

# Nottingham Trent University Course Specification

## Basic Course Information

1. Awarding Institution:	Nottingham Trent University
2. School/Campus:	School of Art and Design, City
3. Final Award, Course Title and Modes of Study:	BA (Hons) Animation Full time
4. Normal Duration	3 Years
5. UCAS Code:	W213

## 6. Overview and general educational aims of the course

BA (Hons) Animation has been created to respond to the rise of the global animation industry. The course provides a creative and experimental environment designed to allow you to explore the visual and narrative elements of this dynamic art form. BA (Hons) Animation offers you an excellent opportunity to develop both a deep technical and creative understanding and a vibrant portfolio that will prepare you well for this creative yet demanding professional field.

On the course you will experience an animation environment based around creative studio practice, exploring the integration of design, narrative, contemporary technologies and theory. The course encourages you to be imaginative, innovative, provocative and directional.

BA (Hons) Animation engages with the current creative, critical, technical and professional understanding within the fields of animation practice, to include writing for animation, drawing for animation, character design, concept art and animation theory. We refer to the world's most imaginative animation practitioners for the best in current thinking and making; designing our curricular to correspond with the rapidly evolving creative field with specific focus on authorship and those skills that formulating the most innovative content requires. This course bases its teaching on praxis; praxis is when a theory is enacted or realised and through realization, tangible outcomes are produced, examined and then reflected upon. You will then frame your development around experimentation, context, reflection and dialectics which will place you at the heart of current animation thinking and practice.

You will be encouraged to see animation as a versatile, exploratory, cross-platform medium that is situated in a cross-disciplinary position between film making, graphic design, art-making and visual practice. Theoretically, animation studies relates to film studies and deals with all aspects of the audiences' relationship with the character, narrative, performance and fictional worlds; built up of incrementally differing frames.

The animation industry is global in nature and you will be prepared to work within it by reflecting on contemporary thought and practice within an internationalised creative context. You will be encouraged to consider your work in relation to international design responsibility, audience and impact. You will experience live projects delivered in conjunction with industry practitioners, who actively participate as an essential component of the praxis-based core modules. Working in teams on live industry briefs will allow you to experience real work situations and reflect contemporary industry practice. Projects are designed to inspire you to submit work to

national and international animation festivals aimed at raising your profile in readiness to enter this dynamic and competitive field.

The overall aim of the course is to inspire and promote a culture of ambition. The expectation is that you will leave NTU after studying this course with a set of design methodologies and design processes that will engender a life-long culture of innovation. The animation industry requires practitioners who can respond quickly to change; therefore experimental practice, conceptual clarity and being able to work collaboratively are all tools that you will employ during this study.

**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:

- Apply design and an informed visual aesthetic to the development and production of animated content appropriate to the narrative
- Evaluate a range of research methods and use them to construct the knowledge base for your work
- Appraise and implement a range of professional animation practices for future employment within your chosen industries
- Analyse the roles and responsibilities of the animation producer within an international context
- Utilise interdisciplinary thinking to explore hybrid animation
- Critically analyse and utilise animation's relationship with its audience
- Communicate effectively in discourse to explore and develop ideas and narratives
- Evaluate evidence and articulate sound judgements within the context of international animation practice

**Skills, qualities and attributes**

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

- Self-manage learning and development in relation to workloads and deadlines
- Utilise advanced practical skills in the making and showing of animated art
- Anticipate and accommodate change to the animation workflow
- Apply appropriate research methods in the contextualization and making of your work
- Identify and resolve problems through the use of appropriate methods, tools and forms
- Innovate through collaboration within the animation studio environment
- Establish appropriate resource management within an animation production
- Present ideas and work to audiences in a range of situations through a variety of methods and media

**8. Teaching and learning methods**

Your learning will take place by undertaking animation projects that are problem-based. These will encourage you to further develop an enquiring mind, a capacity for learning independently and to work collaboratively with others. This will sometimes be delivered through 'live professional experience' project briefs and competitions. There will be seminars,

workshops and master classes that explore the potential of working within differing areas of animation studio practice, helping develop both cognitive and practical skills. The creative potential for using current and developing technologies will also be explored alongside more traditional art and design methods.

Field trips and your final year degree show encourage a broader understanding of presenting animation across a range of venues and audiences.

Discussion and working collaboratively with fellow students are key methods of peer learning that will enhance your subject specific knowledge and understanding. Some of this discussion will be face-to-face and some will be conducted online via NTU's Online Workspace (NOW). You are encouraged to take responsibility for your own learning. All related module information can be accessed on the NOW in support of this learning.

Significant amounts of independent self-directed work are required in order to get the most out of this course. Graduating as an animator, you will be in a position to critically analyse and select the appropriate research methods and creative solutions in response to a broad range of animation-related briefs. It is therefore important that you develop the ability to successfully collaborate with both peers and clients. Successful completion of this course will require you to identify time to undertake self-directed reading, self-directed industry research, independent practical creative development and implementation; whilst sustaining effective project management skills.

You will be encouraged to explore and reflect upon your developing skills and understanding, evaluating the journey and process using a sketchbook and online Reflective Learning Journal.

Your Module Leaders will provide support specifically related to each module. Subject area technicians provide technical support where required. Your Academic Tutor will also provide dedicated surgeries to support your progress.

There is an extensive and diverse range of books and periodicals that focus on art and design within specialist areas such as drawing, character design, cinematography and writing for animation. From a design and technical perspective these resources cover art and design fundamentals, products, colour, design, illustration, advanced technology and a variety of materials relevant to the animation subject area. The course team reviews, defines and updates appropriate material on a regular basis in relation to its currency and significance and you are able to purchase materials through direct links to suppliers. All reading lists are on the NOW and the Library and Learning Resources subject specialists are available to assist you.

Learning is a reciprocal process, based on shared discussion between students and staff. Consequently, working alone or in small and multi-disciplinary groups is an important aspect of the teaching and learning approach for tutorials and interim assessments. The University also provides a framework of support for independent learning and the achievement of goals available through the NOW.

## **9. Assessment methods**

The assessment methods comply with the School Assessment Policy and the

University Assessment Regulations, with all assessment criteria being linked to the module learning outcomes. The final degree classification is based only on modules taken in the final year.

Within the context of animation, the studio and thesis modules' assessment is based on 100% coursework, recognising the connectivity between theoretical, technical and practical resolution in relation to research, development and evaluation. Presentation skills, written and verbal communication are also assessed. At these points your work might consist of 2D visual research, sketchbooks, 3D development work or an animation, portfolio work, reports and evaluations or essays.

During each module you will receive regular feedback on your work. In the middle of the module you will be given written feedback and an indication of what grade you are working at. These interim evaluation points are referred to as 'formative feedback' events. At the end of the module, all of the work undertaken during the module is assessed as one whole body of work against the module's learning outcomes and this is known as 'holistic assessment'. You will also receive informal feedback from tutors and your peers in both group and individual tutorials. Written summative feedback will be given to you at the end of the module.

If you are unable to pass modules to the required standard, the progression board, guided by the Common Assessment Regulations, will determine the next steps.

Assessment is conducted according to the School policy 'Assessment and Feedback Principles and Guidelines' which ensures the academic standards, and their appropriateness, are made clear to the students on the course. The course assessment and feedback strategy is available on the NOW. This strategy provides detail of how your work will be assessed and moderated for each module against the learning outcomes.

You will also be introduced to and trained in ethics in relation to the Research and Ethical Governance Framework, with available documentation provided to students and required to be completed.

## 10. **Course structure and curriculum**

The course is offered in full-time study mode only and all students must complete 120 credits at each level to achieve 360 credits for the BA Honours Animation award.

Levels and modules are designed thematically to focus learning outcomes against the School guidelines.

### **Year 1 [Level 4]**

#### *Understanding Animation - 100cp*

Understanding Animation will be your main studio based module in the first year, utilizing research by practice to investigate the evolution of animation as a creative form.

Initially you will explore how image sequences make animation, how story boards and scene progression help the audience believe in animated characters. You will begin your discovery by investigating a range of simple

techniques establishing how we open a dialogue with the audience.

Developing further you will explore a range of more complex animation tools including cameras and software, seeing how materials are designed for movement and how initial concepts are developed into production characters.

You will look at movement and movement theory, evolving your own ideas of how Disney's 12 principles have evolved in the digital age and when and when not to use.

As an essential theme running through all our explorations you will be looking at script writing and character development for animation. You will consider film language and cinematography and how these are developed through story boards within animation production. Alongside the scripting aspect you will also explore the recording of audio, both foley and dialogue.

#### *Animation Studies 1 - 20cp*

The Animation studies module that runs alongside your main studio module will explore the context of modern animation looking at its historical derivation and its place within film studies in general. You will explore animations relationship with its audience and how communication and story take place.

### **Year2 [Level 5]**

#### *Animation Studio - 100cp*

As year 2 begins you will start to investigate the character, looking at the building blocks that make up a fictional persona both as visual designs and under the skin, psychologically and technically. You will start to explore body mechanics and specific character traits, developing both critical and technical skills.

Building the notion of the character you will continue your investigation looking at interaction, action and reaction; considering the motivation behind movement. Supporting this exploration will be an ever deepening consideration of the animation studio work flow and the professional production process, allowing for a greater complexity in the responses to project briefs.

As you develop, team working becomes more important and the studio environment will come in to greater focus. Working to commercial briefs set by 'live clients', pitching and presenting; you will work to develop your groups' collaborative skills, with the aim of communicating specific messages to the audience. Examining the roles and processes that take place in the studio environment will help develop the understanding of the planning and producing that goes into the development of an animation across a team and how specific rolls combine to produce finished work.

#### *Animation Studies 2: 20cp*

Throughout the second year, supporting the exploration within Animation Studio, you will explore the nature of narrative within and surrounding animation and you will look at the notion of graphical storytelling and its relationship to animation. Particular attention will be placed on the frame as a window on the story and how controlling that window supports narrative. You will explore more of the context of contemporary animation and the

audience that it communicates with.

### **Year 3 [Level 6]**

*Thesis film: 120cp*

The focus of the final year is developing a substantial portfolio surrounding the production of an Animated Thesis Film. Working through the full development process from initial concept research, pitch, script, storyboard, animatic, full animation production then onto post production rendering and final output. The module is targeted on developing the authorial voice within the animated form, looking at a broad range of narrative and visual styles to aid the evolution of an original piece of visual story telling. Supported by a critical document that frames the thesis film, an illustrated written piece should be delivered that explores the cultural and conceptual background of the major animated work, exploring character and meaning, story and message; tracing its development from initial concept research to audience reception. This substantial output will be aimed at submission to animation festivals and competitions, raising exposure and developing reputation across the professional animation community.

#### **11. Admission to the course**

##### **Entry requirements**

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, you will also be assigned a personal tutor who will meet with you on a regular basis. These sessions are to support you with both academic and pastoral matters. You might also discuss other issues including ways in which you might continue to develop your general skills and preparing ahead for your next career steps.

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 Student's Union organise social events in 'welcome week' that will encourage you to meet people from the wider NTU community.

The Undergraduate Student Handbook (available on NOW) contains details of all the support available to you. Should there be 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.

The University recognises that there may be times when a student's performance in an assessment is adversely affected by circumstances beyond their control, this is called an Exceptional Circumstance. You can notify us of an Exceptional Circumstance at any time during the academic year through the University's Notification of Exceptional Circumstance

Procedure (NEC) which can be found within the Academic Appeals section of the University's Student Handbook.

If you have predefined individual requirements (for example, specific learning difficulties such as dyslexia, ongoing physical or sensory impairments, medical or mental health conditions) you should alert your course team to these at an early stage and you will normally be expected to consult with Student Support Services to agree a 'Statement of Access' plan.

NTU's Online Workspace (NOW) is used across all modules on your course and allows key information to be accessed and shared within modules. 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 (formative) and at the end of the module (summative) when you will receive written feedback and an indicative grade, confirmed by the Board of Examiners. 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.

Specialist international student support provided by the University has both appointment and drop-in services addressing academic and financial concerns, issues relating to visas and immigration, employment law etc. Language and academic support is also provided by the School for both international and recommended home students who require additional study support.

Support for student's cultural and creative development includes course teams organising and accompanying students on optional overseas visits. Such visits are an optional enhancement to the course and not essential to progress. Support is given to students not attending these trips in the form of alternative suggestions of excursions within the UK.

### **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. Live projects and opportunities to visit companies and trade fairs are an important part of the curriculum and this together with support from subject specialist staff and the Art & Design Employability Team will prepare you well for your future.

Employability is a key element of most compulsory modules and the content of the modules are designed to prepare you for work in the digital media field. During the course students are engaged with specific animation / art and design technologies relevant to the field such as Adobe Photoshop / After Effects. Autodesk Maya, Mudbox, Motion Builder, Matchmover, TV Paint and Dragon Frame.

Possible careers range from feature film and televisual content, heritage interpretation, advertising, games production, medical simulation through to cloth and garment simulation. Employment is very diverse but can be broadly defined as animated digital design and content generation-related employment. You will also develop transferable skills for alternative careers in teaching, media and freelance design. You may also wish to undertake

specialised postgraduate study in animation or a related subject.

One of the course's key aims is to expose students to current practice in the industry in terms of enhancing and accelerating longer-term career prospects and students are actively encouraged to undertake work experience. This usually occurs during vacations, but where appropriate the course can accommodate a flexible learning approach where a short work experience of 2 to 3 weeks can occur in line with School policies.

The Art & Design Employability Team can offer a variety of activities to support you in preparing for your future. As part of the curriculum you will meet someone from the team as they deliver group sessions and lectures about 'employability employability-related' themes'. This often covers CV building, job hunting and applications, preparing for interviews and even building your personal brand. They can also offer support in finding work experience and set up events where prospective employers can come into NTU so that you can talk to them in person about future opportunities.

#### **14. Course standards and quality**

We would like you to contribute to the continuing development of this course and 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 each of your years of study. 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 an evaluative document entitled the Course Standards and Quality Report (CSQR) which is received at School level and contains an action plan to ensure that the course continues to reflect and develop its curriculum to remain current.

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 Nottingham Trent Universities Quality Handbook available at [www.ntu.ac.uk/adq](http://www.ntu.ac.uk/adq)

#### **16. Additional Information**

Collaborative partner(s):  
Course referenced to national QAA

None  
Quality Assurance Agency's



Benchmark Statements:

benchmark statements for subjects  
in Art and Design 2008  
Communication, media, film  
and cultural studies 2008  
Nottingham Trent University

Course recognised by:

Date this course specification approved:

Key features of the course:

- Develops strong links with industry through an emphasis on the curriculum containing 'live project' briefs
- A broad-based curriculum that allows students to explore and experience the full range of disciplines within the subject of animation
- It encourages students to experiment, take risks and innovate
- It focuses on ideas, individuality and professionalism to ensure that graduates are ready for the industry
- It offers students the opportunity to work collaboratively with their peers both formally and informally