IMPORTANT INFORMATION ABOUT YOUR COURSE

BA (HONS) ART OF VFX AND VIRTUAL PRODUCTION (VFX)*

*This course is subject to validation and details in this course information may change.

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Our Art of VFX and Virtual Production (VFX) degree is a hands-on, industry-focused course designed to equip you with the practical skills needed for careers in visual effects, games, and digital media. You'll be taught by experienced professionals who are actively working in the industry, ensuring that everything you learn is relevant, up-to-date, and aligned with current employer expectations.

Throughout the course, you'll learn through a dynamic mix of lectures, hands-on workshops, tutorials, studio sessions, and practical projects. Key areas of study include 3D modelling, digital sculpting, 2D and 3D compositing, motion graphics, performance capture, asset integration, simulation, dynamics, technical FX, on-set VFX supervision, on-set virtual production using an LED volume, and the creation of real-time environments for virtual production.

We combine cutting-edge, industry-standard software training with insights drawn from over a century of filmmaking and visual effects practice. You'll also gain experience working with emerging virtual production workflows with a studio-based LED volume, including real-time environment creation, in-camera visual effects, and modern production pipelines used across film, television, and interactive media.

The course is designed to take you from beginner to professional level—no prior experience or traditional artistic background is required. From day one, our expert teaching team will support you in developing the creative and technical skills needed to succeed in the industry.

WHY STUDY VISUAL EFFECTS AT FUTUREWORKS?

Whether your ambition is to apply visual effects to blockbuster films, commercials, TV shows, or industries like architecture, medicine, or automobiles, this program has been developed in collaboration with professional VFX artists to ensure its relevance and currency. We combine high quality teaching led by professionals who are active within industry with industry facing software and facilities to ensure that graduates are industry ready upon graduation.

We are an Epic Unreal partner institution and ensure that we provide a professional learning experience. You will develop your skills using professional, industry software such as Maya, Nuke, Unreal and Houdini in combination with industry facing facilities.

By enrolling, you will acquire the technical and creative skills sought after by the industry. Additionally, you'll have the opportunity to develop your soft skills, build valuable industry connections and graduate with an impressive showreel, which will pave the way to a successful career.

ENTRY REQUIREMENTS

Standard Entry: Applicants are required to have at least a Level 4 or grade 'C' in GCSEs Maths and English Language or equivalent and 104 or above UCAS points (for example B, C, C or above at A2 Level, DMM or above at BTEC Extended Diploma Level, M or above at UAL Level 3 Extended Diploma Level) and a proven interest in the subject area. Qualifications such as Graded Examinations in Music Performance and Arts Award (Gold) can also count towards your UCAS points.

International Entry: Equivalent international qualifications will be considered towards meeting the entry requirements for standard entry. Additionally, international applicants will need to have an English Language qualification at International Level B2 or higher, such as an IELTS of 6.0 or better (with 5.5 in each skill: reading, writing, speaking and listening). Students with equivalent qualifications will also be accepted.
Equivalences include:

- Trinity College London: a pass in test ISEI and a pass in test ISEII
- Language Cert: Academic SELT (from 18 December 2023): 60 or International ESOL SELT: 33/50
- Pearson PTE Academic for UKVI: 59
- PDI Services (UK) Ltd: Pass in Skills for English UKVI

Non-standard Entry: Applications from individuals with non-standard qualifications, relevant work or life experience will be equally considered. These applicants will be required to attend an interview as part of the application process. Interviews will be in person or online, depending on the location and availability of the applicant.

Accreditation for Prior Learning: UK and International applicants with qualifications or professional experience equivalent to the knowledge and skills developed during years one or two of this programme may be granted Accreditation for Prior Learning (APL), enabling them to join the programme at the start of year two or three.

If an applicant thinks they may be eligible for APL they should contact our Admissions team on admissions@futureworks.ac.uk . Please note that APL will not exempt applicants from the selection process, or, for international students, the IELTS 6.0 (or equivalent) requirement.

MODULES (CREDITS)

YEAR 1

Compositing for VFX (20 credits)– Introduces you to working with industry standard software. You will be introduced to the core 2D compositing skill used by the leading production houses internationally.

Asset Integration & Invisible VFX (20 credits)– Building on the skills learnt in 'Composting for VFX', you will focus on how to track real world cameras, gather lighting information, texturing and multipass rendering to invisible composite 3D asset into a filmed plate.

3D for VFX (20 credits**)** – You will be introduced to the fundamentals of 3D modelling and Animation to enable you to replicate real world objects in industry standard 3D software. You will be introduced to creative and technical skills such as good edge workflow, UV mapping, texturing, lighting and rendering in order to create a 3D turntable artefact, which showcases the beginnings of Photorealism.

Creative Development (20 credits) – This module introduces you to key concepts for working in the creative sector, including the study of visual conventions and narratives, the development of traditional creative skills such as research skills, creative development, storyboard creation, previsualization and the analysis of visual material in terms of aesthetic value and communication content.

Creative Practice (40 credits) – This module builds on work produced as part of 'Creative Development', where you will work in small teams to develop concepts to particular briefs, pitch these for feedback, and then develop and deliver a final post-visual showcase. It also introduces, teamwork, key concepts in virtual production technologies, including real-time tools and workflows used in contemporary digital media. The aims are to provide you with the knowledge, understanding, and practical skills in production for digital industries.

YEAR 2

Digital Environments for Visual Effects and Virtual Production (40 credits)– You will be working as part of a team to replicate a studio project pipeline for VFX. As part of an open brief, you will use creative practices to generate digital environments and environmental FX through a 3D modelling pipeline, on-set virtual production, real-time environment creation, virtual production using Unreal Engine, dynamics, simulation, and visual effects on-set supervision.

Digital Sculpting (20 credits) – This will introduce you to advanced 3D modelling techniques including digital sculpting, hair simulation, texturing, rendering and compositing to creating a likeness of a character from popular media.

Motion Graphics (20 credits) – You will explore the theory, creative and practical development ofgraphic design in relation motion graphics and as part of user interface development for film, television, and advertising. This will include exploring key graphic design techniques, as well as animation principles, 3D, and simulation-based motion graphics.

Performance Capture (20 credits) – You will be introduced to motion performance-based animation and its integration with an animation ready digital character within a digital environment which takes in to consideration the mise-en-scene of your creative decisions.

Dynamics & Technical FX (20 credits) – Introduces you to the use particle systems, rigid body dynamics, cloth simulations, fluid simulations, and destruction simulations. This will include research of forces, collisions, friction, and material properties to create realistic-looking simulations. Furthermore, you will employ evaluation and analysis of creative and technical decisions making.

YEAR 3

Advanced Digital Environments and Virtual Production (40 credits) – Building on Film 'Digital Environments for Visual Effects and Virtual Production' with a bias on specialisation you get the chance to negotiate your role in the assessment and are graded accordingly. This is where you can hone your specific research and practical skills to create a group-focused portfolio.

Major Project (40 credits) – This is the module that allows you the freedom to create your own project relating to your chosen area of the industry. This can include collaboration or individual work and is another area where you can enhance your portfolio and employability skills.

Professional Futures (40 credits) – Prepares you for the world of work in a multitude of ways from career research, networking, how to create a freelance portfolio to the techniques needed to become employable.

WHAT ARE CREDITS?

As a guide, 20 credits typically represent around 52 hours of tutor contact time (e.g. lectures/workshops/feedback) and 148 hours of self-study time (usually over the course of a semester). These numbers may increase or decrease depending on the nature, length and level of the module, especially towards the end of the course.

LOCATION OF DELIVERY

Your location of study will be at our Riverside Campus, which is located on New Bailey Street in Manchester. Teaching takes place in our fully equipped labs and studios. Flexible access to studio and practical facilities allow you to establish, practice and develop your work using professional-level hardware and software. Relevant hardware and software training will be provided during studio, workshop and lecture sessions to support work at all levels.

TEACHING STAFF

Everyone who teaches on this degree is active in the industry. Whether that's creating visual effects for film, TV or streaming media, illustrating, designing, visualisation or creating motion graphics; when your tutors aren't busy teaching you, they're busy honing their craft. As a result, we are always working and teaching the most current industry workflows. We practice what we teach. We also have an extensive network of industry contacts that we can draw on for guest lectures and workshops, industry-set briefs, and as guests for our degree shows.

METHOD OF ASSESSMENT

We don't believe in exams. All assessment takes the form of coursework, portfolios, presentations, and a limited number of essays. If you are being taught visual effects, you will submit a portfolio of industry facing work with a focus on quality over quantity. If you are being taught how to present your work or research, you will do a presentation your relevant to your project. In other words, all assessment is directly related to the skills being taught and directly applicable to life within industry. You will be offered feedback along the way, via formative submission points, with official summative submissions falling at the end of first and second semesters.

COURSE DETAILS

Award to be received on successful completion: BA (Hons) Art of VFX and Virtual Production (VFX)

Length of course: 3 YEARS (FULL TIME)

Mode of delivery: In-person, on campus

In-person lessons: Typically between 12 and 14 hours per week

Self-study time: Typically between 35 and 40 hours per week

Regulator: Office for Students (OfS)

Awarding Institution: The Open University

FEES / COSTS

TUITION FEES

Home Students: £9,790 per year

International Students: £17,000 per year

You may be eligible to apply for a student loan from Student Finance. Please see our Tuition Fees page for more information.

EQUIPMENT & ACTIVITIES

We provide PCs to work on onsite, with Cintiqs, Wacom tablets and filming equipment; all of which can be signed out from facilities. We have onsite licenses for all software taught on the programme.

You may find it beneficial to invest in additional equipment and/or study resources to support your learning. Example costs are:

- External Hard Drive (2 to 4tb Portable Drive): £100 - £150
- Adobe Creative Suite license (for home use): £16.24 per month (with student discount)
- Personal Graphic tablet (we recommend Wacom Intuos): from £50.

Additionally, there may be the option of attending events outside of Futureworks which would further enhance your studies. Example costs are:

- Festival Visits: £20-40, plus individual travel and accommodation costs.