Richmond
The American International University in London

Master of Film: Science Fiction and Fantasy

Programme Specification

2021-22

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Programme specification and curriculum map – MASTER OF Film: Science Fiction and Fantasy Degree

Introduction

This document describes the **Master of Arts in Film: Science Fiction and Fantasy** awarded by Richmond University, the American International University in London, using the protocols required by *The Framework for Higher Education Qualifications in England, Wales, and Northern Ireland* (QAA, 2008).

The degree is delivered at a US Liberal Arts university with a degree structure in line with comparable MA degrees in the UK. Successful students complete 8 courses amounting to 36 US / 180 UK credits, comprised of coursework (24 US/ 120 UK credits), and either an internship (4 US/ 20 UK credits) and a Professional project (6 US/ 30 UK credits) component or an Extended Professional project (10 US/50 UK credits). Normally, each course carries 4 US/20 UK credits.

Please note: This specification provides a concise summary of the main features of the programme and the learning outcomes that a typical student might reasonably be expected to achieve and demonstrate if s/he takes full advantage of the learning opportunities that are provided.

More detailed information on the learning outcomes, content, and teaching, learning and assessment methods of each course can be found in course specification documents and syllabi.

The accuracy of the information contained in this document is reviewed by the University and may be verified by the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education.

1. OVERVIEW

Programme/award title(s)	Master of Arts in Film: Science Fiction and Fantasy
Teaching Institution	Richmond, the American International University in London
Awarding Institution	Richmond, the American International University in London
Date of last validation	October 2019 (for five years)
Next revalidation	2024-25
Credit points for the award	36 US credits 180 UK credits (FHEQ Level 7)
Programme start date	September 2020
Underpinning QAA subject benchmark(s)	QAA Masters Degree Characteristics (March 2010): For contextualization, Honours degree level subject benchmark statement for History of Art, Architecture and Design (HAAD)
Professional/statutory recognition	N/A
Language of Study	English
Duration of the programme for each mode of study (P/T, FT,DL)	FT (one year, if Fall start), PT (two years, if Fall start) FT (one year and four months, if Spring start), PT (two years and four months, if Spring start)
Dual accreditation (if applicable)	Middle States Commission on Higher Education (First accredited 1981; renewed 2016. QAA – Higher Education Review (AP) December 2017
Date of production/revision of this specification	May 2021 (see chart at the end of this document for list of revisions)

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2. ABOUT THE PROGRAMME

Richmond University's MA in Film: Science Fiction and Fantasy programme offers sustained engagement with the science fiction and fantasy film, television, and other visual media from an intercultural perspective, training students in the professional skills required for career placement in production and cultural industries. The programme brings film historians, theoreticians, professional practitioners and studio artists together to 1) offer a thorough grounding in the interdisciplinary theoretical and methodological issues related to the study of the visual, and 2) equip students with the professional skills and experience to work successfully in a variety of arts and cultural industries.

Programme Goals
- To provide students with a thorough grounding in the interdisciplinary theoretical and methodological issues for the study of science fiction and fantasy film, television, media and visual culture;
- To equip students with the key skills, knowledge and experience for careers in the arts and creative cultural industries, and for Doctoral research;
- To train students to apply their accumulated experience, knowledge and skills to their personal lives, developing appreciation of cultural commonality, diversity and difference;
- To maintain academic standards equal to or better than comparable MA degrees offered by UK universities.

3. PROGRAMME STRUCTURE

Master of Film: Science Fiction and Fantasy Degree

The programme is a discrete and self-contained programme of 36 US/180 UK credits. As such, the structure does not follow the progressive UK PGDip ► MA structure of some other programmes although a UK PGDip is awarded as an exit award in recognition of students who complete the required 24 US / 120 UK credits of taught course work. It is not possible for students to register for the PGDip.

The programme is delivered over one academic year full-time or two-years part-time from the start of September or January. Full-time students take six mandatory taught courses of 4 US/20 UK credits each, spread equally over the autumn and spring semesters. Then in the final semester, students may take the internship course of 4 US/20 UK credits and write the research project which is submitted at the end of the summer and is weighted at 8 US/40 UK credits. Students must complete the six mandatory taught courses before progressing to the internship/research project. Part-time students take one or two courses in the autumn and spring semesters, completing the required course work over two years and complete the internship and research project in the final semester of year two. Full-time or part-time students unable to take the credits instead of the normal project of 10,000 words.

US credit is equivalent to one contact teaching hour per week and each course typically involves three to four contact hours per week over a 15 week semester, except the professional research project which requires self-directed learning with academic supervision, and the internship which requires part-time work placement. There is a ratio of 1 US to 5 UK credits at FHEQ Level 7.

Details of the University's degree programmes, including approved Programme Specifications and Course Specification Descriptions (CSDs) are held in an official archive by academic year, available at https://www.richmond.ac.uk/programme-and-course-specifications/

All students on Masters programmes are expected to be in London for thesis/dissertation supervision and seminars, unless their internship takes them outside London. The student must be registered with the University at this time if the work is to be accepted for marking.

Successful students complete 36 US /180 credits at *FHEQ* Level 7

		US Credits	UK Credits
FHEQ Level 7 (Total)		**36**	**180**
FALL SEMESTER	**Course Title**		
AVC 7100	Research Methods	4	20
FLM 7100	Science Fiction and Fantasy: Industry	4	20
FLM 7101	Digital Storytelling	4	20
SPRING SEMESTER			
AVC 7105	Visual Cultures	4	20
FLM 7102	Science Fiction and Fantasy: Storytelling	4	20
FLM 7103	Edutainment Video Essays	4	20
SUMMER SEMESTER			
EITHER both:			
FLM 7500	Thesis Research	8	40
FLM 7902	Internship	4	20
OR **both:**			
FLM 7505	Final Film Project	8	40
FLM 7902	Internship	4	20
OR **only:**			
FLM 7550	Extended Thesis	12	60

US Postgraduate Certificate (PGC) / UK Postgraduate Diploma in Film: Science Fiction and Fantasy

The US Postgraduate Certificate (PGC) and UK Postgraduate Diploma (PGDip) in Film: Science Fiction and Fantasy are awarded to students registered on the MA who have successfully completed in good academic standing (with a 3.0 GPA/B average) for all courses but: 1) fail to submit the final professional research project (without extenuating circumstances eligible for resubmission), or 2) fail to pass the professional research project. Both awards are therefore conferrable as exit awards in recognition of successful completion of postgraduate coursework, but it is not possible for students to register on the US PGC or the UK PGDip.

Successful students complete 24 US / 120 UK credits at *FHEQ* Level 7

Successful students awarded the exit awards are able to demonstrate all learning outcomes for the MA except the professional research project component – see 'H' in Section 4 "Programme Outcomes" below, and in the Curriculum Map (Appendix I below).

4. PROGRAMME OUTCOMES

Programme-level learning outcomes are identified below, based on *SEEC* categories linked to level 7 of the FHEQ.

Refer to Appendix II – Curriculum Map for details of how outcomes are deployed across the programme of study.

Upon successful completion of the **MA Film: Science Fiction and Fantasy degree** successful students will be able to:

A. A comprehensive and systematic knowledge and understanding of film and fantasy storytelling in theory and an exploration of industry practices.

B. A sophisticated visual literacy and critical engagement with texts, film and art/visual objects.

C. The ability to conduct successful autonomous research in the field of film and fantasy storytelling at postgraduate level.

D. The knowledge and skills for application to careers in the arts and creative cultural industries.

Subject specific knowledge and understanding (A)

A1. Demonstrate a comprehensive and systematic knowledge of theories and methods required for examining film in an international setting, drawing on fantasy film analysis and industry, and visual culture studies

A2. Show a sophisticated understanding and appreciation of a multidisciplinary culture

A3. Demonstrate a critical knowledge of professional practice in fantasy film genres and creative cultural industries

Subject specific skills and attributes (B)

B1. Deploy sophisticated visual literacy including formal analysis

B2. Show systematic, critical engagement with texts and objects

B3. Conduct successful and original research, including the application of appropriate methodologies for locating, assessing and interpreting primary sources

B4. Show excellent writing skills including logical and structured narratives and arguments supported by relevant primary and secondary evidence

B5. Demonstrate professional presentation skills including verbal visual analysis, communicated clearly to specialist and non-specialist audiences

B6. Deploy the skills and experience required to work in the arts and creative cultural industries

Transferable intellectual and personal attributes (C)

C1. Communicate clearly, effectively and professionally information, arguments and ideas in written, spoken or other form using appropriate visual aids and IT resources, as well as an ability to listen effectively, and thus to participate constructively in discussion with team members

C2. Work effectively as an independent and interdependent researcher and research collaborator

Practical and/or professional skills and attributes (D)

D1. Apply current technologies to enhance research and be fully computer literate

D2. Recognise the limitations, contradictions and gaps in a complex argument

D3. Retrieve, process and manipulate information from a variety of valid sources

5. TEACHING, LEARNING, AND ASSESSMENT
Teaching and Learning Strategy

The teaching and learning strategy aims in the most effective and efficient ways to provide a framework of knowledge within which student can take responsibility for their own learning, to introduce students to the latest thinking and research, to give opportunities for students to consider and evaluate the issues and to explore them further with their peers and lecturers. To achieve these aims the teaching and learning will include:

- Group sessions that are designed to provide an overall framework of the existing knowledge and which will give sufficient information for students to follow up details independently

- Large group sessions that will introduce students to new issues, controversial topics, recent research, etc., that are not dealt with in the existing literature

- Small group sessions that will give opportunities for students to discuss and demonstrate their learning with their peers and lecturers

- Individual supervision in which students will be able to explain, discuss and refine their ideas

The strategy for each individual course is designed to contain a mix of teaching and learning methods to provide a rich and varied learning environment. Sessions may take the form of traditional lectures, seminars, tutorials, workshops or they may be delivered through paper or electronic media. The combination of teaching and learning approaches, detailed above, develops students' knowledge, critical and analytical skills and practical skills. These include presenting an overview of a topic, encouraging concentration, note taking and sifting of information. The use of case studies within seminars encourages the application of knowledge to real life situations, independent learning, group cooperation, imagination and original thinking.

The teaching and learning strategy for the MA in Film: Science Fiction and Fantasy degree is based on the understanding that all students are active learners and researchers and are embarking on advanced professional practice with a view to their future career development. This is designed to maximise student engagement in the programme and ensure full participation throughout. The precise approach will vary from course to course, but the learning outcomes relating to each class are designed to ensure that students immerse themselves fully in the subject and take full responsibility for their progress through the programme. The concept of progression through the distinct aspects of the degree (class-based learning focusing on theory and practice, guided independent study and practical work, internship and professional research project including a critical reflection) is integral to the intellectual journey that the students will make during their time on the programme.

A variety of approaches will be used in teaching, including:

- Formal seminars and debates
- Formal lectures, supplemented with audio-visual materials
- Informal lectures and discussions with guest speakers or on visits
- Individual and group projects, culminating in oral presentations and written work
- Group and individual tutorials
- Self-directed and directed reading

Student knowledge will be acquired through:
- Structured seminars and debates (including the sharing of other students' learning and experience), lectures, guest lectures, visits to agencies – including supporting materials
- Directed reading and use of electronic sources
- Independent research and work experience

Student thinking skills are developed through:
- Undertaking practical exercises and making presentations
- Learning alongside others, including group work, seminars, debates and discussions
- Conducting research
- Preparing assessed work

Student practical skills are developed through:
- Applying theory to practice in practical exercises and assessed work
- Specific training related to PR and journalism and related fields, including the use of different media
- Team and individual project work and reflection thereon
- Vocational experience gained through internships

The University welcomes applications from students with disabilities. These disabilities might include a physical or sensory impairment, a medical or psychiatric condition or a specific learning difficulty such as dyslexia, and may require additional support or adaptations to our facilities. Richmond endeavours to make all practical and reasonable adjustments to ensure students are able to fully participate in the University community.

Assessment Strategy

Assessment is by examination, essays, dissertations, and other forms of written work; oral presentations and group work; as well as projects and this assessment strategy usually meets the University Assessment Norms at level 7.

As seen above, the University places considerable emphasis on developing its students' learning and skills. Creating independent thinkers is a part of the University's mission statement and MA academic staff deliver on this promise in a number of different ways at the postgraduate level. A key aspect of their work involves devising methodologies, consistent with best-practice approaches within the field, with which to adequately assess students' performance. These approaches include the setting of learning outcomes encompassing each course as well as regular discussion and interaction amongst academic staff in order to set common goals for the entire degree and each of its courses.

In terms of following up with the assessment of student learning and consistent with US Liberal Arts traditions, MA classes rely on the system of continuous assessment on a course by course basis and throughout any given semester. This approach often involves the use of

short essays, research papers, learning journals, annotated bibliographies, gallery reviews, book reviews, student presentations, research proposals and general class discussion. Not every component applies to every course, but most do relate to many of the classes that are offered. There is an emphasis on writing essays, particularly research papers, at postgraduate level, and reflective work including learning journals.

The variety of instruments used permits academic staff to assess each student's developing and evolving knowledge and skills base as outlined in the previous section. For example, the research paper tests for, amongst other things, a student's ability to engage with primary and/or secondary sources of information and his or her ability to evaluate and analyze this. Site visits encourage students to engage with objects, applying theory and method taught in classes. In addition to this, the University sets specific guidelines on the weighting of coursework in order to effect balance in the process of assessment. As the coursework load for each course set out in the course descriptor shows, a variety of assessment strategies with weighting spread facilitates this across the courses, with the typical course settling for around 50% for the final research paper.

A component part of the programme's efforts to ascertain an appropriate approach to the assessment of student learning involves the use of grade descriptors (made available in the Student Handbook). This information allows the student to see the expected level of performance that co-relates with a particular letter grade summarizing his or her overall achievement level. The programme also has a formalised system of exit questionnaires and feedback meetings punctuated at key moments throughout the year (mid-semester break, end of semester and end of year) for its students as a framework through which the views and opinions of those who have experienced the programme, as students, can be captured and responded to. Evidence of this approach in action is demonstrated in minutes of meetings with students and academic staff and response to comments from the External Examiner.

The academic staff are confident that the assessment processes are sound. Much of this confidence emanates from the comments MA academic staff have received from External Examiners. But an equally important measure is the success that so many students on the Master of Arts programmes enjoy beyond their post-Richmond experiences. Those students judged as the strongest generally move on to take on challenging opportunities on postgraduate programmes and as professionals in the arts and creative cultural industries. This is testimony to their level of preparedness for the real world of careers in the visual arts, and are an indication of the academic staff's and University's ability to fulfil its mission.

Academic Standing

A graduate student is in good academic standing if maintaining a cumulative Grade Point Average (GPA) of 3.0 (B).

Graduate students with a cumulative (GPA) of less than 3.0 (B) risk dismissal from the university (see below under "Grade Point Average" and "Academic Probation").

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Grades

A	4.0	Excellent
A-	3.7	Very good
B+	3.3	Above Satisfactory
B	3.0	Satisfactory (also the cumulative GPA required for the award of the degree)
B-	2.7	Redeemable Fail
C+	2.3	Fail – Poor (may be awarded at graded activity level, but not at course level)
C	2.0	Fail – Deficient (may be awarded at graded activity level, but not at course level)
C-	1.7	Fail - Seriously Deficient (may be awarded at graded activity level, but not at course level)
F	0.0	Fail (may be awarded at graded activity level, and is awarded at course level for any course grade calculated to be lower than B-)

Grading criteria are disseminated to faculty and students to ensure parity of marking and transparency of criteria. Criteria (where relevant): Note that while all five criteria are required for an A grade, these criteria are listed in order of importance:

1. Quality of research: creativity (independent thinking), strength of topic, appropriate use of primary (where relevant) and secondary sources, depth and breadth of reading, extent of thorough analysis
2. Critical engagement: with and understanding of material; selection and application of relevant theory and method.
3. Research analysis
4. Coherency of argument
5. Presentation and Scholarly apparatus: clarity of expression, language use, structure (e.g. introduction, conclusion), referencing, bibliography.

The University places considerable emphasis on developing its students' learning and skills. Creating independent thinkers is a part of the university's mission statement and the faculty delivers on this promise in a number of different ways at the postgraduate level. A key aspect of their work involves devising methodologies, consistent with best-practice approaches within the field, with which to adequately assess students' performance. These approaches include the setting of learning outcomes encompassing each course as well as regular discussion and interaction amongst faculty to set common goals for the entire degree and each of its courses.

Grade Point Average

A grade point average (GPA) is calculated each semester and summer session and is recorded on the student's transcript. A cumulative GPA, including all graduate courses taken at Richmond, is also calculated. The numerical equivalent for the grade (see above) of each

course is multiplied by the number of credits for that course to give the number of quality points for the course.

The GPA is then the sum of quality points for all courses divided by the total number of credits of all courses attempted.

- Students achieving a minimum cumulative GPA of 3.7 and above will be awarded the UK degree with Distinction.
- Students achieving a minimum cumulative GPA of 3.30 to 3.699 will be awarded the UK degree with Merit.
- Students achieving a minimum cumulative GPA of 3.0 to 3.299 will be awarded a UK Pass.
- Students achieving a cumulative GPA of less than 3.0 will fail the UK and US degree.

Students who choose not to submit the Professional Project, or who do not obtain a minimum grade of B (3.0) on the Professional Project, may transfer programs and apply to receive a (US) Postgraduate Certificate. A minimum cumulative GPA of 3.0 on all coursework is required for the award of the Postgraduate Certificate. Students must successfully submit and have approved a research proposal before progressing to the Professional Project.

6. ENTRY REQUIREMENTS

Details of the entry requirements, including English language requirements, may be found at the appropriate page of the University website listed below, where a comprehensive Admissions Policy and Summary of Practice document is also published.

http://www.richmond.ac.uk/admissions/postgraduate-admissions/

7. STUDENT SUPPORT AND GUIDANCE

There is a range of student support and guidance, for both academic and general wellbeing, available to students at Richmond. This is accomplished through a range of programmes and services which positively impact learning as well as the total student life experience.

Every student is advised academically by the Programme Director who takes a close interest in the students' academic progress. Students who need a particular form of academic help can approach the direcotr who can then provide the necessary liaison with Registry Services, Student Affairs, Library and other offices forming the key parts of the academic and pastoral support infrastructure.

Richmond endeavours to make all practical and reasonable adjustments to ensure students are able to fully participate in the University community. Students who declare a physical disability or a special educational need are supported to ensure the quality of their educational experience meets their individual requirements. SEN students, for instance,

receive extra time in examinations, and have the option of writing exams on university-provided computers, and/or of taking exams in a separate room. Please see: https://www.richmond.ac.uk/study-abroad-at-richmond/students- with-additional-needs/

The university operates a well-staffed Student Affairs department that provides services intended to support and encourage student welfare, safety and development. This department oversees medical registration of students and provides counseling services. It also organizes a range of extracurricular activities and travel designed to further enhance students' educational experiences. Disciplinary and social grievance procedures are also overseen by this department.

8. POSTGRADUATE ACADEMIC POLICIES

Please see the Policies page on the University website listed below for the relevant academic policies of this programme.

(https://www.richmond.ac.uk/policies/)

9. REGULATORY FRAMEWORK

The Master of Arts **Film: Science Fiction and Fantasy** is operated under the policy and regulatory frameworks of Richmond the American International University in London, the Middle States Commission on Higher Education, the Framework of Higher Education Qualifications, and the UK Quality Code for Higher Education.

Also key to the background for this description are the following documents:
- QAA (2018). The Revised UK Quality Code for Higher Education. (www.qaa.ac.uk)
- QAA (2008). Higher Education Credit Framework for England: guidance on academic credit arrangements in Higher Education in England.
- SEEC (2016). Credit Level Descriptors for Higher Education. Southern England Consortium for Credit Accumulation and Transfer (www.seec.org.uk).
- Middle States Commission on Higher Education. Standards for Accreditation and Requirements of Affiliation. 2014: Thirteenth Edition; Rev. Ed. 2015. (http://www.msche.org/publications/RevisedStandardsFINAL.pdf)

Ensuring and Enhancing the Quality of the Programme

The Master of Arts **Film: Science Fiction and Fantasy** features detailed published educational objectives that are consistent with the mission of the institution. All course outlines contain course specific objectives that are regularly monitored by the individual instructors and by the faculty as a group.

The University has several methods for evaluating and improving the quality and standards of its provision. These include:

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- External Examiners
- Internal Moderation
- Student representation
- Curricular change approval process
- Annual Programme Monitoring and Assessment
- Formal Programme Review, every 5 years
- Course evaluation
- Student satisfaction surveys and the NSS
- Feedback from employers

The Master of Arts **Film: Science Fiction and Fantasy** is provided through a system of ongoing evaluations that demonstrate achievement of the programme's objectives, and uses the results to impr ove the effectiveness of the programme. Ongoing evaluation is carried out for both US (the Middle States Commission on Higher Education) and UK (QAA) reviews. The University is a voluntary subscriber member of the QAA, and underwent its first full Institutional Review in May 2013 and a Higher Education Review (AP) in 2017.

In this document and other University literature, US credit is articulated in terms of US and UK credit frameworks.

At the Masters degree level (see below for discussion of Levels on the FHEQ), UK MA students obtain a minimum total of 180 UK credits, which equates to 90 ECTS credits or 36 US credits.

American Masters degrees typically award 30-36 credits. Richmond's degree awards 36. The ratio for credit translation at the Masters level (Level 7) is therefore as follows:

	US credit	ECTS credit	UK credit
UK Level 7	1	2.5	5
Required minimum number of credits for MA	36	90	180 (120 of which must be at Level 7)
Richmond MA in Film: Science Fiction and Fantasy	36	90	180 (at Level 7)

Levels

The FHEQ (Framework for Higher Education Qualifications) in the UK defines Higher Education levels in the following way:

- Levels 4-6 (previously HE1-3) – years 1 to 3 of a UK undergraduate degree

- Level 7 (previously M) – UK Masters degrees and postgraduate diplomas and certificates

- Level 8 (previously D) – UK Doctoral degrees

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Each level is illustrated by, and each award determined by, reference to a qualification descriptor. The level 7 descriptors can be found on pages 20-23 of the FHEQ (QAA, August 2008).

References

QAA. *The Framework for Higher Education Qualifications in England, Wales, and Northern Ireland.* November 2014.

QAA. *The Higher Education Credit Framework for England: guidance on academic credit*

Programme Specification Publication Dates

First Edition	October 2019
Revision 1	May 2020
Revision 2	May 2021

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MA FILM CURRICULUM MAP

Course ID	Title	Subject specific knowledge and understanding (A)			Subject specific skills and attributes (B)						Transferable intellectual and personal attributes (C)		Practical and/or professional skills and attributes (D)		
		A1	A2	A3	B1	B2	B3	B4	B5	B6	C1	C2	D1	D2	D3
AVC 7100	Research Methods				x	x	x	x	x						
AVC 7105	Visual Cultures	x	x		x	x		x	x						
FLM 7100	Science Fiction and Fantasy: Industry	x		x				x	x	x					
FLM 7102	Science Fiction and Fantasy: Storytelling	x	x	x	x			x		x					
FLM 7103	Edutainment Video Essays						x				x	x	x	x	x
FLM 7500	Thesis Research				x	x	x	x							
FLM 7505	Final Film Project				x	x	x	x					x		x
FLM 7550	Extended Thesis				x	x	x	x							
FLM 7902	Internship			x				x	x	x		x	x		
FLM 7101	Digital Storytelling	x		x		x		x		x					