

Nottingham Trent University Course Specification

Basic Course Information

1.	Awarding Institution:	Nottingham Trent University
2.	School/Campus:	School of Art & Design/City Campus
3.	Final Award, Course Title and Modes of Study:	MA Commercial Photography Full-time
4.	Normal Duration:	One year
5.	UCAS Code:	N/A

6. Overview and general educational aims of the course

This full-time MA considers the practice of Commercial Photography within an international context and sits alongside the pre-existing MA Photography course. You will be encouraged to take an open-minded approach in seeking out creative possibilities within this expanding and dynamic practice. You will examine the exciting and challenging, cultural and contextual dialogues surrounding this practice.

You will be introduced to high-level production workshops that strengthen and extend your own photographic practice within today's visual culture; these will include high definition studio based digital capture; *Portraiture and Fashion*, contemporary *Applied Photography* and multi-platform *Documentary Photography*. By researching, analysing, testing and evaluating these working methods, you gain a thorough understanding of the current thinking and practices within commercial photography. Alongside these workshop and projects, the course will consider how photographers' can use the internet to inform, identify and then retain a potential client base.

Your course work is based upon your own research question and then developing a photographic project that aims at challenging these conventions. This project is either self-initiated or chosen from 'live' project briefs that reflect real-life, future facing, photographic challenges and opportunities. You will produce your own project plan, referred to as a 'learning agreement', identifying how you wish to develop your own practice as a commercial photographer within one of the three strands offered; *Portraiture and Fashion*, *Applied Photography* and *Documentary Photography*. This plan and your ownership of it is the key focus of this course. Your learning is then supported and evidenced in your 'reflective journal', which records, analyses and evaluates your ideas and considers ways in which your project might progress.

You are encouraged to research and critically evaluate differing working methods, alongside your creative ideas and your awareness of ethics and photographic markets, and you will evidence these in your reflective journal and supporting essay. Through this you will gain a thorough understanding of contemporary commercial photographic practice; grasping the commercial purpose of your practice and how the resulting images function and are received. You will then apply this analysis to your own practice, developing an autonomous learning style.

Through the development of sound research methodologies, you will discover opportunities to extend your understanding of commercial photography as a practitioner or manager. You will be encouraged to explore the relationships between practice and contexts to establish lifelong learning skills.

In addition to your personally devised learning aims, evidenced in your learning agreement, the general objectives of the course are to enhance your personal and professional ambitions through the practice of photography. The course encourages a commitment to the exchange of ideas and knowledge across international boundaries. Through your work and engagement with peers and industrial specialist from many different cultures and backgrounds, you gain a first-hand understanding of diversity and build a sense of community.

7. Course outcomes

Course outcomes describe what you should know and be able to do by the end of your course if you take advantage of the opportunities for learning that we provide.

Knowledge and understanding

By the end of the course you should be able to:

- Appraise specialised and advanced photographic technologies and digital workflow and apply them appropriately to your project.
- Situate your commercial practice within current and historical fields of photography.
- Engage with and critically evaluate the current debates within visual culture.
- Critically appraise advanced research knowledge and apply appropriately to your practice in advancing your career.
- Conceptualise your work within the appropriate professional contexts.
- Utilise an advanced knowledge of IP, ethical and commercial standards appropriate to your area of practice.

Skills, qualities and attributes

By the end of the course you should be able to:

- Use critical thinking and self-reflection to independently advance your practice.
- Utilise and engage with advanced research skills through practice.
- Employ advanced and appropriate technical skills.
- Solve complex problems in a professional and appropriate manner.
- Communicate your research effectively to an appropriate audience.
- Accept accountability for your work and manage it effectively, according to current industry standards as demanded by the marketplace.

8. Teaching and learning methods

MA Commercial Photography comprises of one single module worth 180 credits, delivered full-time over one academic year running from September to July.

Specialist tutors will run workshops and tutorials and you will learn by doing, reflecting and contributing to discussions within your tutorial groups. Peer group learning is fostered, independent self-directed learning is expected, and directed teaching is provided. You will learn by problem solving while completing set tasks and, importantly, setting your own aims to continually enhance your practice.

Your Learning Agreement will be developed to extend your scope as a practitioner and manager. To support your learning you will develop a Reflective Journal, which is where you will reflect on your ideas and consider ways in which your project might progress.

Once a term, all postgraduate students in Photography, both full and part-time, will participate in a collaborative meeting alongside all staff members, referred to as 'the MA Day'. This is an opportunity to share ideas and develop a community of practice. All postgraduate students are also invited to go on cultural and industry related trips.

9. Assessment methods

At the end of the course; assessment will focus on your level of achievement against each of the course's learning outcomes and also your ability to reflect

on the process supporting your achievements. All course learning outcomes have assessment and grading criteria that describe the level of learning being achieved against each learning outcome; this will be explained to you.

At each tutorial you will receive written formative feedback about the progress you are making via the joint completion of a tutorial record form. You will also receive feedback from staff and students during group presentations, workshops and seminars.

The work you submit is determined by your learning agreement and is holistically assessed consisting of a substantial final body of photographic work sitting inside the area of commercial photography that is being researched. The development of an exhibition/publication/website (as appropriate to your commercial practice and defined by your work based project) will also form part of the assessment at the end of the module. This final photographic body of work will show appropriate research and problem solving skills, as well as knowledge of specialist subject skills to complete and present, the final photographic project. Knowledge of, and skills in, the relevant technical, commercial and professional contexts of production for a completed project need also to be evidenced.

All this sits within a holistic assessment structure evidenced by an assessment package consisting of the final body of photographic work accompanied by a learning agreement, reflective journal with an annotated bibliography, conceptual essay and work based learning report, an artist statement, and concluding oral/online presentation.

On successfully completing the course, you will have achieved 180 credit points and will be awarded an MA in Commercial Photography with a Distinction, Commendation or Pass. If you have not met the learning outcomes for the MA award, then it is likely that you will be offered a referral brief. On completing this, your work will then be reassessed against the course learning outcomes and, if necessary, against the interim fall-back award learning outcomes for Postgraduate Certificate in Commercial Photography (equivalent to 60 credits of masters' level 7 learning) or Postgraduate Diploma in Commercial Photography (equivalent to 120 credits of masters' level 7 learning). The decision about the final award will be made at the Board of Examiners, following the final assessment, at the end of the course.

Assessment is conducted in accordance with the School policy - 'Assessment and Feedback Principles and Guidelines', which ensures that academic

standards about assessment and feedback are made clear to you.

10. **Course structure and curriculum**

You are asked to arrive with an outline of a self-directed project at the beginning of the course. This will underpin the development of your Learning Agreement that will detail how you are going to develop your own practice as a commercial photographer. This is then developed throughout the MA, culminating in a work integrated learning project that provides a resolution to your brief together with a final exhibition/publication/website (as appropriate to your practice).

The first ten weeks of the course looks at photography both critically and technically, exploring and challenging the established parameters of commercial photography, moving to understand the relationship between the various commercial practices. During a standard teaching week you will engage in tutorial discussions to consider the entrepreneurial possibilities in photography, supported by a seminar series examining the contextual dialogues surrounding commercial photographic practice. These dialogues will help you understand photographic production; the core business of an MA in Commercial Photography.

The photographic workshops will build on your pre-existing photography skills and will support the development of your project. These workshops will include high definition portrait and fashion photography, applied photography, and documentary/story telling.

If your self-initiated project fits more appropriately with the MA Photography course evolving more towards a personal creative practice, or you wish to engage with formal academic research or do not require work-based learning, you may be able to transfer over to the MA Photography course. You should discuss this with your tutors prior to the Christmas or the Easter break.

In January you will choose to specialise in one of these three areas.

- Portraiture and Fashion; high definition digital studio techniques and fashion photography
- Applied; applied studio photography, surveying, digital landscape, heritage and museum photography
- Documentary; sports and events, storytelling, multi media platforms and photography

These will be supported by discussions on the cultural and legal dialogue surrounding photographic practice, the introduction of appropriate photographic methodologies and their commercial contexts, use of the internet and social media marketing, setting personal aims, mapping out the ethical legal and commercial territories of your photography project and finally the use of time planning skills to successfully meet deadlines. You will determine the context of your work and how it will define your future goals and careers aspirations.

Prior to the Easter Break you will all take part in a public, celebratory, exhibition of your photographic work to date. The show should be then evidenced and documented within your reflective journal.

There will also be a trip to at least one photographic archive, shared with the MA Photography students.

After Easter, the course team, International Office and Student Employability & Enterprise, will help you to identify and secure an appropriate placement or project-based opportunity, which may be at a host institution. You will be allocated an academic tutor who will have experience relevant to supervising master's students in their field and will support you through both the placement or project's process. It is important to note that any placement or live project is dependant on your suitability and availability of the live project and placement providers.

You will focus your attention on producing a final exhibition/publication/website (as appropriate to your practice and defined by your work based project) for the MA assessment. You will be encouraged to demonstrate appropriate research and problem solving skills, as well as an advanced knowledge of specialist subject skills to complete and present this final photographic project.

Your work will need to demonstrate evidence of contemporary context, theory and practice within Commercial Photography and shows a strong commitment to your chosen practice demonstrating creativity, imagination and innovation. It is therefore envisaged that the final body of work and the exhibition statement will meet the creative and intellectual ambitions of both the Learning Agreement and the learning outcomes of the course.

11. Admission to the course

For current information regarding all entry requirements for this course, please see the 'Applying' tab on the course information web page.

12. Support for learning

The School is committed in assisting you to achieve the best results possible during your studies and will provide you with a wide range of academic and pastoral help and advice. In addition to the course leader and course administrator, a member of staff will also be assigned to you at the start of your course who you can communicate with on more personal matters.

The Student Handbook is available electronically on NOW, NTU's online workspace and contains details of all the support available to you. If there is an interruption in your studies due to circumstances outside of your control, or through other factors affecting your academic performance, then please speak to your Course Leader for advice on what to do next.

At the start of your course you will be invited to participate in an 'induction week' where you will undertake a range of activities that will introduce many of the key facilities available within the University and will also provide you with an essential introduction to the course. You will meet the staff and your fellow students and will be able to find out more about how you will be taught and assessed on your course. At the same time, the Students' Union organise social events in 'welcome week' that will encourage you to meet people from the wider NTU community. Support is available, through flexible and responsive teaching and learning methods, to enable you to explore and challenge the established parameters of photography and the boundaries within which it operates.

Foreign language classes will also be available to help you if you plan to study abroad, but they are not formally part of the course and are therefore not assessed.

The NOW is used to support your learning and allows key information to be accessed and shared at any time. You can also access your results through NOW.

To ensure that you have a clear understanding of the way in which you are progressing within the modules, you will receive feedback on the progress that you are making on a regular basis. Some of the feedback that you will

receive is formal and will occur both during and at the end of the module. Group tutorials are also an important informal opportunity to receive feedback from fellow students and your tutor. You will also be assigned a personal tutor who will meet with you on a regular basis.

13. Graduate destinations/employability

This course has a strong focus on producing highly employable students and is committed to offering experiences throughout the course that will enhance your understanding of the industry's requirements. To this end the Art & Design Employability Team can help prepare you well for your future. They can offer a variety of activities to support you in preparing for your future. As part of the curriculum, in the first two phases you will meet someone from the team. These meetings might often covers CV building, job hunting and applications, preparing for interviews and even building your personal brand.

14. Course standards and quality

We would like you to contribute to the continuing development of this course, we welcome all feedback and have a number of ways in which we can formally and informally receive this. You will have an opportunity to put yourself forward to be considered as a course representative at the beginning of your course. As part of this role you will be invited to attend the course committee meetings that occur three times a year and contribute to the conversations and debate to support the continuing health of the course. Any issues brought up at the course committee meetings are reported to the school academic standards and quality committee and actions identified from thereon in with responses reported back to you either via the next course committee meeting or via NOW.

The experience that you have whilst studying on the course is important to us and you will be required to give feedback on individual modules and the course as a whole and will also be invited to attend staff-student liaison committees and meetings with the Dean. At the end of each year the course team write a Course Interim Report and action plan (CIR), which is received at the School's Standards and Quality Committee as confirmation that course continues to reflect and develop its curriculum to ensure currency.

An External Examiner is also appointed whose job it is to make judgements about and report on the standard of your course in relation to other

comparable courses in the UK. Part of their role is to review samples of assessed work and confirm at the Board of Examiners that the internal assessment and moderation practices are fair and in line with the School and NTU's policies. The external examiner also writes a report at the end of each academic year and this will be available to you via NOW, together with a response written by the Course Team and the Course Committee.

15. **Assessment regulations**

This course is subject to the University's Common Assessment Regulations (located in Section 16C of the Quality Handbook). Any course specific assessment features are described below:

NA

16. **Additional Information**

Collaborative partner(s):	None
Course referenced to national QAA Benchmark Statements:	http://www.qaa.ac.uk/en/Publications/Documents/Masters-Degree-Characteristics-15.pdf
Course recognised by:	Art and Design
Date this course specification approved:	20 April 2016 Advanced Standing Agreement added with AIVA, Shanghai (SASQC October 2016)

Any additional information:

Achieving your own career and personal goals is the main aim of this MA in Photography.

- You can tailor your project to your own personal interests and career aspirations within commercial photography; portraiture fashion, applied and documentary photography.
- You will engage with, and discuss, the historical and contextual frameworks surrounding your practice
- You will update and challenge your pre-existing skillset in order to use high-end digital capture in portrait / fashion photography and contemporary applied photography. You can also engage with the changing paradigms in multi-platform documentary photography.
- You will may undertake industry visits.
- You will join the seventy-five years' worth of NTU graduates who have achieved success, won awards or otherwise distinguished themselves in photography.