

For international students wanting to enrol on a film studies course, the USA and Canada provide the ideal environment in which to embark on a career path in this industry. The USA is home to many of the most highly-paid film directors and stars in the world, and film courses throughout North America offer students the opportunity to study at the cutting edge of the film industry.

"Fifty per cent of our film students are international," says Eileen Hoeter, Programme Director of Film Related Studies at Vancouver Film School in Canada. "They come from all over the world. With the easy access to the Internet, people can research the schools available. Students are wanting a quicker form of education. They want an intensive, production based course and that is what they get here."

Film students going to the USA or Canada can choose to study in either a specific film academy or the film department of a college or university. Courses offered by film academies and colleges tend to be shorter in length - varying from a few

Selection of institutions that provide film studies courses in the USA and Canada

	Use agents	Number of students	% overseas students
Canada			
Gulf Islands Film and Tele. Sch., Galiano Island, BC	✓	450	4
Vancouver Film School, Vancouver, BC	✓	1,000	30
Victoria Motion Picture School, Victoria, BC		39	8
University of Manitoba, Winnipeg, MB		23,618	4
USA			
Columbia College, Chicago, IL		9,416	4
New York Film Academy, NY	✓	200	50
Maine Photographic Workshops and Rockport College, Rockport, ME		2,890	18
Barry University, Miami Shores, FL		8,691	5

	USA	Canada
Example of award	MA, BA, diploma, certificate	MA, BA, diploma, certificate
Min. English requirements - Toefl	500	500
Min. English requirements - Ielts	6.0	6.0
Approx. tuition fee for a one year undergraduate degree course	\$12,500	CAN\$9,000 (US\$5,630)
Approx tuition for a one year diploma/certificate course	\$15,000	CAN\$11,000 (US\$6,880)

weeks to two years - while many Canadian and US universities offer a film studies major for students wanting to take the traditional four-year degree route.

For students wanting to progress to further academic study in films, a degree from a Canadian or US university is a natural first step. Bruce Sheridan is Chairman of Columbia College Chicago in the USA, which offers a Bachelor of Arts degree with a major in film and video, as well as a Master of Fine Arts degree in film and video. He says, "Graduates of the degree course who are interested in pursuing higher education are uniquely positioned for entry into graduate studies across the USA and around the world."

However, students without the necessary entrance requirements for university may find that the admissions requirements for a shorter course at a film academy place less emphasis on academic achievements. "Our workshops are open enrolment. There are no special requirements for international students," says Alex Meillier, Deputy Director of

Film studies

in the USA and Canada

There are many universities and colleges offering both long-term and short-term film studies courses in the USA and Canada, and international students intending to study in this field will find themselves faced with an array of options to choose from. **Bethan Norris** reports.



PHOTOGRAPH: COLUMBIA COLLEGE

the New York Film Academy. "We impress upon our students the serious commitment that our workshops require, but we do not have any formal admission requirements."

Shorter courses can also be attractive for those students who do not have three or four years to invest in an expensive education programme abroad. "We are finding that more frequently we are attracting international students who have had some previous post-secondary training and/or experience in a related area such as media arts or general communications and who are looking to expand their skills," says Laurie Cain, Marketing and Communications Manager at Victoria Motion Picture School in Canada.

All institutions offering courses in film studies in the USA and Canada rely on links with the film industry to ensure that their graduates are equipped with the most up-to-date skills required for future employment. "The technology within the film industry is constantly changing," says Cain. "We provide our students with the opportunity to work with industry

standard equipment and with current digital technology [that is employed]."

Film schools report that the dawn of the digital age in film making is affecting the nature of the courses they now offer. "Film making has changed more in the last two decades than ever before," says Hoeter. "With the use of digital formats, filming has become more accessible to many people. By keeping in touch with the industry, we are able to keep our courses relevant to the needs of the industry."

Gene Walz, from the department of film studies at the University of Manitoba in Canada, has noticed an increase in demand for practical components to courses. "Our courses consist mainly of history, theory and criticism courses but the number of practical hands-on courses has increased in the past few years because of student demand," he says.

Work experience is an important consideration for most students, both because it introduces them to the real world of the film industry and also because it can be a useful source of extra income. Columbia College Chicago offers its students an internship programme which places students in jobs in Chicago, New York and Los Angeles. "All our production and post-production courses are based around hands-on practical experience," says Sheridan. "As students advance, this develops in complexity and provides the basis for professional internships within the industry. International students may acquire paid practical training within one year of their education in the field of their major."

International students make up a large percentage of many film schools and departments in Canada and the USA and the Internet has become a key marketing tool for many schools keen to attract more students from overseas. "Our international marketing is mostly dependent on the web and we get a huge response to our site," says Cain.

"Most of our international students come from Southeast Asia," adds Sheridan. "One of our film department's primary objectives over the last few years is to increase the number and diversity of our international students." ○

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