Programme Specification

Programme award and title: BA with Honours in Film & Media and Communications Practice

UCAS code: 

SCQF Qualification Level: 8-10 SCQF Credit Value: 484

Educational aims of the programme:
Concise (e.g. a few sentences), general statement of aims and broad purposes of the programme

- The degree programme aims to develop a critical understanding of the central role played by the media and communication in contemporary society. The programmes investigate the wider social context within which the media and cultural industries operate and encourage a rigorous analytical approach to investigating the media's position within particular political, economic and cultural contexts.
- The communications practice pathway provides students with both a theoretical underpinning of public relations and advertising as well as developing practical skills such as campaign planning and increases their employability with the creative industries arena.
- Throughout the programme there is a concern with the relationship between aspects of cultural production and consumption, with students encouraged to examine, both critically and creatively, a range of media and their professional practices. Areas of study offered to students include cinema, new media, television, public relations and the sporting industry.

Given the interdisciplinary nature of the subject, the course will expose students to a range of approaches to the study of media production, consumption and aesthetics. These include political economy, institutional analysis, textual and film analysis, media practice and audience studies. Students also develop an understanding of areas of professional communications practice such as public relations and advertising. The programme offers a 'mixed economy' approach, requiring students to reflect critically on the relationship between theory and practice, both their own and that of professionals. Students are expected to emerge with a deeper understanding of the position of the media and the wider creative industries in contemporary society as well as of the range of creative practice that informs development in these areas. In an economy where the creative and cultural industries are viewed as increasingly important, students on this programme should emerge with a wide variety of creative, intellectual, analytical and research skills that enhance their employability across a wide range of sectors.

Intended programme learning outcomes:
Outline (e.g. one or two paragraphs) of what the student will know, understand and be able to do as a result of their learning, expressed in the categories below. Please consider the contribution made to the student's personal development planning (PDP) and future employability.

Knowledge and understanding
- Students on this programme would be expected to gain knowledge and understanding in a number of these core areas:
- Develop an understanding of public relations and advertising theory and practice and place the occupations within the context of other media and communication-related industries such as journalism and marketing
- Communications and society
- The historical context of media development
- Media processes and practices
- Forms and aesthetics
- The relationship between media, culture and identity.

Subject-specific skills and other attributes
- Intellectual skills - students should develop the ability to understand forms of communication, media and culture as they have emerged historically and appreciate the political and cultural processes through which
they have come into being.

- Analytical skills - students should be able to analyse closely, interpret and show the exercise of critical judgement in the evaluation of these media and cultural forms.

- Creative, innovative and imaginative skills - students should develop the ability to produce work which demonstrates an understanding of media forms and structures, audiences and modes of address, campaign planning.

Generic skills (e.g. information skills, communication skills, critical, analytical and problem-solving abilities) and other attributes

- There is a range of transferable skills that students will be expected to gain during their period of study on this programme. These include:

  - In terms of communication skills, the ability to: communicate effectively in interpersonal and group or team settings and through the submission of written work to a given length, format, brief and deadline; gather, organise and deploy ideas and information in order to formulate arguments coherently and to express them coherently in written, oral or other forms; work in flexible, creative and independent ways, showing self-discipline, self-direction and reflexivity.

  In terms of critical and analytical skills, the ability to: carry out various forms of enquiry and research involving sustained independent enquiry; formulate appropriate questions and employ appropriate methods and resources for exploring those questions; evaluate and draw upon a range of sources and texts and appropriate conceptual frameworks.

  - In terms of problem-solving skills, the ability to: reflect upon understanding gained in activities and cooperation across a wide range of individual and group tasks in order to formulate appropriate responses to a wide range of issues and problems.

- All these skills, both subject specific and generic, contribute to the employability of graduates. In terms of PDP, students are encouraged and assisted throughout the programme to engage in work experience and volunteering of many kinds. Regular contributing lecturers from many branches of the media industries ensure a continuing focus on both employment and personal development issues.

Learning, teaching and assessment strategies:

Outline (e.g. one or two paragraphs) on overall approach taken to develop and assess learning outcomes, including any distinctive features

- The degree programme contain theoretical and analytical.

- First, they provide students with an understanding of the social, economic and political roles of the media in contemporary societies. This is achieved by examining how media output is funded, regulated, produced and consumed, and how audiences may be affected and influenced.

- Second, they aim to develop the skills and methods required for the analysis of media texts. Films, television and radio programmes, newspapers, magazines and advertisements are all subject to detailed analysis to see how information, meaning and pleasure are structured and communicated.

- Appropriate teaching methods and learning strategies have been developed to achieve the learning outcomes. All programmes employ a range of assessment methods to enable students to demonstrate achievement of the learning outcomes.

- Student questionnaires regularly provide staff with positive feedback on the educational value of the learning experience on the undergraduate programmes.

Level 8 semester modules

- The first three semester modules - Media I: Production and Policy, Media II: Representation, The Moving Image - have large student numbers, c.150-200. One- or two-hour lectures are therefore used as an economical means of introducing students to the key concepts and issues in the modules and to guide their independent reading, an essential part of the learning process throughout the degree. Lectures are complemented by weekly one-hour or one-and-a-half-hour seminars or workshops, which are linked to student reading. Given the wide range of academic backgrounds, life experiences and self-confidence in the student body, group discussion in the first semester (Media I: Production and Policy) takes place in seminars of c.12 students. The size of classes
enables the tutor (normally a member of staff or, occasionally, a teaching assistant) to moderate the discussion or small group activity sensitively, taking account of students’ individual characteristics. Class discussion, which begins at this stage, is central to the Department's teaching and learning practice, and students are encouraged to work within the ground rules for discussion groups which are outlined in the Department's Student Handbook.

- The weekly one-hour workshops in semester 2 (Media II: Representation) comprise larger groups (max. 16), moderated by a tutor (again, normally a member of staff or, occasionally, a teaching assistant). Working in groups of five or six, students analyse a variety of media texts in terms of the ways in which they construct and mediate meaning. By the end of the module they are expected to be able to conduct a stylistic analysis of media texts using the appropriate conceptual frameworks and to understand the industrial context in which such texts are produced.

- The workshop format is continued in semester 3 (The Moving Image), which focuses on providing students with a robust toolkit for the detailed analysis of moving image texts in particular (film, television and, increasingly, online. The work done in this module is essential for students taking moving image-related courses at advanced level. The unit also features a weekly programme of screenings tied in to the progressive, developing structure of the course.

- In their first three semesters students' assessed work comprises essays and end-of-term examinations. Both forms of assessment test students' knowledge of the subject matter of the respective modules, their understanding of the issues involved and their ability to write cogently and coherently. The semester 1 and 2 exams also include a multiple-choice test as a means of encouraging due attention to factual learning early in students' careers. In all three modules a second, optional essay is available for those whose first essay is unsatisfactory, in line with University policy. Advice on essay writing techniques is set out in the Department's Student Handbook, and a lecture hour early in semester 1 is devoted to the topic.

- Semester modules (level 9/10)

- The work undertaken in semesters 4 to 8 extends and deepens the knowledge and understanding provided by the three introductory modules. With few exceptions, there are no core modules or formal pathways for the remainder of the course. Students have the flexibility to choose modules to construct a degree programme best suited to their interests and aptitudes, e.g. in media production, television and film studies, or the sociology of the media and popular culture. (For specific examples see section 11 'Typical Informal Pathways'.) But in each subsequent semester all students select one, two or three modules above level 8, depending on their degree programme, from a list of five or six.

- The semester 4 module Reading Film and Television gives students the analytical skills and conceptual frameworks they will need on later film and television modules as well as in their audio-visual production studies. In looking at questions of realism, aesthetics and narrative the module begins to introduce students to abstract film theory. In addition to two-hour lectures and weekly film screenings, seminars last one hour enabling students to work through detailed analytical tasks within small groups.

- The other semester 4 module, Society Media and Culture, deepens students’ theoretical and analytical understanding of the relationship between the media and culture. It provides a more advanced grounding in the sociology of media culture, which is the focus of a number of advanced modules later in the degree programme.

- Issues concerning the media and ideology, the politics of popular culture and the role of the media in the process of identity formation are examined. Lectures and seminars are augmented by screenings. There are currently more than two dozen modules on offer in semesters 5 to 8, providing an unusually generous choice for students. In addition, the range of subject matter, approach, and teaching and assessment methods is very broad. All the principal media are represented - film, television, radio, the press, the internet - as well as practices that cross media boundaries, e.g. sport, advertising and public relations. Most of these semester modules take a critical-analytical approach, drawing on knowledge and theory from a range of Arts and/or Social Science perspectives. The audio-visual production modules, while focusing on creative and practical activities, also involve a high degree of critical awareness.

Typically, the teaching and learning in semesters 5 to 8 is done through a blend of lectures, screenings and seminars/workshops with prescribed weekly readings. Some modules involve assessed individual or group presentations, which help to develop important communication skills. Other forms of assessment include essays, group projects, advertising campaigns, exams and a dissertation. Typically, modules are linked to the research interests of staff, many of whom are international authorities in their respective fields. (See the Departmental Student Handbook for the full list.)
Final semester honours students are required to complete a dissertation. These modules are double weighted to reflect both the amount and level of work associated with successfully completing them.

The 10,000-word dissertation gives students the opportunity to undertake independent, sustained research in an area of their own choice related to the media and cultural industries. It enables them to display the range of research, conceptual and analytical skills that they have been developing throughout the programme. The best examples should be of publishable standard and the experience also offers ideal preparation for students who wish to pursue their academic career to Masters level and Doctorate levels.

Further details:

Entry requirements: http://www.external.stir.ac.uk/undergrad/entry_reqs/index.php

Programme structure: http://www.calendar.stir.ac.uk/

Relevant Subject Benchmark statement: http://www.qaa.ac.uk/academicinfrastructure/benchmark/default.asp

Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework: http://www.scqf.org.uk/the_framework.asp

Introduction/revision date: