

## Programme Specification Definitive Document

### 1. Basic Information

<b>1.1 Awarding Institution:</b>	Plymouth Marjon University
<b>1.2 Teaching Institution:</b>	Plymouth Marjon University
<b>1.3 Locus of Delivery:</b>	Plymouth Marjon University
<b>1.4 Final Award Title:</b>	BA (Hons)
<b>1.5 FHEQ Level:</b>	4, 5 and 6
<b>1.6 Programme Title:</b>	Acting
<b>1.7 Mode and Duration of Study:</b>	Full Time – 3 years Part Time – N/A
<b>1.8 School:</b>	Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences
<b>1.9 HECoS Code:</b>	100067
<b>1.10 Collaborative Provision Arrangement:</b>	None
<b>1.11 UCAS Code(s):</b>	W410
<b>1.12 Admission Criteria:</b>	Normal University entrance criteria apply (please refer to the website for further details). Applicants will be expected to pass an audition before being offered a place International students will be expected to meet the English language requirements of IELTS 6.0 or equivalent.
<b>1.13 Accrediting Professional Body/PSRB:</b>	N/A
<b>1.14 QAA Subject Benchmarking Group(s):</b>	Dance, Drama and Performance (2015)
<b>1.15 Other External Points of Reference:</b>	Framework for Higher Education Qualifications (FHEQ); UK Professional Standards Framework
<b>1.16 Language of Study (for learning, teaching and assessment):</b>	English
<b>1.17 Work-Based Learning Arrangements:</b>	N/A
<b>1.18 Foundation Degree Progression Routes:</b>	N/A
<b>1.19 Arrangements for Distance Learning:</b>	N/A
<b>1.20 Original Date of Production:</b>	2019
<b>1.21 Date of Commencement:</b>	1 <sup>st</sup> September 2019
<b>1.22 Review Date:</b>	By 31 <sup>st</sup> August 2025

### 2. Programme Outline

The programme offers actor training within a university setting. Its aim is to prepare students for work in the theatre industry whilst also gaining skills in TV, film and radio. The acting programme

is branded under The Actor's Wheel banner and each cohort has a sense of identity within that company.

This degree combines skills development with the knowledge and understanding that comes from exploring the actor-as-theatre-maker. This combination of learning and teaching styles makes the course varied, industry-specific and reflects the demands of the working world. Students are given support beyond module learning in voice and speech, stage movement, dance, movement and singing to ensure that they become versatile actors who are able to meet the demands of the industry. The course is also characterised by the many opportunities to perform: each academic year culminates with a full-length production that is directed and designed by industry professionals. Regular showcase opportunities that incorporate industry conventions and practices are also offered as work-in-progress, throughout other modules. Students benefit from a rich mix of actor-specific training and graduate with an intellectual and practical knowledge and understanding of the actor's craft, alongside a working CV and the tools necessary to launch an acting career.

## **2.1 Integrating Sustainability into the Curriculum**

The programme team is responsible for embedding sustainability into the curriculum. The overarching aim is to empower students to become global citizens while also increasing their employability. We implement this through adherence to the broad term of sustainability which outlines respect for human rights, equality, social and economic justice, intergenerational responsibilities, ethics and cultural diversity and transferrable skills. The programme team works alongside other University-wide agendas, such as student engagement, to embed these concepts more widely. The curriculum has been thoughtfully aligned and made relevant to ensure these principles are being implemented. As with all performing arts-based programmes, the opportunities to perform in public help to build confidence, strengthen oral skills and develop the ability to work within groups with a common aim or goal.

## **3. Distinctive Features**

Students benefit from being part of productions directed by industry professionals and performed in the public domain under the company name 'The Actor's Wheel'. This 'company model' approach to the programme is designed to reflect the working world and develop the student's employability skills in relation to the industry they are studying. The company model also offers a rich opportunity to develop transferrable and valuable communication skills, confident presentation and positive teamwork and collaboration. The students have a large number of performance opportunities throughout the three-year degree from showcases and rehearsed readings to full scale productions directed and designed by industry professionals.

## **4. Programme Aims**

The BA (Hons) Acting programme trains students for future careers as actors and/or theatre makers. This programme provides intensive skills training, developing students' acting and devising ability to a standard that will enable them to enter directly into the industry, whilst enhancing critical and creative thinking skills. The degree is designed to foster and facilitate the creative, interpretative, intellectual and practical skills demanded within the industry today, training performers to a high degree of technical facility and flexibility so that they possess great individuality and imagination.

The programme aims to produce performers who are self-sufficient, have an ability to create and assess their own work, facilitate workshops, and who are able to adapt their performance with a high degree of skill to meet the demands of a range of performance styles and mediums.

### **General aims:**

- To provide a stimulating, focussed and supportive learning environment in which students can be autonomous over their education.
- To develop and broaden students' capacity for critical thought and intellectual reasoning through praxis, developing their understanding of the interplay between theory and practice.
- To develop the student's ability to take responsibility for the quality of the creative process and output in individual and group contexts.
- To enable students from varied cultural and social backgrounds to fulfil their potential in both intellectual and practical/creative skills.
- To generate a vibrant and creative learning culture in which students are able to work together effectively as company members while responding to audience needs, in order to achieve shared goals.
- To prepare students for employment and/or postgraduate study by equipping them with a diverse range of transferrable practical and research skills including effective communication and digital skills.
- To develop students' knowledge, understanding, reflection, analysis, articulation and ability to learn independently, commensurate with an Honours level award.

**Specific Programme aims:**

- To develop the students' rehearsal, devising, workshop facilitation and performance skills to enable them to enter directly into the industry as actors and theatre makers.
- To develop the students' ability to take responsibility for the quality of the creative process and output in individual and group contexts.
- To provide the opportunity for students to develop specialisms in specific areas of theatre making and the actor's craft.
- To instil an understanding of a range of practical theories, contexts and concepts, which inform the creation of a refined performance.
- To prepare the student for their future career through regular contact with industry professionals, and by providing regular and varied opportunities to perform and work within contexts that authentically replicate industry practice, including touring and performing to public audiences.
- To develop students' understanding and appreciation of current ethical and social issues related to the representation of lives within performance, and current industry practice in relation to these.
- To provide opportunities to participate in collaborative working situations that will develop students' practical skills and the ability to work with others.

## **5. Programme Learning Outcomes**

### **Knowledge & understanding:**

By the end of this programme students should be able to demonstrate:

1. A comprehensive understanding of the processes and various roles that contribute to the creation and production of live and recorded performance.
2. Critical analysis and application of approaches to acting through appreciation of key performance genres and practitioners, their place within the broader historical, social and cultural context and the inter-relationship between theory and practice.
3. A comprehensive understanding of how plays and performance practices reflect and produce cultural differences and change.
4. A comprehensive understanding of, and facility for, the business requirements of working as a freelance actor and theatre maker.

## **Intellectual skills:**

By the end of this programme students should be able to demonstrate:

5. Critical reflection and constructive assessment of their own and their peers' process and performance work.
6. Critical analysis of play texts from key historical periods in terms of psychological, social, political, cultural and economic information and the application of this knowledge to the development of performance work for a given audience.
7. A working process in which theory and practice inform one another, and a comprehensive understanding of how praxis can shape and develop approaches to performance supported by sophisticated and nuanced use of relevant vocabularies in rehearsal, reflection and research.
8. An ability to autonomously analyse and research contemporary and historical performance practices and texts, from different creative and practical perspectives, to inform performance processes and develop own practice.

## **Practical skills:**

By the end of this programme students should be able to demonstrate:

9. A comprehensive knowledge and application of a range of physical and vocal skills in performance with technical control and creative flair in response to a variety of directorial approaches, including self- and peer-direction.
10. Application of sophisticated individual interpretative skills to the creative and sustained communication of character, intention, emotion and narrative in rehearsal and performance.
11. Practical application of the complex interplay between the actors' conscious and subconscious, emotional and intellectual resources supported through critical textual analysis, research and detailed observation to the development and realisation of a wide range of performance work.
12. Independence and self-reliance within the actor's creative process applying knowledge and skills autonomously and sustaining a working ethic and relationships with all working parties appropriate to industry practice.

## **Transferable / key skills:**

By the end of this programme students should be able to demonstrate:

13. Confident, detailed and coherent expression of complex ideas in written, spoken and performance forms, with respect for diverse values and beliefs.
14. The ability to work effectively with advanced organisation, communication and negotiation skills with others within a group, applying creative, reflective and analytical skills flexibly and with confidence to overcome obstacles and successfully complete project goals.
15. The ability to work with complex ideas and justify judgements made through effective use of evidence responding positively and constructively to creative and academic processes.
16. Confident and flexible application of a wide range of digital skills to a variety of academic and practical contexts

## 6. Learning and Teaching Methods

A range of learning and teaching approaches is utilised on this programme to enable flexible, student-centred learning. Considerable emphasis is placed on critical enquiry and dialogue in relation to learning and development through practice and for advanced scholarship. The programme seeks a balance between teaching and learning methods that include working in small seminar groups; lecture inputs; workshops; independent study and individual supervision. As the programme develops there will be increasing emphasis on blended learning via the University Virtual Learning Environment.

The learning and teaching approaches employed through the programme contribute directly to the development of key and transferable skills and professional practice skills. Students are encouraged to develop confidence in using their practice as a site of analysis and to enable discussion and enhance their own and others' learning. Practice-based learning is central to the programme and this is integrated into the programme with opportunities to apply those skills within live briefs for external clients.

Lecturers are central to students' learning and professional development where they assist the students' task of relating and integrating theory and practice. In addition to the module leader, students are assigned a Personal Development Tutor who will provide tutorial support. The lecturer's role contributes to ensuring a holistic approach to professional development supported by module specific support and learning resources. Throughout the programme students are encouraged to identify and engage in independent reading to supplement and consolidate teaching and learning and to broaden individual knowledge and understanding of their subject area/s. University lecturers play a significant role in supporting this dimension of the learning experience.

In line with the University Learning and Teaching Strategy, the teaching team is committed to engaging with and developing further new approaches to teaching and learning, including the full and active use of the Virtual Learning Environment (VLE), the use of open learning resources and audio capture of lectures where appropriate.

<b>Method</b>	<b>Description</b>
<b>Critical Reflection</b>	Students engage in critical reflective practice and activities to highlight areas of academic, personal and professional strength and weakness.
<b>Directed Study and Reading</b>	Time set aside by the teacher for learners to study a particular subject.
<b>Group Discussions</b>	Company and group discussions to analyse aspects of the rehearsal process and gauge responses to specific stimuli and/or presentation of work in progress to peers and/or staff/professionals in order to gain constructive criticism to enable development.
<b>Group Work</b>	Students work in small groups to achieve a goal or carry out a task. There is usually a feedback session, or a chance to disseminate the results within the larger module group. It can include exercises, activities, debates, and discussion.
<b>Guest Lecturers</b>	Using specialists from the field to students. Typically refers to when a guest speaker explains or shows some content to a learning audience; similar to a lecture.

<b>Independent Study</b>	Self-directed study to fulfil a range of tasks. Commonly used for additional rehearsals for productions.
<b>Lectures</b>	Subject introduced and delivered by the teacher in a specific time which transmits information.
<b>Rehearsals</b>	Sessions focused on the development of a text-based, non-text based and/or devised production.
<b>Seminars</b>	A group session following up a topic that has already been introduced on the course, often within a lecture; it can involve reading of a paper or observing a performance followed by discussion.

## 6.1 Learning Enhancement

Students have the opportunity to explore performance opportunities within the public arena from an early stage in the programme. They are exposed to a range of theatre and acting styles to allow them to develop a specialism or interest in a particular form that can be nurtured through their Professional Profile Module, The Festival Performer and their research.

## 6.2 e-Learning

The programme team recognises the increasing contribution that digital resources make to the learning experiences of students. The team utilises the virtual learning environment to provide access to resources, discussion groups and other learning materials, such as audio files, learning objects, lecture capture and performance analysis technology. The programme will also have a Twitter feed and Facebook page that encourages collaborations within schools and professional organisations and the development of professional networks. In addition, students have open access to extensive digital and media facilities within the University to support their studies.

## 7. Modes of Assessment

Assessment methods for this programme are designed to reflect industry practice and, as such, have a strong weighting towards the practical project form of assessment. The assessments vary in format in order to effectively link to the learning outcomes. Examples of practical project assignments range from group work to individual practice; from professionally directed to peer-led creative work; from one large project to a collection of short projects and from recorded to live performance projects.

The practical project assignments complement the practice-based pedagogy, research and scholarly activity which underpin the whole degree programme. The processes students follow over the course of such projects require them to engage in academic research and to exercise critical judgement. The academic requirements of the project are clearly outlined in module handbooks, and the assessment criteria incorporate evaluation of the level of academic research and critical reflection that has gone into each practical performance.

The practice-based pedagogical approach to learning will be balanced with more conventional written forms of assessment as appropriate. These forms of assessment will gauge students' level of knowledge, understanding, analytical, critical and contextual skills.

The assessment methods of each module are designed to assess achievement of the module and programme learning outcomes. Some are weighted heavily on the end product while, importantly, others place particular emphasis on the elements of process and rehearsal, where continuous assessment is undertaken. Module learning outcomes are explicitly stated in the module descriptors and module guides and are incorporated into assignment-marking criteria in order to guide the student along in their cumulative learning. The nature of the assessments develops as the student progresses through the programme - they are less prescriptive in the

later stages in order to encourage and enable student autonomy, independent thought and creative practice. The latter stages have a greater focus on the skills required to develop their own work, be pro-active in gaining employment or places on programmes of further study.

<b>Method</b>	<b>Description</b>
<b>Essay</b>	A critical written response to a question or title related to an aspect of live or pre-recorded performance.
<b>Individual Viva</b>	A verbal examination in which students provide a critical reflection of their work in response to questions.
<b>Presentation</b>	Research and development, methodologies and critical reflections and analyses presented using oral communication skills.
<b>Portfolio</b>	A collection of assessments covering the learning outcomes of the module, which usually takes several different forms such as a performance, report, evaluation, presentation, tasks utilising various media formats.
<b>Practical Project</b>	Creative practical work, undertaken either in groups or individually. This enables students to apply skills in a range of performance disciplines (signing, music, acting, dancing) either singly or in combination through the creative processes involved in live or recorded performance.
<b>Project Proposal</b>	A precise and coherent summary of a proposed practical project setting out the topic to be addressed, the format of the project, participants and ethical procedures to be followed.
<b>Reflective Journal</b>	A critical account of the work undertaken usually accompanying a Practical Project, which includes personal and group reflection. It will involve explanation, analyses and interpretation of processes and practices under consideration.
<b>Research Project</b>	Detailed individual research or a sustained practical project, which is contextually grounded. All independent projects are negotiated with and supervised by an appropriate lecturer.
<b>Research Proposal</b>	A precise and coherent summary of a proposed research project setting out the central issues to be addressed and the ethical procedures to be followed.

## **8. Exemptions to University Regulations**

Due to the nature of the work, anonymous marking is not possible during the presentation and performance assessments and many of the reflective journal and evaluative write-ups refer to character which immediately identifies a student. To ensure parity of marking and transparency of grading decisions, all practical work will be marked by two members of staff using 'blind' marking procedures. Rehearsal processes may be delivered over longer or shorter periods of time through intensive rehearsals or longer development time frames rather than the usual weekly sessions.

As the programme is vocationally focussed, there will be continual input from industry specialists, regional organisations and guest inputs from professional companies. Through this input we will actively encourage industry networking and the acquisition of work experience, which will complement the learning and training acquired through participation in the programme.

## 9. Work-Based Learning/Placement Learning

Students will be immersed within approaches to study that replicate the conditions of the industry. Whilst external work-based learning does not form part of their programme, students have numerous opportunities to produce work through authentic learning within industry-based conditions, including touring to receiving venues.

## 10. Programme Structure

### Full Time

#### Level 4

Module Code	Module Title	Credits	Assessment	Semester/ Term	Compulsory/ Optional	Condonable/ Non- Condonable
<a href="#">ACTC51</a>	Theory and Practice 1	20	80% Coursework 20% Practical	Semester A	Compulsory	Condonable
<a href="#">ACTC52</a>	Craft and Discipline	20	20% Coursework 80% Practical	Semester A	Compulsory	Condonable
<a href="#">ACTC53</a>	Global Theatre Perspectives	20	100% Practical	Semester A	Compulsory	Condonable
<a href="#">ACTC54</a>	Naturalism	20	20% Coursework 80% Practical	Semester B	Compulsory	Condonable
<a href="#">ACTC55</a>	Acting for Media	20	20% Coursework 80% Practical	Semester B	Compulsory	Condonable
<a href="#">ACTC56</a>	Classical Performance	20	20% Coursework 80% Practical	Semester B	Compulsory	Condonable

#### Level 5

Module Code	Module Title	Credits	Assessment	Semester/ Term	Compulsory/ Optional	Condonable/ Non- Condonable
<a href="#">ACTD51</a>	Popular Forms	20	100% Practical	Semester A	Compulsory	Condonable
<a href="#">ACTD52</a>	Theatre for Social Change	20	30% Coursework 70% Practical	Semester A	Compulsory	Condonable
<a href="#">ACTD53</a>	The Actor as Theatre Maker	20	20% Coursework 80% Practical	Semester B	Compulsory	Condonable
<a href="#">ACTD54</a>	Theory and Practice 2	20	100% Coursework	Semester A	Compulsory	Condonable
<a href="#">ACTD55</a>	20 <sup>th</sup> Century Text and Performance	40	30% Coursework 70% Practical	Semester B	Compulsory	Non- Condonable



## Level 6

Module Code	Module Title	Credits	Assessment	Semester/ Term	Compulsory/ Optional	Condonable/ Non- Condonable
<a href="#">ACTH51</a>	The Freelance Artist	20	70% Coursework 30% Practical	Semester A	Compulsory	Condonable
<a href="#">ACTH52</a>	New Writing in Performance	20	30% Coursework 70% Practical	Semester A	Compulsory	Condonable
<a href="#">ACTH53</a>	The Festival Performer	40	30% Coursework 70% Practical	Semester X	Compulsory	Non- Condonable
<a href="#">MUTH01</a>	Directed Production	40	100% Practical	Semester B	Compulsory	Non- Condonable

Key: Semester X = A & B

- A definitive module descriptor is required for each module

The table below shows the various ‘threads’ through the programme. These ‘threads’ provide cohesion and coherence to the programme, so that learning can be developed and built upon in a robust way that makes sense to the students. Links will be forged during learning sessions with content from previous modules, as well as indication of learning on up-coming modules. The ‘threads’ act as a mechanism for students to see how the learning links together in meaningful way and will be made explicit to students throughout the programme.

### Threads Level 4

Module Code	Module Title	Thread
ACTC51	Theory & Practice 1	1, 5
ACTC52	Craft & Discipline	3, 7
ACTC53	Global Theatre Perspectives	4, 5
ACTC54	Naturalism	2, 3, 5, 7
ACTC55	Acting for Media	3, 5, 6
ACTC56	Classical Performance	2, 3, 5, 7

### Threads Level 5

Module Code	Module Title	Thread
ACTD51	Popular Forms	2, 3, 4, 5, 7
ACTD52	Theatre for Social Change	4, 5, 7
ACTD53	The Actor as Theatre Maker	3, 4, 7
ACTD54	Theory & Practice 2	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6
ACTD55	20 <sup>th</sup> Century Text and Performance	2, 3, 5, 7

### Threads Level 6

Module Code	Module Title	Thread
ACTH51	The Freelance Artist	1, 3, 6, 7
ACTH52	New Writing in Performance	2, 3, 5, 7
ACTH54	Festival Performance	3, 4, 5, 7
MUTH01	Directed Production	4, 5, 7

- 1: Critical theory, research perspectives, skills for learning, and employability
- 2: Theatre practitioners and texts covering the 16<sup>th</sup> century – 21<sup>st</sup> century
- 3: Development and application of characterisation and performance skills
- 4: Actor as theatre maker for a variety of contexts
- 5: Social, historical and cultural contexts
- 6: The actor and media performance
- 7: Development of critical reflection skills

## **11. Accrediting Professional Body /Professional Regulatory and Statutory Body (PSRB)**

N/A

## **12. Professional Advisory Group**

N/A

## **13. Academic Progression Opportunities**

Graduates will have the opportunity to pursue postgraduate education, notably Master's and PhD research. Students will be made aware that post graduate progression is available within the context of lifelong learning and relationships with the alumni often result in further study in the future. Performance-based students are actively encouraged to remain part of the Marjon community by utilising rehearsal space, collaborating with undergraduates and sharing performance opportunities.

## **14. Employability and Career Progression Opportunities**

This degree has been designed in consultation with industry professionals. It reflects the changing needs of the performing arts industry and prepares students to enter this highly competitive job market. Flexibility in approaches to work is essential for the modern actor, and this course uniquely combines actor skills training for working in a variety of mediums with approaches to actor as theatre maker in order to nurture graduates who can adapt to a variety of working practices.

All modules are designed to promote future employability, and students will have the opportunity to develop networking skills, entrepreneurship, devising and performance skills as well as a strong understanding of their craft and discipline.

## **15. Support for Students and for Student Learning**

The University recognises the value of the whole student experience within Higher Education and students have full access to the University's facilities for academic and pastoral support and guidance. The Student Support team offers a confidential and comprehensive service to guide and support students through their studies in the following areas:

- Academic Advice
- Academic Skills
- Accommodation
- Disability and Inclusion Advice Service
- Employability and Careers Development
- Finance and Welfare
- Health
- Student Counselling and Well-being
- Student Volunteering

Student support and guidance is further promoted by the following:

- Personal Development Tutor for every student in the University
- Academic tutorial staff, including programme leaders, module leaders and tutors
- Extensive library, and other learning resources, and facilities
- Library and study skills guidance material
- Programme handbooks, and module guides
- The Chaplaincy Centre which is at the heart of the University and is used for social gathering, quiet reflection and prayer
- On-campus Nursery provision

### **Personal Development Tutors**

Every student in the University is allocated a Personal Development Tutor. Tutors assist in evaluating the student's progress and provide appropriate subject advice to support the student's area of study. Tutors will also be aware of guidance services provided by Student Support, the Library, Counsellors, Student Union and IT services.

## **16. Student Feedback Mechanisms**

The programme team seek to develop positive relationships with students through on going and continuous dialogue and regular communication.

Students will be invited to participate in the National Student Survey (NSS). In addition feedback at programme level will be achieved through programme and module evaluation surveys.

## **17. Other Stakeholder Feedback**

Graduates and current students that have been contacted feel positively about the 'company' approach to learning and feel strongly for the need for their own identity as The Actor's Wheel within the suite of performing arts programmes.

Professional external directors and new staff members that have worked across the existing programmes rate the discipline and work ethic of each year group and acknowledge the approach to company discipline that is instilled through teaching and learning in this way. Professional directors and practitioners have offered insightful advice on curriculum design and aligned the student experience and knowledge gained to working practices and equity guidelines.

## **18. Quality and Enhancement Mechanisms**

The quality of the student experience and the standards of the awards are managed and quality assured through the University's regulations policies and procedures. Student achievement and progression is managed through the Module Assessment Boards (MABs) and the Progression and Award Boards (PABs). Programmes are reviewed annually through University annual monitoring processes, including external examiner contributions, and incorporate student feedback mechanisms at both modular and the programme level reported formally through the University's annual monitoring and reporting cycle.



