

Foundation Degree in Circus Arts – Course Information

The Foundation Degree in Circus Arts aims to develop a broad range of the skills required as a professional circus artist, with a strong focus on artistic creativity and collaboration, as well as the development of reflective and analytical skills. A specialisation process enables each student to find a circus discipline which will be suited to them and to develop a technical and creative vocabulary in that discipline.

The training is intensive, weeks are 35 hours long with a mix of taught sessions and scheduled independent learning. Each year is up to 35 weeks in length in order to sustain physical progression. Class sizes vary depending on the subject being taught. As well as physical skill development there is a strong focus on artistic exploration and creativity, contextual studies and business planning.

The course is divided into modules for assessment purposes, details of which can be found by clicking on the programme content links below. The course will focus on continuous assessment of each student's individual progress, as well as performance related assessment both as an individual and as part of an ensemble. Students' analytical and critical skills are also assessed through research presentations, essays and other assignment projects. There are no formal written examinations.

The degree is delivered at the National Centre for Circus Arts and is awarded by the University of Kent. Students must complete and pass all modules in both years of the course in order to obtain the qualification. On completion of the Foundation Degree they may apply for entry to the BA (Hons) Degree.

Foundation Degree in Circus Arts – Year 1 Programme Content

Overview

During the first year of the Foundation Degree in Circus Arts students can expect to spend an important amount of their autumn term being inducted into the workings of the National Centre for Circus Arts, preparing for your time as a student here and getting to know their year group. Students will gradually be inducted into the use of spaces and equipment, and students will access these resources when we are sure that they are safe and secure in their use.

Throughout the year they will undertake intensive physical classes in a range of circus-related activities, as well as sessions in performance, movement, and contextual studies which allow you to gain an understanding of circus in a wider performance context.

All students undergo a process to determine their circus discipline specialisation. This is a collaborative process between the student and staff, leading to a decision about which circus discipline is suited both physically and creatively to that person. Our goal is to help the young circus performer to establish the foundation for a long and fruitful career. We aim for all students in this first year to have completed this process by the end of the spring term. In the final term we create a timetable that prepares students for continued development in the 2nd Year of the Foundation Degree in Circus Arts.

The year is comprised of 6 core modules:

Preparing for Circus

This module focuses on essential aspects of your training. It will be the core physical activity of your first year, moving from general circus skills through to the development of the basic and fundamental technical skills appropriate for your future development in your chosen specialist discipline. Students are assessed on their technical progress and understanding, as well as the early stages of developing

their professional practice. The module also introduces students to movement and performance work in the first term.

Movement

This module aims to develop foundational elements of physical performance. Sessions will encompass a range of techniques and explore approaches to improvisation, and students will be assessed on the quality of their movement work, as well as a reflective essay.

Play and Performance

This module allows students to engage with the essential conventions and techniques involved in different forms of performance. Sessions will involve continuous exercises and presentations, and students will be assessed on the quality of their work in these sessions.

Specialisation Assessments

This module provides students with the opportunity to research and experience a various range of appropriate circus disciplines. At the end of the module, students will have gained insight and knowledge that will allow them to make a more informed and positive choice of their area of circus specialisation. Students will work in strict collaboration with the teaching staff to choose the most appropriate specialist discipline and will be assessed on this process.

Performance in Theory & Practice

This module explores the theoretical and practical application of historically significant performance practices to contemporary circus. Students are assessed through performance work and an essay submission.

Introduction to Ensemble

This module introduces students to the specific creative and technical demands of creating an ensemble performance. Students are assessed on their engagement with the devising and rehearsal process.

Foundation Degree in Circus Arts – Year 2 Programme Content

Overview

The second year of the course is devoted to the development of a student's technical abilities in their circus discipline and other technical skills as well as increasing their understanding of creating, devising and performance contexts. Students will have a tailor made timetable that is specifically designed to support them in the development of their circus discipline, as well as scheduled independent learning sessions to allow students to work towards becoming an autonomous learner.

A typical week during year two will include classes in your specific discipline, other physical complementary classes, acrobatics, performance, movement and contextual studies, as well as time for research and independent practice.

Year 2 is comprised of 7 core modules:

Circus Discipline Level 1

In this module students will begin to work on sequencing and the creation of their own material in their circus discipline, developing their own artistic ideas, and the implementation of their own training regime. The module will be delivered as a combination of tutor led sessions/workshops and task driven independent learning. Some tutor led sessions will be specifically focused on the circus discipline itself, whilst other scheduled sessions will cover practices designed to complement

discipline training – (e.g. acrobatics, handstands, ballet, Pilates). Scheduled independent and peer led learning sessions are a central element of this module, allowing students the space to bring learning from across the programme into their practice, and to self-select areas of their training they wish to develop. Alongside progression with technical skills in their discipline, students will be expected to develop the habits required for professional practice as circus artists, and will be assessed on both of these aspects.

Action, Reaction and Creation

This module investigates methods of creating work for performance. Students will be assessed on the process of developing and performing work created during the module.

Movement & Composition 1

This module addresses both movement technique and composition of material. Students are assessed on their work in both areas.

Performance Review and Analysis

This module will help you to understand epistemologies of performance criticism and forge deeper connections between your ideas and artistic practice. Students will be assessed on a presentation to their peers, as well as an assignment submission and their engagement with research and discussion.

The Business of Being a Performer

This module includes a series of lectures on the variety of employment contexts open to a contemporary circus performer, as well as lectures in a range of topics such as employability skills, funding opportunities, health & safety regulations and international circus companies. The assessment of the module involves the production of a website/online portfolio, and the module includes practical workshops to prepare students for this assignment.

The Student Devised Piece

In this module students will be able to demonstrate the development of their own artistic approach and create a performance piece, applying the technical and devising skills they have acquired during the programme. The presentations in this module are performed individually or in small groups to National Centre staff, students and some invited guests. Students will be assessed on both the process they undertake to create the piece and on their final performance.

The Ensemble

This is an ensemble production project emulating the experience of working as a member of a professional company. Students will work intensively over a number of weeks with a creative director or choreographer. As a member of this ensemble cast the objective will be to understand the needs of the creator and propose solutions and content that respond to those needs. Students will be assessed on both their engagement in the process and on their final performance.

BA (Hons) in Circus Arts – Course Information

This one year course consolidates the technical level of a specific circus discipline and its integration with a personal artistic approach.

The training is intensive, weeks are 35 hours long with a mix of taught sessions and scheduled independent learning. Each year is up to 35 weeks in length in order to sustain physical progression. Class sizes vary depending on the subject being taught. As well as physical skill development there is a strong focus on artistic exploration and creativity, contextual studies and business planning.

The course is divided into modules for assessment purposes, details of which can be found by clicking on the programme content links below. The course will focus on continuous assessment of each student's individual progress, as well as performance related assessment both as an individual and as part of an ensemble. Students' analytical and critical skills are also assessed through research projects and presentations. There are no formal written examinations.

The degree is delivered at the National Centre for Circus Arts (except for the Ensemble Performance Task module – see below) and is awarded by the University of Kent. Students must complete and pass all modules in order to obtain the qualification. Applicants should hold a Foundation Degree from the National Centre for Circus Arts or another school which is a recognised Full Type 1 member of FEDEC: <http://www.fedec.eu/en/members/?c=18>.

BA (Hons) in Circus Arts – Programme Content

Overview

The emphasis of this year long 'top-up' course is to consolidate the technical level of each student's specific circus discipline, continue to develop their personal artistic approach, advance their analytical and reflective skills and build upon their experience of performance contexts. A typical week includes classes in and to support their specific circus discipline, sessions in direction and movement, contextual studies, time for research and academic study, and a higher expected level of autonomy and independent practice than the Foundation Degree.

The BA (Hons) Degree programme is comprised of 7 core modules:

Circus Discipline Level 2

In this module students will build on their skill acquisition in their circus discipline with the aim to progress their physical, technical and artistic development as a circus artist in line with industry expectations. The module will be delivered as a combination of tutor led discipline focused sessions/workshops and task driven independent learning. Scheduled independent and peer led learning sessions are a central element of this module.

Alongside progression with technical skills in their discipline, students will be expected to demonstrate a level of professionalism in their practice in line with industry expectations of circus artists. Students will be assessed on both of these elements, and will also complete a risk assessment to demonstrate a professional level of understanding regarding health and safety protocols related to their discipline

Circus in the 21st Century

This module allows students to analyse and contextualise developments in contemporary circus. Students will be assessed on student-led theoretical presentations on specific practitioners and will also produce an original piece of research in the form of a practitioner interview and reflective essay.

Directing

This module draws together learning from academic and performance classes to introduce students to the practice of directing. Students will each have the opportunity to direct a short piece, and to perform in one another's work and will be assessed on presentations at different stages of development.

Movement and Composition 2

This module advances students' ability to apply principles of choreography and composition to the creation of new work. Students will devise and perform original movement pieces, and will be assessed on both their process of creation and their performance.

The Business Plan

Students work individually or in a group to prepare a business plan for the development of a professional project to be implemented after graduation. All business plans are assessed and those plans which have received the highest marks are then shortlisted for the National Centre for Circus Arts Entrepreneurial Award.

Ensemble Performance Task

This module comprises an ensemble production devised in collaboration with an external director or choreographer. This work takes place over an intensive period of a number of weeks and culminates in the creation of a professional standard production for public viewing. This module usually takes place externally, and occasionally may take place outside of London or the UK.

Negotiated Performance Task

This module gives students the opportunity to use all of the skills and techniques they have learnt so far to create a devised performance. The piece will allow them to show their personal approach to circus creation and to highlight the technical level that they have achieved. The piece can be created as an individual performer or as part of a group with other students and students will be assessed on both the process of creation and the final performance. The performance is open to the general public.