

MA

# Visual Effects Production

Validated by University of Kent

Course Handbook | Academic Year 2021/22

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## 1. Introduction

### Welcome from the Dean of Escape Studios, Ian Palmer

Welcome to Escape Studios! We are proud to have helped thousands of aspiring artists achieve their ambition of becoming professionals in the Animation, Games and VFX industries. When you finish your course and formally become an 'Escapee' you'll be a member of an international community that has contributed to the success of the creative industries since 2002. Escape Studios' reputation is based on creating world-class, studio-ready talent. Our tutors will share their extensive industry experience with you and introduce you to cutting-edge professional techniques through hands-on, studio-based learning. Through practise and with their guidance, you will have the opportunity to develop knowledge and skills needed for a successful creative career. We are constantly striving to provide the very best educational experience for all of our students, and we pride ourselves on our track-record of preparing our Escapees for a professional career at the end of their course and beyond. I am delighted that you chose to join us and I wish you every success with your studies.

Dr Ian Palmer  
Dean of Escape Studios

### Our Validating Partner

The course is validated by the University of Kent, which means that your degree will be delivered by Escape Studios (part of Pearson College London and the Pearson PLC group) but you will graduate with a degree from the University of Kent.

Further information on University of Kent's policies and regulations can be found on the Pearson College London website:

Go to: Students > Current Students > Policies and regulations > University of Kent Regulations.

## 2. Student Experience

There are a number of ways that we can guide and support your learning experience while you're studying with us, both while you're in the timetabled sessions in the studios and when you're working on projects. Whether you are studying with us online or in-person we are committed to giving you the same standard of teaching, and the same opportunities and support throughout your learning experience.

### Personal Tutors

You'll be allocated a personal tutor while you are with us. They are there to offer advice and help you progress in your studies. They will meet with you regularly to discuss your progress and will be able to give you guidance on how to improve your performance. They've all been through the process of developing as artists themselves, so they know what it takes to reach a high level and you should make the most of their experience. They should also be someone you can ask if you feel your studies are not going as well as you'd like, and whilst they won't have all the answers, they should be able to point you in the right direction to get back on track.

### The Student Experience Team

This team aims to provide an excellent student experience for you, both in the studio and beyond. Besides the Studio Assistants, this team also arranges events that both add value to your studies (such

as 'Evenings with...' which bring professionals at the peak of their careers in to share their experience with you) and offer chances to socialise (such as end of term parties and group trips).

### Studios Assistants

These individuals work in the studios alongside the tutors to assist and guide you learning your craft. They are often Escapees themselves, and are chosen based on their skill level and ability to help you learn. They don't have the extensive experience of tutors, but they will be able to help you with most of your problems you face while you're developing your own specialist knowledge and skills. They'll also take registers of who's in the studios during the timetabled sessions as we require you to be present during these times.

### Attendance Monitoring

Hopefully you'll want to make the most of your time with us and will be attending all the timetabled sessions. However we have a responsibility to you, your peers (especially during team projects) and the funding bodies to ensure that you're only absent when it's unavoidable and for good reason. As we've said, the Studio Assistants will be taking registers of the students in each studio, and we'll be using these to verify that you're here when you should be. If we find you've missed a number of sessions and you haven't contacted us to tell us why, we'll be in contact to ask you the reason for your non-attendance.

Prolonged absence without good cause will result in action being taken that could ultimately lead to you being excluded from the course. We really want you to succeed, and experience shows that this is most likely if you attend as much as you can, even if sometimes this may be difficult. This will still be the case in online classes where you will be required to make it clear to the Studio Assistant that you are present.

The absence request form can be found on the College website:

Go to: Students > Student Services > Forms and Documents > Pearson College Absence Form

## 3. About the Course

In common with most Master's courses, your degree is made up of 180 credits and is divided into a number of modules, each of which itself represents a portion of the total credits. Each module is a self-contained unit of study that has a number of learning outcomes that you must achieve that will help you progress in your studies. We measure whether you've met these learning outcomes by setting you one or more assessments. The details of the course itself and the module specifications are available in the student area of the website.

Go to: Students > Current Students > Module Specifications > Escape Studios Modules > Level 7

All modules on the course are core so you won't have to choose options but you will be able to specialise within the modules by choosing the nature of your projects. You can think of the degree as being broken down into two *stages*.

### Stage 1

This consists of three modules on each route and one common module:

### 3D Route

- 3D Foundation (30 credits)
- Visual Effects (30 credits)
- Advanced 3D for Visual Effects (30 credits)

### Compositing Route

- Compositing 1 (30 credits)
- Compositing 2 (30 credits)
- Advanced Compositing for Visual Effects (30 credits)

### Common

- Studio Project (30 credits)

On successfully completing a total of 60 credits you will be entitled to a Post Graduate Certificate if you choose to leave the course, and if you successfully complete all 120 credits you will be entitled to a Post Graduate Diploma.

### Stage 2

This only has one module:

- Production Project (60 credits)

After successfully completing this phase, you will be eligible for a Master's award.

### Approach to Learning and Teaching

During your course you'll be able to develop your knowledge and skills in a number of ways. Some of these will be closely directed /supervised by your tutors, and at other times you'll be free to organise your own study with guidance. All your scheduled studio time, except for some information sessions and presentations, will be in groups of around 10-20. For your Studio Project you'll be working with a smaller team, collaborating to meet a shared brief. This should give you ample opportunity to get the support and assistance that you need.

The first three modules (the 'craft' modules) have a high contact time, as this is where you will be learning the knowledge and skills associated with your particular subject, directed and informed by your tutors' expertise and experience. These will normally involve a large part of each day in the studio with your tutor and studio assistant, following demonstrations and working on set exercises to help you develop your craft.

The Studio and Production Project modules will have a lower contact time, your tutors taking on the roles of supervisors or studio leads. You'll still meet with them regularly to get feedback and help you stay on the right path, but these modules are much more about you managing the learning experience to meet your objectives. You'll be free to organise your work either as a team or an individual to best suit your project requirements.

Each module has its own area on the OLE where you will find all the information about the module and the resources that are provided to support your learning. Some of this information will be dedicated to the module, other elements may be shared across different modules and some may be external assets that can help with your further study. There may be links to videos, online journals and ebooks, and you should take advantage of these to enhance your development and take it beyond

the studio experience. Tutors may highlight some of these during their sessions, so make sure you listen out and follow up on their advice!

## 4. Assessments

You can find details of each module's assessments on the corresponding section of the OLE. This will have information about the assignment brief, what format is expected, how and when to submit it and what the assessment criteria are. Generally each module will have a practical element (usually a portfolio, where you make something) and a written element (usually a journal or blog, where you reflect on what you've made). Both these elements are essential to your development as one shows that you can deliver to a required level and the other shows that you understand why you can and how you could improve.

### Assignments

These will be specifically designed to measure how well you meet the learning outcomes of the module. They will usually involve a task to meet a brief set by your tutor and will allow you to demonstrate the knowledge and skills that you have learned during the module. You'll need to decide exactly how to complete the task, choosing particular techniques, approaches and making decisions on the aesthetics and style to meet the given requirements.

### Marking

Your work is marked by your tutor against the criteria set out at the start of each module. This ensures both that you have met the threshold to pass the module, but also measures at what level or performance you have achieved. You will often be asked to present your work as part of this assessment process so that your tutor and your peers can ask questions about the work to clarify certain aspects and to give you the chance to explain your work and put in the context of professional practice. The journals/blogs that you write for many of your modules will be assessed by the tutors after you have submitted these. All work that you submit is 'second marked' by another member of staff and passed to our external examiner for scrutiny. This ensures that the marking is fair, consistent and in line with work on similar courses elsewhere.

### Presentations

As we have already said, you will often be asked to present your work to your tutors and peers. Communication skills are really important in all jobs, but particularly in the creative industries where you will be pitching for work, presenting project outcomes and your work in progress for approval and feedback throughout your working life. Usually these will be used to assess the work and therefore help define your final mark for the module, but they may also be formative, which means that you get feedback on your work but they will not directly form part of the final grade for your work. The exact nature and purpose of the presentations will be clarified in each module.

### Feedback

This is one of the most important aspects of your work. You will receive feedback constantly in many different ways:

- **From your tutor, studio assistants and peers during your studio time** as part of your daily routine. This will often be oral feedback on your work, sometimes on a one-to-one basis in the studio, sometimes in a group feedback session or daily. Feedback isn't only for assessments, it's part of a healthy working environment so make the most of it.
- **During formal presentations.** This is likely to be from tutors, peers and professionals during a specially arranged session. Again, this will often be given orally, and/or it may be recorded or written up after the presentations.

- **At the end of the module with your grades.** This will be written, audio or video recorded feedback that specifically relates to your final marks. This will be sometime after the module has finished as with the final grade that you receive for your work will have to be checked and agreed as described previously to ensure consistency.

All these different types of feedback should help you build on your strengths and develop your skills as you progress through the course. You should be sure to take note of any feedback you received and act upon it as this will help you develop your skills and meet the needs of your assessments.

## 5. Industry Involvement

Industry involvement in our courses is a key feature. All our courses have been designed in collaboration with industry, and our advisory board constantly guides and influences their development. Our teaching staff are a mix of full-time tutors who have substantial industry experience and associate tutors who are current practicing professionals. We believe this mix provides you with a great combination of academic guidance and industry input, and creates a vibrant learning environment for you to work in. We strive to ensure our project briefs are aligned with industry, and often these are set by practicing professionals themselves, using source material and assets from real projects. Either way, you can be sure that the engagement we have with industry means that you'll feel like you're part of the industry before you leave us.

During your studies with us you'll also have lots of opportunities outside the studio time to engage with industry, from our 'Evenings with...' where current practitioners talk about their latest projects, through specific masterclasses to our annual VFX Festival which is a celebration of the best work from the games, animation and VFX industries. Make the most of these, they are something other Universities can't provide and are to your advantage.

## 6. Conclusion

We've created these courses to provide you with an environment to develop not only the specialised knowledge and skills for a career in your chosen area, but also the problem solving, awareness, agility and communication skills for you to adapt and flourish in our constantly changing world. We cannot predict exactly what careers you will go on to when you complete your studies with us, but we do believe that if you take full advantage of the opportunities and resources we provide, you will have every chance of not only being a successful professional, but you will also help to shape the future of the creative industries.

We hope you are inspired by our Escapees who have gone on to world-leading studios, worked on award-winning and ground-breaking projects and contributed to the growth of the creative sector in the UK and across the world. We look forward to one day welcoming you back to inspire future generations of students with your own success stories.

Good luck, work hard and enjoy your time with time us!