

Programme change proposals

At York each degree programme has its own, tailored set of distinctive learning outcomes. These won't change, no matter what your location or mode of delivery, and our academics are working hard to ensure your programmes and modules next year continue to inspire and motivate you.

Your health and safety is our number one priority and in light of the Covid-19 pandemic we have needed to make changes to some of your programmes of study for the coming academic year. This document summarises the changes that are proposed.

Programme(s)	Interactive Media BSc Interactive Media BSc with Placement Year
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Summary of Overall Plans

We've spent a great deal of time carefully planning how we can provide you with the highest quality and most enriching learning experience this Autumn, while also ensuring that you and those around you are kept safe in the context of current social distancing requirements. We've also put a lot of thought into how we can ensure that all of you are able to fully engage with the course in the case where you are not able to attend campus for a short or extended period of time due to circumstances and restrictions relating to Covid-19. I'm pleased to be able to share our plans with you now and request that you provide your feedback on them. We genuinely want to know your thoughts about how we intend to run the course in Autumn, so that we can incorporate them into our ongoing planning. Therefore, I strongly encourage you to take the time to read this document in detail and communicate your views to us via the online form.

In the first part of this document, I will provide a summary of our teaching plans for the Autumn term by describing how the main types of activities you participate in across our modules are intended to happen under current restrictions. I'll also provide some information on why we have chosen to configure teaching in these ways.

Lectures: At university lectures normally last one hour and involve a staff member presenting material to a class. Unfortunately, we're presently unable to conduct lectures in person for safety reasons. In the Autumn term, therefore, we plan that lectures will be delivered as downloadable videos. We'll ask you to watch these videos in your own time, highlighting when videos need to be watched so you're prepared for subsequent activities that depend on them like seminars. We understand that watching long videos can be more tiring than seeing a whole lecture in person. For this reason, we'll endeavour to break videos down into more bite-size chunks than one hour. Our lectures are often highly interactive, including elements like questions, quizzes and breakout

discussions. We plan to recreate these interactive elements by asking you to complete active tasks between videos, sometimes in collaboration with other students, and through new peer learning sessions (more info further down).

Computer-based practical classes: A mainstay of Interactive Media teaching is the practical classes in which you develop technical skills such as programming and media asset creation. In these classes, you receive one-on-one help and feedback from staff, who sit next to you and discuss the work you've created as it's shown on your screen. Under current social distancing rules, where we can't be within 1m of you to see your screen, it's impossible to provide this kind of help in the way we normally do safely. However, we think that it's essential to find a way to still provide it because detailed individual feedback is so crucial for learning concepts like programming. For this reason, we're planning that you'll be able to join online video conference sessions, in which you'll receive one to one help and feedback by screen sharing with staff. These sessions will be more focussed than the practicals our students normally experience, with smaller group sizes and a shorter run time. We'll ask you to attempt practical exercises in your own time and then come to the session ready with questions based on the challenges you've faced. This will mean you'll be able to very quickly get the help and support you need from staff, without having to wait your turn in a video conference call amongst a larger group of students. We intend that running these classes in smaller groups will also make it easier for you to discuss your work with other students. In case you do find that you get stuck early on in completing your exercises and need some help before class, there will also be a web discussion forum. This forum will be regularly monitored by staff. These forums will also provide a way to get help in the case where you are unable to attend a video conference session, for reasons such as a poor internet connection.

Peer-learning sessions: Lectures and practicals aren't just a place to learn from staff, but they also present a great opportunity to learn from your peers. We don't want to lose this valuable feature of the learning experience as elements of our lecture and practical teaching are delivered online. For this reason, we plan to introduce a new kind of peer-learning session for this Autumn. In these sessions, you'll take part in activities that help you share and learn from the experiences and perspectives of other students. Many of the activities you'll do in these sessions will be based on those you might have normally done in the interactive stages of lectures, or in sections of practical classes where the lecturer initiates group reflection on a commonly shared challenge. For example, in a peer-learning session you might: work as a group to highlight issues with a piece of code and suggest ways to fix it, share challenges you've faced and discuss their possible resolution with others, or take part in a quiz on your learning to date. These sessions are currently planned to take place in-person and on campus, as we feel they can be very important for building and maintaining a sense of community amongst us all. In order to make these sessions safe in the context of social distancing guidelines, they will be conducted in small groups. We're also planning to run some groups over video conferencing, so you won't miss out in case you're unable to safely attend campus.

Seminars: The current guidelines for social distancing at the University make it difficult to effectively run seminars as we normally would. To keep you safe in teaching rooms, we'll have to ask you to sit in fixed locations at a defined distance from each other, and to face toward the front of the room at all times. This would make the kinds of informal discussions you'd normally have in seminars, in which you often 'break-out' into smaller groups before feeding back to the whole class, very difficult to run effectively. At the same time, we've found that seminar type teaching works really well using online video conferencing tools like Zoom this year. For this reason, we don't feel there is sufficient value added from holding seminars on campus to outweigh the safety

implications. Instead, we plan that seminars will take place online using video conferencing tools in the Autumn. To help you prepare for the most productive discussion, we'll provide additional materials and activities for you to engage with in your own time and a forum where you can discuss these with your peers. This forum will also provide a route to engagement if you are unable to attend a video conference session, such as due to a poor internet connection.

Community-building activities: Being at University isn't just about going to classes! Rather, as students you gain a lot of value from ad-hoc interactions with the fellow students on your course. These kinds of interactions are of course risky in the context of current social distancing restrictions. However, we think it's essential to help you to engage with them. For this reason, we're planning a programme of community building activities in the Autumn term. These activities will be designed to enable you to engage informally with other students, but with a structure that keeps you safe within the rules. We're still working on what these activities might be, but suggestions made so far include creative challenges that can be conducted independently in small groups under social distancing guidelines.

Assessment: As first year Interactive Media students, you were due to take two in-person closed examinations on content taught in the Programming for Digital Media and Introduction to Media Technologies modules in the first week of the Spring term. Under current university guidelines, in-person closed examinations are not possible. For these reasons, we plan that you will be assessed in those modules using take-home exams, which you will be asked to complete at home during a defined period. These exams will be similar in topic to the ones you would have taken, except their questions will be designed using an 'open book' approach where you will be assessed primarily on the application of your knowledge. As all subsequent assessments on the degree are coursework-based, for the remainder of the academic year we plan that assessments will be broadly unchanged. In particular — due to how important it is for you to do practical work for the development of your creative, production and technical skills — we plan that you will still engage with the same level of practical assessment as you would have normally. There may be some small amendments made to assessment tasks and specifications to ensure that everything we ask you to do is possible under social distancing guidelines. However, you can expect that you will generally be assessed in the same way that you would have been in any other year. Based on the positive experiences that we have had in conducting effective practical assessments under social distancing guidelines this year, we are confident that this is an achievable and realistic approach.

Programme Structures

In seeking to respond to the challenges of Covid-19, one option we have explored is whether some of the more practical modules in the course (e.g. coding, media asset creation) could be moved later into the academic year. We felt that this would be unsuitable for a course like Interactive Media, where practical work cuts across almost everything we teach and many of the more practical modules in the Spring and Summer terms depend on pre-requisite skills being developed in the Autumn. For this reason, we plan that the structure of your degree will remain broadly as specified. In the academic year that has just finished, we've found it's possible for our students to fully engage with a range of ambitious and technically complex practical projects while working under social distancing guidelines. For this reason, we are confident that our plans to maintain the current degree structure are achievable and realistic.

Further changes or information of note