

Programme Specification

Award and title: BA (Hons) Acting

<i>School:</i>	School of the Arts
<i>Subject area:</i>	Performance
<i>Entry from academic year:</i>	2025-26
<i>in the month(s) of</i>	September
<i>Awarding institution:</i>	York St John University
<i>Teaching institution:</i>	York St John University
<i>Delivery location:</i>	York St John University
<i>Programme/s accredited by:</i>	Not applicable
<i>Exit awards:</i>	Certificate of Higher Education Drama & Theatre Diploma of Higher Education Drama & Theatre BA (Ord) Acting

UCAS code / GTTR / other:

Joint Honours combinations: Not applicable

QAA subject benchmark statement(s): Dance, Drama and Performance (2019)

Mode/s of study:

full time	3 years
part time	6 years

Language of study: English

Paired with Foundation Year No

Study abroad opportunities: Yes

Opt-in YSJU Placement Year opportunity: Yes

Introduction and special features

This course is a unique opportunity to engage in understanding and developing acting in a practice-led, creative and socially engaged programme. Our Acting programme at York St John University allows you to study the craft of contemporary mainstream acting for stage and screen. Through exciting and innovative practice you will engage with rigorous processes and approaches to acting and performing. You will have the opportunity to develop personas and characters utilising imaginative skills, to hone presence and tell unique stories. You will study acting as a transformative experience, act in plays and ensemble works, present solo pieces where you and your talent is at the very heart of performing. BA (Hons) Acting is a taught course that is practice-led, which means you are assessed mainly on practical work as well as some written assignments. You will have the opportunity to develop a Professional Acting portfolio, be eligible to join Equity and be encouraged to develop your future career path towards the creative industries. We place high importance on practice where visual and textual interpretation through playing and experimenting with contemporary forms are encouraged.

Through our partnerships and relationships with professional bodies we encourage a culture of outward facing opportunities for our students. Our practice-led course offers you an opportunity to engage in a rich and diverse range of contemporary performance practices. You will act in plays, devise original works, write theatre shows, facilitate others, to make exciting and challenging projects. You will study the history of acting, drama and theatre in the context of 20th and 21st century performance and will open your mind to the complexities and the importance on the study of practice. Supported by our excellent studio facilities

and expert staff team, who are all practicing artists and scholars, you will work both independently and in ensemble to learn the craft of acting for a wide range of audiences.

This is a practice based, interdisciplinary and socially engaged programme of study where you will engage in creative contemporary and outward facing teaching and learning, that invites you to get your hands dirty in the subject in order to understand the world we all live in that is changing so rapidly.

Our special features offer enhancement activities such as field trips in the UK and Europe that feed directly into large scale creative projects. Our touring venue *Performing House* welcomes theatre shows from professionals currently touring the circuit. Festivals will enable you to showcase your work and raise your profile through our very own magazine *Theatre Pages* and you will have an opportunity to be entered into the York Theatre Royal prize. Our visiting artist list is impressive as we regularly invite internationally renowned practitioners to our campus to share their work with you through artist talks and workshop activity.

Special Features

- The academics who teach on programme are experienced theatre practitioners, writers and researchers whose works are performed and presented both nationally and internationally.

- **Visiting Artists**

Students are offered opportunities to work with visiting artists/practitioners in the field of applied theatre.

- **York Theatre Royal**

We have a long history of working with York Theatre Royal and they are key partners in developing and sustaining this unique programme.

- **Performing House**

A receiving venue programmed between drama and dance, providing you with an opportunity to see contemporary work of an international standard that is not accessible with the locale.

- **Study Abroad**

You will have an opportunity to study abroad as part of the University exchange programme (semester 1 of Level 5). In recent years students have gone on to exchange at: University of Regina, Saskatchewan, Canada; Pacific University, Oregon, USA; Keene State College, New Hampshire, USA; Juniata College, Pennsylvania, USA; Metropolia University, Helsinki, Finland.

Field trips are a valuable part of your learning that ensures you are immersed in the real world of work. Please note that if you wish to attend field trips then you may be required to fund, or part fund your trip, particularly if these trips are abroad.

During semester 1 of your first year you will go on an 'expedition', where you will work in small groups to make a series and sequence of works. Recently, this has taken place at Featherstone Castle, Cober Hill and has been a highly successful and memorable experience.

In your second year you will be encouraged to gain insight into different cultures and histories through field trips. This will raise issues of justice, memory and human rights that are central to our concerns on this programme. For many years our students have been on an expedition to Krakow Poland where they have spent a day at Auschwitz.

In semester 1 of your third year you will be given the opportunity to go on a field trip (e.g. London) where you will have organised a series of viewings, interviews, meetings in order to further develop and underpin your 3rd year research practice. For example, you may wish to visit a project working with the homeless or an organisation offering theatre work to young people in socially deprived areas and taking part in specialised theatre company workshops.

- **E-Portfolio**

As part of developing your professional practice, you will be introduced to the e-portfolio in Level 4 and continue to build this digital platform throughout your degree. The integration of an e-portfolio into different modules as a learning and reflective tool demonstrates how virtual material can be transformed from a

product for consumption to an area of critical discussion, exploration, exchange, dissemination of work and ultimately, the creation of a community.

- Dialogue day

Dialogue days are held between staff and students each year. These provide a valuable space for academics and you, the student, to think about and discuss issues that concern us all, e.g. assessment, feedback, learning outcomes, module choices, future careers and the next steps after graduation.

- Theatre blog

This initiative offers you the opportunity to post items that are of interest to the community. This works alongside a twitter feed that is particularly active during performance festivals. It is proving useful for disseminating news and for sharing with candidates and stakeholders.

- Theatre Pages

Theatre Pages is a high-quality magazine incorporating students in areas such as writing, editing and design. For every issue the majority of the material is written by students, whether on their work or interviewing artists, for example.

- Transferable skills

The learning activities you will take part in during your time on the degree will also present the opportunity to accumulate a set of skills which are highly valuable to employers, such as; creativity, team work, the ability to collaborate, contextual awareness, problem solving, independence, the ability to meet deadlines.

In the 1st year you will be asked to compile an audit of transferable skills you already have, then to consider your long-term career plan and construct other skills you need to acquire and where on the programme you can get them.

Admissions criteria

You must meet the minimum entry requirements which are published on the programme specific webpage.

If your first language is not English, you need to take an IELTS test or an equivalent qualification accepted by the University (see <https://www.yorks.ac.uk/international/how-to-apply/english-language-requirements/>).

If you do not have traditional qualifications, you may be eligible for entry on the basis of [Recognition of prior learning \(RPL\)](#). We also consider applications for entry with advanced standing.

Programme aim(s)

1. Develop the students' practical and theoretical interest, knowledge and understanding of established, new and emergent acting practices.
2. Facilitate students' understanding of the political, social and cultural significance of acting processes and theatre making and spectating through the analysis of historical and contemporary practices.
3. Encourage individuals and groups to creatively harness their intellectual and practical abilities to compose thoughtful, imaginative and articulate performances for diverse audiences/spectators/participants.
4. Produce motivated graduates capable of contributing, individually or collaboratively, in drama and theatre practice and allied fields as well as employing their skills in a wide variety of presentational and interactive contexts.
5. Foster individuals with a lifelong interest in embracing new learning opportunities and in making positive, creative contributions to the world around them.

Programme learning outcomes

Upon successful completion of the programme students will be able to:

Level 4

- 4.1. Demonstrate knowledge of underlying concepts and principles of drama and theatre practices and evaluate and interpret these concepts within performance contexts.
- 4.2. Evaluate performances, as visual and textual artefacts within a historical and practical context, communicating results in a coherent manner.
- 4.3. Develop new dramatic and performance skills within a structured and managed environment and apply these skills and approaches in making and critiquing theatre.
- 4.4. Reflect on skills, processes and evaluation of their own performance practices in order to refine, select and present further work.
- 4.5. Demonstrate understanding of professional attitudes, disciplinary boundaries, and cultural frameworks that impact on theatre making.

Level 5

- 5.1. Apply established principles, and concepts outside the context in which they were first studied, across acting, theatre and performance contexts.
- 5.2. Critically analyse performances, as visual and textual artefacts within cultural, social and political contexts and effectively communicate arguments and analyses.
- 5.3. Apply a range of acting techniques and approaches to drama and theatre, engaging with the interplay between practice and theory.
- 5.4. Reflect critically on their learning, on appropriateness of different approaches and on the limitations of their own knowledge and skills.
- 5.5. Exercise personal responsibility and decision-making skills with regard to professional attitudes and disciplinary boundaries within the wider culture of acting, drama, theatre and performance.

Level 6

- 6.1. Demonstrate a systematic understanding of acting technique, drama processes and theatre making concepts and critically evaluate arguments, assumptions and abstract concepts in order to make judgements, frame appropriate questions, and achieve a solution.
- 6.2. Critically evaluate and cultivate uncertainty, ambiguity and contingency in the knowledge and practice of acting, drama and theatre performance.
- 6.3. Engage creatively and critically with the creation of drama and theatre performances through a developed, theoretically underpinned, and sensitive understanding of performance vocabularies, acting techniques, crafts, structures and methods.
- 6.4. Apply the practices of reflection, reviewing, consolidation and extending knowledge and understanding to the initiation and execution of projects.
- 6.5. Demonstrate an independent, agile and professional deployment of approaches to drama and theatre exercising personal responsibility and effective decision-making in complex and unpredictable contexts.

Programme structure

Code	Level	Semester	Title	Credits	Module status	
					Compulsory (C) or optional (O)	non-compensatable (NC) or compensatable (X)
PER4015M	4	1	Voice Workshop	20	C	X
PER4005M	4	1	Acting	20	C	X
PER4010M	4	1	Making Ensemble Performance	20	C	X

PER4009M	4	2	Big Ideas in Performance	20	C	X
PER4011M	4	2	Ensemble: Political Performance	20	C	X
PER4022M	4	2	Performance Methods	20	C	X
PER5001M	5	1	Politically Engaged Practice 1	20	C	X
PER5002M	5	2	Politically Engaged Practice 2	20	C	X
PER5011M	5	1 or 2	Acting Vignettes	20	C	X
PER5006M	5	2	Acting for Screen: The Performer as Auteur	20	C	X
You must choose two of the following modules:						
PER5005M	5	1	Physical Theatre	20	O	X
PER5012M	5	1 or 2	Funny Bones	20	O	X
PER5007M	5	1 or 2	Politics & the Play	20	O	X
PER5008M	5	1 or 2	Artist as Witness	20	O	X
PER5003M	5	1 or 2	Auto/biography & Performance	20	O	X
PER5004M	5	1 or 2	Children & Young People	20	O	X
PER5014M	5	1 or 2	Contemporary Storytelling	20	O	X
PER5015M	5	1 or 2	Performance & Digital Media	20	O	X
PER5016M	5	1 or 2	Performance & Ecology	20	O	X
PER5009M	5	1 or 2	Performance in Social Context	20	O	X
PER5013M	5	1 or 2	Re-Performing Dance Archives	20	O	X
PER5010M	5	1 or 2	Site Specific Dance	20	O	X
PER5014M	5	1 or 2	Writing after Beckett	20	O	X
PER6001M	6	1&2	Dissertation	20	C	X
PER6002M	6	1	Company: Research and Development	20	C	X
PER6003M	6	2	Company: Commission and Actualisation	40	C	NC
PER6004M	6	1 & 2	Independent Project: Acting	40	C	NC

Please note that not all options may be available every year as they depend on student demand and staff availability.

At Level 5 BA (Hons) Acting students must do a minimum of two O modules above.

Any modules that must be passed for progression or award are indicated in the table above as non-compensatable. A non-compensatable module is one that must be passed at the relevant level (with a mark of 40) in order to progress.

Learning, teaching and assessment

Central to teaching acting is the focus on your skills as an actor, with particular emphasis on movement, voice, and developing an authentic connection with text, in order to be supported to develop a professional actor profile that showcases your work. For all drama students learning takes place through physical, intellectual and emotional engagement. The objective being the creation of acting technique, drama processes, theatre images and experiences that are resonant with meanings for an audience. The creation, composition, performance and documentation of these images occur with a strong sense of social engagement, i.e. these images and experiences have a purpose. You will develop your understanding through a feeling-thinking-action loop embracing critical enquiry, contextual awareness and creative actualisation.

The programme is designed so you, the student, can work, create and study alongside the tutors through project-based learning, and take charge of developing the individual direction of your learning. This will be captured through the creation of live works for public consumption, field trips, meeting and working with various 'community' groups and creating documents. You will be required to think and analyse practical and theoretical texts in order to deepen your own learning and bring this understanding to bear on the development of actor technique, creation of drama processes, theatre images and experiences.

You will experience a range of teaching styles: workshops; seminars; lectures; tutorials; ethnographic field trips; technical demonstrations; tutorials; peer-to-peer collaborative learning; etc. You will be taught through practical workshops, lectures, seminars in small group tutorials, ethnographic field trips, and visiting guest artists (such as AtomR, Clean Break, Cardboard citizens, York Theatre Royal, Instant Dissidence, Shonaleigh see *Performing House*).

Building your CV and gaining valuable real-world experience and technique is central to the course. There are optional modules where you will be able to go on work placements with guest artists and community values such as those listed above. All teaching staff are research active and/or produce professional theatre, so there are frequent opportunities for students to assist with professional practice and research in theatre through our Student Internships scheme. We also offer students the opportunity to publish their written work in our very own publication, Theatre Pages, that we distribute throughout the UK. There are study abroad opportunities in the U.S. for those students who wish to expand their connections internationally. We encourage and support festival and competition entry and have professional technicians who can support these activities, including the development of individual design ideas for theatre, lighting and sound operation training. Embedded in select modules are weekly dance and movement classes, such as Yoga, Contemporary dance and various other styles such as Street, Jazz, taught by our staff and visiting lecturers. Our curation of professional touring theatre artists in *Performing House* will also offer professional workshops in the company's particular house style. Finally, you can showcase all of these skills through your final projects that can be presented in our professional 200+ seater theatre venue in the heart of York.

The complementary combination of practice and theory enriches the learning experience allowing skills and knowledge introduced in year one to evolve throughout the duration of the programme. This will be delivered through:

- Acting (voice and movement techniques) normally assessed through an extended small group piece from a pre-existing play text and taught in collaboration with York Theatre Royal.
- Screen Acting – initially taught as part of the acting module and then developed in second year to prepare you for acting for screen as an optional specialism for final year projects.
- Working as an ensemble in bringing a dramatic text to performance, this has recently included *Hamlet* by William Shakespeare and the *Birthday Party* by Harold Pinter. This work will conclude with an ensemble performance of the chosen text.
- Practice as an ensemble in devising a large outdoor piece of drama & theatre for the opening of the School's Create festival at the end of the academic year.
- Developing skills as a workshop leader in Voice, a key skill in acting, drama & theatre whether working with communities or young people to running a rehearsal with professional actors, as a professional actor.

These activities support you to focus on specific specialisms in the 2nd year of your study. They may include:

- Working with text from page to stage with the short play and audition technique
- Devising for performance
- Community and performance
- Performance making (in collaboration with Dance)

Level 4 - Orientation

The first year of the programme will take your existing knowledge and skills and develop them in a variety of ways. You will develop key crafts in contemporary acting, drama and theatre (including acting, movement, devising and voice workshop practices) and learn to work creatively in groups. You will also gain an understanding of how contemporary practice sits within theoretical contexts. The first year of the Acting programme includes modules taught with students from other degrees (e.g. BA Drama and Theatre, BA Drama: Education & Community; BA Drama and Dance). This allows you to become part of a wider performance community and form connections that will support you throughout your degree.

Semester 1		Semester 2	
Voice Workshop	20 – C	Big Ideas in Performance	20 – C
Making Ensemble Performance	20 – C	Ensemble Political Performance	20 – C
Acting	20 – C	Movement for Performance	20 – O

Level 5 – Application and Specialism

In your second year you apply the techniques and knowledge learned in the first year and deepen your skills through increasing specialism; allowing you to develop expertise in your own areas of interest. You apply these abilities to drama, theatre and performance making in a range of contexts whilst considering its relationship to the world around you. During this year you will specialise in acting via the two compulsory modules, one in each semester from the following four: Acting for Screen, Acting Vignettes, Funny Bones, Politics and the Play.

The following is an indicative route for a BA (Hons) Acting student (specific module choices may vary):

Semester 1		Semester 2	
Politically Engaged Practice 1	20 – C	Politically Engaged Practice 2	20 – C
Physical Theatre	20 – O	Acting for Screen	20 – C
Acting Vignettes	20 – C	Site Specific Dance	20 – O

Level 6 - Independence and Industry

In your final year you will work as both an independent artist and as a member of a performance company, developing work from research and development to actualisation. You will be supported in positioning yourself and your portfolio of skills as you prepare to for your chosen career.

This year offers you the opportunity to further develop your own practice as a thinker, writer maker of drama and theatre. Semester 1 in your third year is focussed on developing ideas and practices that in semester 2 will become drama and theatre works. These works will become key to your future career aspirations which will be fully articulated in the portfolio of skills you will have been developing over the three years.

As part of the enhancement of your experience in the third year you will go on a residential field trip to a major cultural hub (i.e. London, Berlin, Paris) to fulfil your own individual and small group research tasks. These might comprise of interviewing a particular artist or company, going to see a performance work or accessing an archive.

Semester 1		Semester 2	
Dissertation			20
Independent Practice: Acting			40 – C
Company: Research & Development	20 – C	Contemporary Performance Practice: Actualisation	40 – C

Assessment

The purpose of assessment on BA (Hons) Acting is to offer structures through which you learn (assessment as learning; rather than assessment of learning). Assessment has to be of value to you as a student and should reflect the real world.

These assessments take the form of performances (large group, small group, duet and solo), workshops, reflective documents, 'zines, reports & articles, essays and performance lectures. This range of assessment intends to cover possible scenarios which prepare you to pursue your professional or academic aspirations. The assessments on the programme are carefully considered to be of value to you, the student, and reflect experiences and situations beyond the classroom.

Progression and graduation requirements

The University's [general regulations](#) for undergraduate awards apply to this programme.

Any modules that must be passed for progression or award are indicated in the Programme Structure section as non-compensatable.

Internal and external reference points

This programme specification was formulated with reference to:

- [University mission and values](#)
- [University 2026 Strategy](#)
- [QAA subject benchmark statements](#)
- [Frameworks for Higher Education Qualifications](#)

Date written / revised: 4 June 2021

Programme originally approved: