actively observe, absorb and assimilate other disciplines into their own practice. This opportunity will be supported by lecturers monitoring group projects through specific assessment questions designed to measure interdisciplinary practice development, and through formative feedback on assessment. Example of such assessment questions are shown below.
- Opportunities will also be actively sought for L9 students to engage in voluntary projects or activities specifically so that they can learn new skills etc.
- Individuals addressing major research projects through interdisciplinary practice must satisfy the supervisor in terms of their competence to use processes and equipment, for both health and

safety, and equipment security reasons. They may lead to recommendations for enrolment on short technical courses. These courses would normally incur an extra cost.

- Technical support for students working with processes, equipment, or materials outside their core discipline will be available, provided the student has been approved by the lecturer as technically competent and compliant with health and safety requirements.
- All the above actions will be planned and scheduled by the student and supervisor as an integrated support plan for interdisciplinary practice development

Note that courses or classes to develop technical competence in other disciplines is not a formal part of the curriculum. Places on undergraduate classes in specific disciplines may be made available to Level 9 students as a 'extra' for people who want to increase skills in a particular area. These places will only be available if the undergraduate class is not already full, and all health and safety requirements are met.