

MArt/BA (Hons)

# The Art of Video Games/ Visual Effects/ Computer Animation

Validated by University of Kent

Course Handbook | Academic Year 2021/22



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## 1. Introduction

### Welcome from the Dean of Escape Studios

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 the 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 may not 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 in 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 the 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 touch 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 at:

Students > Current Students > Forms and Documents > Pearson College Absence Form

## 3. About the Course

In common with most degree courses, each year of your study represents 120 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 which has a number of learning outcomes that you must achieve which will help you progress in your studies. We measure whether you've met these learning outcomes by setting you one or more assessments. There are two main types of modules - craft modules, in which you learn about a particular area of specialism and project modules, where you work collaboratively to deliver to a set brief.

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

Our BA/MArt courses follow a similar structure, and they all share a common first year of study. All modules on the course are core but you will be able to specialise within a number of modules by choosing the nature of your projects.

### Year 1

#### Term 1

This term helps you build a solid foundation and understanding of the principles on which the disciplines are built. This was identified as a crucial part of your development during our consultations with industry.

#### Creative Foundations - Craft (30 credits)

This module covers many of the creative foundations that underpin your disciplines. It is broken down into two units, each of which covers a separate area and has its own assessment.

These units are:

- Art Direction, Movement and Narrative
- Photography, Composition, Cinematography and Lighting

Each unit will last four weeks and is assessed at the end of the unit. The marks for these are then combined for the overall module mark.

#### Creative Foundations - Project (30 credits)

This involves working in a team to deliver a solution to a creative brief. At some point during the first 10 weeks of the term you'll spend two weeks looking at some foundation skills needed for the project, and then after you've completed the Craft module you'll work on the team project itself. This will help you start to develop group-working skills and collaborating to meet an externally defined set of criteria. It will also introduce you to working iteratively, responding to feedback and adapting your work accordingly. You'll have to present your work to your peers, tutors and industry professionals.

### **Term 2**

This term introduces the specialisms that you will go on to study in the rest of your course. You study the fundamentals of each subject to give you a better understanding of these and therefore enables you to work better across disciplines and on multi-platform projects.

- Computer Animation - Core (15 credits)
- Video Game Art - Core (15 credits)
- Compositing for VFX - Core (15 credits)
- 3D for VFX - Core (15 credits)

## **Year 2**

### **Term 1**

This continues with you developing your craft, and you study different modules depending which course you are on.

#### The Art of VFX

- 3D for VFX - Pro (30 credits)
- Compositing for VFX - Pro (30 credits)

#### The Art of Computer Animation

- Computer Animation - Pro (30 credits)
- Computer Animation - Advanced (30 credits)

#### The Art of Video Games

- Video Game Art - Pro (30 credits)
- Video Game Art - Advanced (30 credits)

## **Term 2**

This term allows you to specialise in a chosen area of your craft and to work in teams on a number of projects based on industry briefs.

### Specialism (15 credits)

Now that you have had the opportunity to learn about your craft, you are in a position to select an area to specialise in. You can choose an area in consultation with your tutors and then agree the nature of your portfolio that will allow you to develop and demonstrate your knowledge and skills in this area.

### Industry Studio Project (45 credits)

For this module you'll be required to work in teams on projects that are based on industry briefs, completing a number of these during the module. It gives you the opportunity to demonstrate your craft knowledge and skills in a large body of work and will further develop your ability to manage time and resources to deliver complex work to a high level.

## **Year 3**

By this year, you should have considerable knowledge and a set of skills that will enable you to work on substantial projects that will form the basis of your showreels. You'll be working in teams to deliver projects to a professional standard whilst further developing your specialism alongside these. You'll also be developing your professional awareness alongside these projects, ensuring that you're ready to move on to the world of work or the final stage of the MArt course.

### Advanced Specialism (30 credits)

This allows you to further develop your chosen specialism, gaining an in-depth knowledge and highly developed skills that should be the basis of your career path.

### Professional Practice (30 credits)

Working in industry involves more than being a highly skilled expert in your field and being an experienced team worker. You also need to understand the professional requirements of your field, such as an understanding of contracts, legal and ethical aspects, etc. This module provides an opportunity to achieve this and to ensure you are fully prepared to enter the industry.

### Professional Studio Project (60 credits)

This is a major team project, broken down into a number of stages, and will give you the chance to deliver professional standard work to complex and varying criteria. It will give you the opportunity to show that you can collaborate to solve significant problems by researching and developing novel solutions.

If you are on the BA version of your course, this is your final year, and on successfully completing it you will be eligible for the award of BA.

## **Year 4**

This is the Master's stage or what is called the MArt course, and so is only relevant if you have chosen to follow that route. It allows you to develop mastery of your subject, going even deeper into your chosen area and working alongside other students as if you were working in your own studio. There is sustained emphasis on the business elements of the work, requiring that you develop a full business plan to support your project work. It is structured differently to the previous years, with

four modules covering the four key elements that underpin the philosophy of the Escape Studios and a unique entrepreneurial approach.

#### Art and Design (30 credits)

This is about the aesthetic qualities of the projects that you deliver and how you have made your design decisions. Your work should exhibit innovative features that show that you are fully immersed in the cutting edge of your discipline.

#### Business (30 credits)

The viability and sustainability of your project will be an essential part of this year, and this module will address these issues, requiring you to think like an entrepreneur and run your project as if it were a business and working on making it financially viable and attractive to your users or customers.

#### Craft (30 credits)

To deliver your project you will need to have a thorough understanding of the latest and developing elements of your craft, showing that you can select advanced techniques and where appropriate creating novel approaches to solve problems presented by your brief.

#### Process (30 credits)

This will allow you to develop and demonstrate techniques to manage complex resources to meet varying requirements and constraints. It allows you to control many key digital processes.

After successfully completing the year, you will be eligible for an MArt 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, 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 30. For many of your projects, you'll be working in smaller teams, collaborating to meet a shared brief. This should give you ample opportunity to get the support and assistance that you need.

The craft modules will usually have a higher 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 week in the studio with your tutor and studio assistant, following demonstrations and working on set exercises to help you develop your craft.

The project modules will have a lower contact time, with your tutors taking on the roles of supervisors or studio leads. You'll still meet with them regularly (usually every working day) 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. The majority of the projects will be team-based, and you'll have the opportunity to take on different roles in a number of teams during your studies. Again, you'll be expected to work in the studios for a significant part of each day, and attendance will be recorded, but outside those times you'll be free to organise your work as a team 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!

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.

## 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 retrospective, where you reflect on what you've made). Both these elements are essential to your development; one shows that you can deliver to a required level, 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 and approaches, and making decisions on the aesthetics and style to meet the given requirements.

The practical assignments will usually be assessed by a team of people. This ensures two things. The first is to ensure that the process is fair and that the marks and feedback genuinely reflect the standard of the work. The second is to make the marking process as transparent and understandable as possible, since you will be part of the marking team for every piece of practical work that you submit.

### Marking

Your practical work for the craft modules is assessed in three ways:

- The tutor(s) that lead the module assess it. This is the largest component of the mark as they have the most experience and have set the assignments.
- Your peers contribute a mark. This is contributed to by your fellow students, based on the same marking criteria as the other marks for this module. We do this so that you all get used to assessing work in context and gain experience in analysing and giving feedback to others. You will of course be marking other students' work as part of this process, and this is as important a part of becoming a professional as completing your own work.
- You will give yourself a mark. This may seem strange, but again this is an important part of your development as a professional. In fact, being aware of your own strengths and weaknesses is a key part of your learning experience, and this was emphasised during our development of the courses with industry. You need to assess your work against the criteria given for the assignment, and the closer that you get to the agreed tutor mark the better.

Your assignments for the project modules are assessed slightly differently. They still have the peer and self-marked components, but the tutor mark is split with industry. Your work will be viewed by a practising professional, and they will liaise with the tutor team to agree a final mark, rather than the tutors just marking the work. This is to ensure that we are working in the context of current practice, and to give you the opportunity to get feedback from someone who is at the leading edge of the discipline.

## Presentations

You will be giving a lot of presentations during your time at Escape Studios, both as an individual and in teams. 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. Some of these presentations will be to small groups of your peers, and some will be to larger gatherings, including industry professionals. Usually these will be used to assess the work and so help define your final mark for the module, but they may also be formative, i.e. so that you can 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 the final grade that you receive for your work will have to be checked and agreed, usually by other members of the tutor team and/or an external examiner who has been appointed to verify that the assessment process is fair and aligns with the required standards.

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 make sure you take note and respond to all these different types of feedback as they will help you develop your skills and also meet the assessment criteria.

## 5. Industry Involvement

As you will see from the way your project work is assessed, industry involvement in our courses is a key feature. All of our courses are 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 practising 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.

During your studies with us you'll also have lots of opportunities outside the studio 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 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!