

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 and we have provided a consultation form for you to complete if you have any feedback on these proposals:

<https://forms.gle/FqxtnjkW5F1VRCWX8>.

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: As per the University's guidelines, we're presently unable to conduct lectures in person for safety reasons. Instead, your lectures will be delivered as downloadable videos in the Autumn term. 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 other activities 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. As I'm sure you'll

remember, Interactive Media lectures are often highly interactive. We aim to recreate the interactive elements of our existing lectures 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 you will have experienced before, 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 practical 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 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 due to 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 already 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, 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 will make the kinds of informal discussions you 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. For this reason, we don't feel there is sufficient value added from holding seminars on campus to outweigh the safety concerns.

Instead, we've decided that seminars will take place online using video conferencing tools in the Autumn. Like practicals, in many cases, these online seminars will be conducted in a more focussed way with smaller groups. 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.

One-to-one supervision: For those of you entering the third year, you'll be having a small number of one-to-one supervision meetings around your individual project toward the end of the Autumn term. We've found that such meetings have worked very well using video conferencing for our just graduated third years. Therefore, we plan to carry out these meetings using this approach in the Autumn. If you are unable to attend a video conference supervision, such as due to a poor internet connection, you'll be given an opportunity to engage with your supervisor through another means that works with your preferences and level of technology access (e.g. a detailed email exchange).

Community-building activities: As I'm sure you're all very aware, being at University isn't just about going to classes! Rather, as students you gain a lot of value from ad-hoc interactions with fellow students on a day-to-day basis. 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: We plan that the way you will be assessed will be broadly unchanged for the Autumn term. 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 previously. There may be some small amendments made to assessment briefs and specifications to ensure that all tasks are possible to complete 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 for the 2nd and 3rd years in the previous term, we are confident that this is a practical and realistic approach.

Programme Structures

In seeking to respond to the challenges of Covid-19, one option the University asked us to explore was whether some of the more practical modules in the course 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 degrees will remain broadly as specified. There are, however, two exceptions to this for modules that we feel cannot be run effectively under the current restrictions.

Media Production for Interactive Environments to swap with Web Application Design and Development (Year 2): In the Media Production for Interactive Environments module, you'll learn to design and create 3D virtual environments using the Unity platform. Unity is a software package that requires quite a powerful computer to use, especially when you are getting started and haven't yet learned to make your environments as efficient as they could be. We are, therefore, not confident that all students will have a sufficiently powerful computer at home to engage with the practical content for this module. For this reason, we plan that this module will now take place in the Spring term rather than the Autumn. The module will be swapped with Web Application Design and Development, which will now take place in the Autumn term. The core tools to develop web-based experiences (i.e. a text editor and a modern web browser) require a far less powerful computer, so we are confident that these will be more accessible from home.

Experience Evaluation to move to the Spring term (Year 3): This module teaches you to plan, run and analyse user studies of interactive media systems. The module is focussed on running in-person user studies, which commonly take place with close social interaction between the experimenter and subjects. For this reason, many aspects of the teaching and the assessment are not possible to conduct under social distancing guidelines. We explored whether this module could be adapted to teach you to run online user studies. However, we felt that doing this would mean you wouldn't learn a range of crucial skills relating to the in-person facilitation of user-studies that you may need in your future careers. For this reason, we have decided to move this module to the Spring term. As this change affects your option module choices, you will be given the opportunity to re-select options for next year later this summer (we expect in August).

Further changes or information of note

The **Esports Content Production** option module normally involves practical work in the department's television studios. This is expected to not be possible in the Autumn term under current social distancing restrictions. We intend to still run this module in the Autumn term by shifting its focus to the use of online and distributed broadcast technologies. The new tools we will teach you will actually more closely resemble the software-only production setups increasingly used by contemporary Esports broadcasters, compared to the hardware-based setup found in our television studios. Therefore, you'll still be learning extremely relevant skills for the industry. However, we appreciate that the shift away from in-person practical sessions in the television studios is quite a major change. For this reason, we intend that you will have the opportunity to revise your option choices in light of this change should you wish.