

Course Specification

Course Summary Information		
1	Course Title	BA (Hons) Visual Effects with Foundation Year
2	Course Code	US1517F
3	Awarding Institution	Birmingham City University
4	Teaching Institution(s) (if different from point 3)	
5	Professional Statutory or Regulatory Body (PSRB) accreditation (if applicable)	

6	Course Description
	<p>BA (Hons) Visual Effects with Foundation Year</p> <p>The Foundation Year will develop your creative knowledge and academic skills so that you feel confident and ready to start the first year of the degree programme.</p> <p>You will be welcomed into a friendly, lively and energetic environment at Margaret Street, just a short walk from City Centre Campus. Here you will have access to a range of creative studios, technology and software to expand your knowledge of practical skills, creative exploration and conceptual thinking.</p> <p>You'll be supported by dedicated foundation tutors, experienced technicians and the degree course team to prepare you for progression.</p> <p>There will be a range of opportunities to work on group and individual projects, to build your confidence, collaboration skills and identify your role as a developing practitioner.</p> <p>The two first semester modules will form the building blocks for future work and will explore core principles of creative practice focussing on the development of technical confidence, study skills and productivity.</p> <p>The two final semester modules will encourage a positive integration between research and practice, challenging decision making and technical competency.</p> <p>This semester is designed to empower you with independent learning skills appropriate for your future BA studies.</p> <p>On successful completion of the Foundation Year, you will have the flexibility to continue to the BA Visual Effects degree programme, or an alternative appropriate degree, if you discover that a new area is preferred during the foundation year. Our foundation year tutors will have conversations with you about next steps throughout the year.</p> <p>BA (Hons) Visual Effects degree</p> <p>After you successfully complete the foundation year, you will have the option to progress onto the first year of the BA (Hons) Visual Effects degree, based at City Centre Campus, Our BA (Hons) Visual Effects is where creativity meets technology (STEAM). It will give you the skills to unleash your true mix of creative and technical abilities. You could go on to work on top level productions for a range of industries, including TV, film, games, advertising, architecture, education and more.</p>

Visual Effects is an ever expanding multi-billion-pound industry in the UK and globally, with job opportunities in high demand. As demand grows for visual effects in Film, TV and Games, the demand also grows for skilled professionals who can bring these to life.

On this course, you will develop technical, creative and production skills to prepare you for a range of careers. You will learn a variety of disciplines from modelling, rigging, animation, dynamics to lighting, rendering and compositing, there is so much for you to explore. You will learn using state-of-the-art facilities and software including a Vicon Motion Capture studio, high-specification computers, industry standard software such as Maya, Nuke and Houdini and one of the largest fixed green screen studios in the UK.

You will be taught by a range of experienced staff, with a breadth of knowledge across both visual effects and the larger area of computer graphics. This includes staff with industry experience, and staff who work and innovate alongside industry in a variety of ways.

What's covered in the course?

This course has been developed alongside the visual effects industry to meet the needs of employers, so that you leave with the skills needed to secure a great career.

You will learn all aspects of visual effects production including shooting video, computer modelling, animation, matchmoving, motion capture and compositing. You will use these skills to produce digital elements such as creatures and environments, then combine them with live action video to produce convincing visual effects shots. Along with the visual elements you produce, you will develop problem solving and critical thinking skills while building your unique fusion of creative and technical abilities that are desired by industry.

On the BA (Hons) Visual Effects course you will learn technical and creative skills underpinned by knowledge of fundamental concepts while using industry tools and best practice.

During the course, you will do a mixture of 'hands on' productions and technical investigations, which will teach you the practice, process, craft and technology of visual effects. These activities will help you become a proactive learner able to explore knowledge, implement best practice and critically evaluate the results of your work.

Aligning with the industry practice of collaboration, you will get the opportunity to work with students from related disciplines such as animation, games and film. This will allow you to broaden your horizons and help you understand how your visual effects and computer graphics skills can fit into other existing and emerging industries.

7	Course Awards		
7a	Name of Final Award	Level	Credits Awarded
	Bachelor of Arts with Honours Visual Effects	6	360
	Bachelor of Arts with Honours Visual Effects with Professional Placement Year	6	480
7b	Exit Awards and Credits Awarded		
	BA(Hons) Visual Effects - Pass & Progression to Level 4	3	120
	Certificate of Higher Education Visual Effects	4	120
	Diploma of Higher Education Visual Effects	5	240
	Bachelor of Arts Visual Effects	6	300

8	Variation from the University Regulations
	<i>This should reference section 5 above where variations from the University Regulations have been approved as a result of PSRB accreditation (e.g. compensation not permitted in specific modules etc.)</i>

9	Delivery Patterns			
	Mode(s) of Study	Location(s) of Study	Duration of Study	Code(s)
	Full Time with Foundation Year	City Centre (Margaret Street)	4 years	US1517F
	Full Time	City Centre	3 years	US1517
	Full time with Professional Placement Year	City Centre	4 years	US1518

10	Entry Requirements
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The admission requirements for this course are stated on the course page of the BCU website at <https://www.bcu.ac.uk/>, or may be found by searching for the course entry profile located on the UCAS website.

11 Course Aims	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To provide students with a comprehensive understanding of visual effects, blending a mix of art principles with cutting-edge digital tools and techniques. • To equip students with the practical and theoretical knowledge and skills that are required to succeed within the film, games and animation industries with a focus on technical artistry. • To foster full developed understanding of collaborative and interdisciplinary working and communication. • To develop critical thinking and problem-solving skills allowing students to solve complex artistic and technical challenges for visual effects work. • To prepare students for the ever-changing demands of the visual effects industry, ensuring they remain proactive, adaptable and professional. • To create a full portfolio of work that demonstrates a high level of skill and creativity, enhancing employability and industry readiness.

12 Course Learning Outcomes	
Knowledge and Understanding	
1	Understand the fundamental principles of visual effects including the integration of art and technology.
2	Apply appropriate professional production tools for the ideation, realisation, resolution and presentation of work.
3	Understand the pipeline and workflow processes in visual effects from an art and technical perspective.
4	Apply interdisciplinary approaches to visual effects practice.
5	Position yourself as a professional within the creative industries.
Skills and Other Attributes	
1	Demonstrate proficiency in using industry-standard software and tools and utilising a fusion of creative and technical skills to produce 3D models, film visual effects and computer animations, incorporating realistic movement, lighting and textures.
2	Design and implement bespoke approaches and solutions, to producing visual effect work.
3	Be organised and able to plan and manage resources, time and activities effectively
4	Critically evaluate and reflect on their own work and the methods used, then independently develop their knowledge and skills in response.
5	Communicate verbally and visually, and present complex ideas clearly and succinctly, to both specialist and non-specialist audiences.
6	Work collaboratively as part of an effective team, including confidence, critical self-awareness, listening, teamwork, decision making, negotiation and evaluation

13 Level Learning Outcomes	
Upon completion of Level 3 students will be able to:	
1	Critique layout and strategies of documentation that support the progression of ideas.
2	Employ experimentation in the development of practice-based work.
3	Independently source a range of contexts and global references that inform practical work.

4	Develop ideas in response to critical decision making.
5	Self-initiate and sustain a reflective creative practice
6	Establish skills in the presentation of work and ideas to an appropriate audience.
7	Reflect on the learning experience through written, visual and oral forms of communication.
8	Identify the historical and future contexts of the chosen subject area.
9	Recognise how creative risk-taking, problem solving, and technical exploration inform creative understanding.
10	Recognise equality, diversity, and inclusivity through participation in interdisciplinary group projects.
<i>Upon completion of Level 4 / the Certificate of Higher Education, students will be able to:</i>	
Knowledge and understanding	
1	Form an understanding of the relationship between visual art, animation, and film with digital mediums
2	Use research methods to gather and distil material relevant for the development of ideas and relate them to visual effects contexts
3	Apply the basic principles of visual effects production to practical work
4	Reflect on developing ideas and make appropriate technical and conceptual adaptations to emerging work
5	Engage in critical discussion and communicate in verbal, visual, and written form
Skills and Attributes	
6	Acquire basic technical skills in visual effects production tools and processes
7	Visualise ideas as a form of communication and articulation
8	Critique own work and the work of others, identifying intention, strengths, and weaknesses.
9	Collaborate on group work employing key interpersonal and communication skills
10	Plan practical activity using pipelines and asset organisation
<i>Upon completion of Level 5 / the Diploma of Higher Education, students will be able to:</i>	
Knowledge and understanding	
1	Apply further theories, principles, and concepts to the practical development of visual effects
2	Develop the use of visual effects to articulate and communicate visual ideas
3	Conceptually analyse a range of approach and practice to inform and substantiate ideas and solutions
4	Work strategically and effectively in interdisciplinary and collaborative teams
Skills and Attributes	

5	Research, analyse and interpret context and methodologies, and apply findings to further develop imaginative approaches to visual effects practice
6	Organise and establish self-directed study and group activity, managing timelines and resourcing
7	Work collaboratively as part of a team, developing confidence, critical self-awareness, listening, teamwork, decision-making, negotiation, and evaluation
8	Communicate effectively, and present further developed ideas
Upon completion of 60 credits at Level 6 / the Bachelors Degree, students will be able to:	
Knowledge and understanding	
1	Effectively demonstrate professional visual effects production principles and values
2	Critically evaluate and discuss the appropriateness of different methodologies and approaches
3	Demonstrate a depth of understanding of a professional visual effects practice
Skills and Attributes	
4	Employ a high level of competency in the use of digital art and visual effects tools
5	Be flexible, resourceful, and resilient, and adapt a problem-solving mindset to fit changing or unforeseen circumstances
6	Communicate verbally and visually and present complex ideas clearly and succinctly to both specialist and non-specialist audiences
7	Construct complex problem-solving skills and processes using research, experimentation, and reflection to identify relevant opportunities, purposes, and solutions

14	Course Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy
	<p>Teaching and Learning Strategies</p> <p>The learning and teaching strategy for the BA (Hons) Visual Effects course is designed to provide a balanced mix of lectures, practical sessions and collaborations, emphasising the application of theory to real-world practicalities. The course is built on three pillars. Pillar 1, the core skills of a visual effects artist. Pillar 2, the teaching of industry standard software. Pillar 3, the teaching of production management and pipeline processes. The teaching approach on the course evolves from initial structured, guided learning to the students becoming more independent, research-oriented learners, reflecting a decrease in scheduled teaching and an increase in directed and private study. This progression is intentional and aims to develop the student's ability to work independently and apply their knowledge and skills in complex scenarios, aligning with the expectations of a progressively independent learner. We aim to mirror industry approaches, processes and methodologies and this underpins the course philosophy of learning by doing. The teaching methods are chosen to reflect the dynamic and ever-changing nature of the visual effects industry across, film, games and animation sectors, ensuring that students are well-prepared for a variety of roles and challenges that they may face in their careers.</p>

Alongside the core teaching, the course also promotes the development of networks within the local, national and international visual effects, film, games and animation industries. This aligns to the development of their portfolios and showreels to gain employment within these industries, as well as developing collaborative opportunities within these networks.

The BA (Hons) Visual Effects course delivers a compelling curriculum that emphasises the skills and processes that are embedded within the industries of film, games and animation. Methods of teaching and learning include:

- Lectures and seminars – provide theoretical foundations, introduce concepts and facilitate discussions and critical analysis.
- Workshops, practical sessions and lab work – offer hands-on experience with software, software tools, technologies and skills.
- Group projects and collaborations – offer interdisciplinary approaches, the exchange of ideas and perspectives and foster teamworking which is vital to the industry.
- Guest lectures and industry involvement – offers insights into the industries trends, pipelines and practices, facilitates engagement with professionals and industry experts.
- Self-directed learning – encourages independent research and exploration along with reflective practice.

Range of Assessments

The assessments are how the students will experience the course content. There will be a diverse variety of different assessments which are tied into the course philosophy, the learning outcomes and the content taught.

This may include but is not limited to:

- Individual coursework
- Group projects / collaborations
- Presentations / VIVAs
- Reflective pieces and portfolios

These are all designed to comprehensively evaluate the students' knowledge and skills. We offer a balanced spread throughout the academic year to avoid overwhelming students. Formative assessments, such as peer reviews, ongoing monitoring provide ongoing feedback, fostering a deeper understanding and improvement.

A key principle the course team instil in students is "We don't want the first time we see your work to be when you hand it in." Formative assessment opportunities are scheduled into the modules to ensure that students have the appropriate support structure in place for personal development and academic achievement. Students are expected to come prepared with work ready for these formative learning opportunities. If students do not do this, they miss the opportunity to work in partnership with the course team.

The BA (Hons) Visual Effects course uses both formative and summative feedback, with an understanding that both forms of assessment play a key role in informing ongoing learning. These forms of feedback are essential to the studio learning experience which promotes students to become active participants in their own development.

Feedback mechanisms within the course include:

- Formative assessment points
- One-on-one formative tutorials
- Peer-review

- Summative assessment feed-forward
- Written (and/or Audio/Video) feedback

Expectations from the students:

- Active participation in all learning activities
- Engagement with peer feedback and collaborative projects
- Self-directed research and exploration to complement structured learning
- Commitment to continuous improvement and receptiveness to feedback

15	Course Requirements																																																						
12a	<p>Level 3:</p> <p><i>In order to complete this course a student must successfully complete all the following CORE modules (totalling 120 credits):</i></p> <table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <thead> <tr> <th style="background-color: #ffffcc;">Module Code</th> <th style="background-color: #ffffcc;">Module Name</th> <th style="background-color: #ffffcc;">Credit Value</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>VIS3004</td> <td>Understanding Practice</td> <td>20</td> </tr> <tr> <td>VIS3001</td> <td>Creative Development and Production</td> <td>40</td> </tr> <tr> <td>VIS3002</td> <td>Perspectives on Practice</td> <td>20</td> </tr> <tr> <td>VIS3003</td> <td>Creative Realisation</td> <td>40</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p>Level 4:</p> <p><i>In order to complete this course a student must successfully complete all the following CORE modules (totalling 120 credits):</i></p> <table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <thead> <tr> <th style="background-color: #ffffcc;">Module Code</th> <th style="background-color: #ffffcc;">Module Name</th> <th style="background-color: #ffffcc;">Credit Value</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>CMP4XXX</td> <td>Modelling</td> <td>20</td> </tr> <tr> <td>GFA4001</td> <td>Film Primer</td> <td>20</td> </tr> <tr> <td>DIG4171</td> <td>Matchmoving</td> <td>20</td> </tr> <tr> <td>DIG4174</td> <td>Texture and Look Development</td> <td>20</td> </tr> <tr> <td>GFA4004</td> <td>3D Animation Production</td> <td>40</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p>Level 5:</p> <p><i>In order to complete this course a student must successfully complete all the following CORE modules (totalling 120 credits):</i></p> <table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <thead> <tr> <th style="background-color: #ffffcc;">Module Code</th> <th style="background-color: #ffffcc;">Module Name</th> <th style="background-color: #ffffcc;">Credit Value</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>CMP5XXX</td> <td>Procedural Modelling</td> <td>20</td> </tr> <tr> <td>MED5198</td> <td>3D Character Production</td> <td>40</td> </tr> <tr> <td>DIG5132</td> <td>Compositing</td> <td>20</td> </tr> <tr> <td>DIG5133</td> <td>Dynamic Effects and Simulations</td> <td>20</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p><i>In order to complete this course a student must successfully complete at least 20 credits from the following indicative list of OPTIONAL modules:</i></p> <table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tbody> <tr> <td style="background-color: #ffffcc;">DIG5116 / ADM5006</td> <td style="background-color: #ffffcc;">Collaborative Practice (optional)</td> <td style="background-color: #ffffcc;">20</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="background-color: #ffffcc;">ADM5001</td> <td style="background-color: #ffffcc;">Live Project (optional)</td> <td style="background-color: #ffffcc;">20</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Module Code	Module Name	Credit Value	VIS3004	Understanding Practice	20	VIS3001	Creative Development and Production	40	VIS3002	Perspectives on Practice	20	VIS3003	Creative Realisation	40	Module Code	Module Name	Credit Value	CMP4XXX	Modelling	20	GFA4001	Film Primer	20	DIG4171	Matchmoving	20	DIG4174	Texture and Look Development	20	GFA4004	3D Animation Production	40	Module Code	Module Name	Credit Value	CMP5XXX	Procedural Modelling	20	MED5198	3D Character Production	40	DIG5132	Compositing	20	DIG5133	Dynamic Effects and Simulations	20	DIG5116 / ADM5006	Collaborative Practice (optional)	20	ADM5001	Live Project (optional)	20
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Professional Placement Year (optional)

In order to qualify for the award of Bachelor of Arts with Honours Visual Effects with Professional Placement Year, a student must successfully complete all of the Level 6 modules listed below as well as the following Level 5 module:

Module Code	Module Name	Credit Value
PPY5004	Professional Placement	120

Level 6:

In order to complete this course a student must successfully complete all the following CORE modules (totalling 120 credits):

Module Code	Module Name	Credit Value
CMP6XXX	Virtual Production	20
MED6200	Professional Practice	40
GFA6015	Final Major Project	60

15b Structure Diagram

Please note list of optional modules is indicative only. Students' choice will not be guaranteed for optional modules but a fair and transparent process will be adopted and shared with students.

Level 3

SEMESTER ONE	SEMESTER TWO
Understanding Practice (20 Credits – core)	Perspective on Practice (20 credits – core)
Creative Development & Production (40 credits – core)	Creative Realisation (40 credits – core)

Level 4

Semester 1	Semester 2
M1 Matchmoving (20 credit) (Core)	M4 Texture and Look Development (20 credit) (Core)
M2 Film Primer (20 credit) (Core)	M5 3D Animation Production (40 credit) (Core)
M3 Modelling (20 credit) (Core)	

Level 5

Semester 1	Semester 2
M6 Procedural Modelling (20 credit) (Core)	Optional M8 Collaborative Practice (20 credit) OR Live Project (20 credits)
	M9 Dynamic Effects and Simulations (20 credit) (Core)
M7 3D Character Production (40 credit) (Core)	M9 Compositing (20 credit) (Core)

Professional Placement Year (optional)

Optional Professional Placement Year (120 credits)
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Level 6

Semester 1	Semester 2
M10 Virtual Production (20 credit) (Core)	M12 Final Major Project (60 credit) (Core)
M11 Professional Practice (40 credit) (Core)	

16 Overall Student Workload and Balance of Assessment

Overall student *workload* consists of class contact hours, independent learning and assessment activity, with each credit taken equating to a total study time of around 10 hours. While actual contact hours may depend on the optional modules selected, the following information gives an indication of how much time students will need to allocate to different activities at each level of the course.

- *Scheduled Learning* includes lectures, practical classes and workshops, contact time specified in timetable
- *Directed Learning* includes placements, work-based learning, external visits, on-line activity, Graduate+, peer learning
- *Private Study* includes preparation for exams

The *balance of assessment* by mode of assessment (e.g. coursework, exam and in-person) depends to some extent on the optional modules chosen by students. The approximate percentage of the course assessed by coursework, exam and in-person is shown below.

Level 3

Workload

30% time spent in timetabled teaching and learning activity

Activity	Number of Hours
Scheduled Learning	360
Directed Learning	600
Private Study	240
Total Hours	1200

Balance of Assessment

Assessment Mode	Percentage
Coursework	75%
Exam	0%
In-Person	25%

Level 4

Workload

22% time spent in timetabled teaching and learning activity

Activity	Number of Hours
Scheduled Learning	258
Directed Learning	518
Private Study	424
Total Hours	1200

Balance of Assessment

Assessment Mode	Percentage
Coursework	90%

Exam	0%
In-Person	0%

Level 5

Workload

24% time spent in timetabled teaching and learning activity

Activity	Number of Hours
Scheduled Learning	284-294
Directed Learning	466-476
Private Study	440
Total Hours	1200

Balance of Assessment

Assessment Mode	Percentage
Coursework	72-83%
Exam	0%
In-Person	17-28%

Level 6

Workload

18% time spent in timetabled teaching and learning activity

Activity	Number of Hours
Scheduled Learning	134-208
Directed Learning	696-770
Private Study	296
Total Hours	1200

Balance of Assessment

Assessment Mode	Percentage
Coursework	92%
Exam	0%
In-Person	8%