

PROGRAMME SPECIFICATION

This document describes the **Master of Arts, Postgraduate Diploma and Postgraduate Certificate programmes in Playwriting**. This specification is valid for new entrants from **September 2013**.

The aims of the programme are:

- to develop and deepen students' understanding of the nature of drama and performance through the close study of plays and other forms of 'texts' for staging;
- to teach students to appreciate and practice a specialist professional discipline;
- to explore theatrical conventions of different cultures and periods and to allow students to draw critically upon their experiences of theatre-going;
- to explore how a range of theoretical approaches may be applied to the study of performance texts both on the page and on the stage;
- to allow students to shape what is a relatively flexible syllabus to realise a variety of personal objectives.

The programme is delivered in a single stage, equating to one year of full-time study (52 weeks), or two years of part-time study (104 weeks). On successful completion of the programme a student should have an understanding of the area of the MA at a level appropriate for a postgraduate qualification. Whilst being a self-contained degree in its own right, the programme provides suitable and recognised qualifications for entry to PhD study in the same or a closely related field.

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This document provides a summary of the main features of the programme, and of the outcomes which a student might reasonably be expected to achieve if full advantage is taken of the learning opportunities provided. Further information is contained in the College prospectus, the College Regulations and in various handbooks issued to students upon arrival. Whilst Royal Holloway keeps all its information for prospective applicants and students under review, programmes and the availability of individual courses are necessarily subject to change at any time, and prospective applicants are therefore advised to seek confirmation of any factors which might affect their decision to follow a specific programme. In turn, Royal Holloway will inform applicants and students as soon as is practicable of any substantial changes which might affect their studies.

Learning outcomes

Teaching and learning in the programme are closely informed by the active research of staff. In general terms, the programmes provide opportunities for students to develop and demonstrate the following learning outcomes:

Knowledge and understanding

- a broad and detailed historical perspective on the condition of contemporary British Theatre;
- a knowledge of theatrical conventions of different cultures and periods;
- the application of contextual and theoretical modes of inquiry;
- critical understanding of aspects of British society, politics, culture and the operating contexts of contemporary theatre;
- a familiarity with a wide range of spatial forms used in modern performance;
- an awareness of the scope of theatre studies and its methodologies of research;

- a perception of the complex nature of theatre history and the strengths and limitations of various approaches to its recording and transmission;
- understanding, both theoretical and practical, of how drama and theatre might be applied to specific community, educational and therapeutic contexts (Applied Drama pathway);
- an awareness of the impact and effectiveness of applied drama and theatre to participants (Applied Drama pathway);
- gain insight, both theoretical and practical, into the role of the director in historical and contemporary theatre practice (Directing pathway);
- gain a wide ranging insight into methods of developing the voice and the physical expressiveness of the performer as well as the traditions and cultural background underlying these training methods (Physical Theatre and Performance pathway);
- acquire a growing insight into the ways in which the body in its totality is the principal creative source and resource of the performer (Physical Theatre and Performance pathway);
- explore the craft of the playwright in terms of structure, dialogue, story and theatrical image (Playwriting);

Skills and other attributes

Students following the programme will gain the ability to:

- critically deconstruct theatrical performances from a variety of theoretical positions;
- devise exercises that engage with the issues surrounding the ways in which theory influences practice and performance;
- use space creatively, with an enhanced understanding of how space conditions meaning, and of the possibilities open to a maker of theatre;
- experiment with, and question, ideas and practices which aim for cultural and social intervention (Applied Drama pathway);
- analyse the theories and practices inherent in applied drama and theatre (Applied Drama pathway);
- apply and demonstrate their skills and insights in an independent directing project for public presentation (Directing pathway);
- bring insights into the voice, body and expressiveness of the performer together for the creation of a short performance (Physical Theatre and Performance pathway);
- release the imagination by a greater understanding of technique (Playwriting);
- undertake and critique bibliographic inquiry including considering the usefulness of a range of research resources;*
- use web-based research resources;*
- work collaboratively within a group;*
- present seminar material through a range of media;*
- undertake research and write critically about a variety of topics;*
- write an extended dissertation on a specialist topic (either historical, practical or theoretical), treating it critically and analytically.

* transferable skills

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Teaching, learning and assessment

Teaching and learning are mainly by means of sessions lasting anywhere between one and a half and four hours. These would typically combine periods of seminar discussion and practical exploration or workshops. Where possible, these are student-led, with participants being encouraged to devise exercises engaging with the relevant issues and to direct their fellow-students in these experiments. Opportunities to visit theatrical presentations are also an important part of the programme, and students are encouraged to use these as a basis for discussion and to deconstruct the performances they have seen from a variety of critical positions.

Assessment is by a variety of means including essays (both theoretical and critical) and performance analyses, practical projects as well as a final dissertation of 10-14,000 words. Practical projects are sometimes carried out in a group and may include an element of assessment for an individual's contribution to group working and direction. All students undertake a summer term practical project.

Full details of the assessments for individual courses can be obtained from the Programme Handbook or from the [Department](#).

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Details of the programme structure(s)

The brief outline of the programme is shown below; however students can obtain further details from the Programme Handbook. Where credits are indicated in brackets, these refer to credits within the MA. The programme structure for the PgDip is as below, with the exception that students will not undertake the dissertation.

In the **Autumn and Spring** term, students take:

DT5009 Theatre Contexts, Histories & Practices (40 credits)

DT5113 Playwriting (40 credits)

DT5200 Making Performance Texts (40 credits)

DT5210 Dissertation (60 credits)

Part-time programme structure

In the case of students on the MA Playwriting they will take DT5113 Playwriting and DT5200 Making Performance Texts in the first year and DT5009 Theatre Contexts and DT5210 Dissertation in the second year of the programme. Tutorials in respect of the dissertation would begin in the summer term of the first year.

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Progression and Award requirements

Progression throughout the year/s is monitored through performance in oral presentations, contributions to seminar discussion and coursework. To pass the programme a student must achieve an overall weighted average of at least 50.00%, with no mark in any element which counts towards the final assessment falling below 50%. Failure marks between 40-49% can be condoned in courses which do not constitute more than 25% of the final assessment, provided that the overall weighted average is at least 50.00%, but a failure mark (i.e. below 50%) in the dissertation cannot be condoned.

The **Masters** degree with Merit may be awarded if a student achieves an overall weighted average of 60.00% or above, with no mark in any element which counts towards the final assessment falling below 50%.

The **Masters** degree with Distinction may be awarded if a student achieves an overall weighted average of 70.00% or above, with no mark in any element which counts towards the final assessment falling below 50%. A Distinction will not normally be awarded if a student re-sits or re-takes any element of the programme. In exceptional circumstances a viva may be held for a student at the request of the Examiners.

The **Postgraduate Diploma** may be awarded if a student achieves an overall weighted average of at least 50.00%, with no mark in any taught element which counts towards the final assessment falling below 50% and has either chosen not to proceed to the dissertation, or has failed the dissertation on either the first or second attempt. Failure marks in the region 40-49% are not usually condoned for the award of a Postgraduate Diploma, but if they are, such condoned fails would be in courses which do not constitute more than 25% of the final assessment.

The **Postgraduate Diploma** with Merit may be awarded if a student achieves an overall weighted average of 60.00% or above, with no mark in any element which counts towards the final assessment falling below 50%.

The **Postgraduate Diploma** with Distinction may be awarded if a student achieves an overall weighted average of 70.00% or above, with no mark in any element which counts towards the final assessment falling below 50%. A Distinction will not normally be awarded if a student re-sits or re-takes any element of the programme. In exceptional circumstances a viva may be held for a student at the request of the Examiners.

The **Postgraduate Certificate** may be awarded if a student achieves a mark of at least 50% in at least 80 credits and has either chose not to continue with the programme, or has failed the remaining credits.

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Student support and guidance

- Personal Tutors: The programme leader serves as personal tutor. The tutor's role is to advise on academic, pastoral and welfare issues. Advisers are available for consultations within office hours. The MA Co-ordinator is also available for pastoral support.
- All staff are available via their e-mail addresses, which are published in the programme handbook.
- Detailed student handbook and course resources.
- The department's postgraduate Induction sessions for incoming students (including a compulsory weekend of practical workshop activity to meet all new MA students within the department) in the first week of the Autumn term, aligned with the College's induction procedures.
- Extensive supporting materials and learning resources in College libraries and computer centre.
- College Careers Service and Departmental Careers Service Liaison Officer. The department also arranges careers evenings, usually once a term, bringing in external speakers to advise on careers of particular interest to Drama graduates. A document directing students to members of staff with particular career advice expertise is available in the departmental office.
- Access to all College and University support services, including Student Counselling Service, Royal Holloway International, Students' Union, Health Centre and the Educational Support Office for students with special needs.
- A Staff-Student Committee is held each term with representatives from each degree pathway. Minutes of these meetings are posted in the Department.
- Students are able to gain entrepreneurial training through the Young Enterprise's (YES) Graduate Programme run by the Research and Enterprise Office.
- Use of performance spaces (including The Noh Theatre, Studio Theatre and the Boilerhouse).

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Admission requirements

Students are normally required to have at least a good upper second-class Honours degree in Theatre Studies, English Literature, History, Media Arts or a related discipline or an equivalent overseas qualification. However, the Department also has considerable flexibility in its admissions and offers policy and strongly encourages applications from non-standard applicants (such as those with considerable professional experience within the discipline, but without the standard qualifications). Students whose first language is not English may also be asked for a qualification in English Language at an appropriate level. For further details please refer to the [Prospective Students](#) web page. It may also be helpful to contact the [Admissions Office](#) for specific guidance on the entrance requirements for particular programmes.

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Further learning and career opportunities

Drama graduates do not follow any kind of typical pattern, but embark on a wide variety of careers and postgraduate training programmes (for example, teacher training, arts management, PhDs and other research). Some start their own theatre companies, or serve as educational officers at places like Shakespeare's Globe, while others leave the theatre behind to become chartered accountants, librarians, and web-page designers: the options are limitless. The usefulness of a drama degree is not at all surprising, as students obtain the sort of transferable skills that graduate employers most demand, according to the Employment Satisfaction Survey. For more details on further learning and career opportunities please refer to the [Careers Service](#).

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Indicators of quality and standards

Royal Holloway's position as one of the UK's leading research-intensive institutions was confirmed by the results of the most recent Research Assessment Exercise (RAE 2008) conducted by the Higher Education Funding Council (HEFCE). The new scoring system for the RAE 2008 measures research quality in four

categories, with the top score of 4* indicating quality that is world-leading and of the highest standards in terms of originality, significance and rigour. 60% of the College's research profile is rated as world-leading or internationally excellent outperforming the national average of 50%. The College is ranked 16th in the UK for research of 4* standard and 18th for 3* and 4* research. The Department of Drama and Theatre was ranked joint 9th in the top 10 universities in the country in terms of proportion of 3* and 4* research.

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List of programmes with details of awards, teaching arrangements and accreditation

All the programmes are taught entirely by staff at Royal Holloway, University of London, and the Masters lead to awards of the University of London. The Postgraduate Diplomas lead to an award of Royal Holloway and Bedford New College. Programmes in Theatre Studies are not subject to accreditation by a professional body. The Banner programme codes are given in parentheses.

Master of Arts Programme in Playwriting

MA in Playwriting (2451)

Postgraduate Diploma in Playwriting

PG Diploma in Playwriting (2452)

Postgraduate Certificate in Playwriting

PG Certificate in Playwriting (2647)

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