

# CAREER VIEW

## FILM

"Since time began humankind has gathered round campfires in the dark to listen to stories. They remind us of who we are, where we have come from, and where we want to go. I think today the cinema is the modern campfire and audiences go to the dark space of the cinema and sit in the light of the screen to get their stories," said New Zealand film director, Gaylene Preston.

Today the New Zealand film industry has become an international thoroughfare where film-makers from around the world, including Hollywood and Bollywood, come to tell stories using New Zealand's production and post-production facilities, employing local actors, crew and other technical staff.

The study of Film makes it possible to consider the diversity of cinema both in Aotearoa/New Zealand and around the rest of the world. A critical approach to the study of Film also allows students to better understand both cinema's language and the social, cultural and economic implications of film production.

### WHY STUDY FILM?

The focus of Film at university is on the theoretical, historical, and critical approaches to films. There are also practical components designed to foster creativity and enhance understanding of filmmaking. The language of film is specific to the industry, and students learn how to use it. They also learn critical approaches to the analysis of production, and critical theories of film aesthetics. Those who earn their living in the film industry are highly motivated – they can't imagine doing anything else. It can be a high-risk, low-security business, which demands stamina and discipline, imagination, optimism, talent and a high tolerance for sleep deprivation.

While the academic study of film is not vocational training, it offers a unique and exciting educative process that combines creative and practical with historical, theoretical and critical analysis. If you are looking to be a creative in any industry or progress in the film industry, the insights and understandings gained from academic study of film is critical to success.



### WHAT SKILLS DO FILM STUDENTS DEVELOP?

The study of Film through history and theory is academically demanding and hones skills that are transferable to a range of careers. Students learn some practical skills in film making so they are familiar with some of the processes and techniques of film making should they wish to go further into film production or post production.

**Critical thinking** is a key skill and critical analysis enables

Career View explores how degrees and courses relate to employment opportunities and to life/work planning. It includes graduate destination information and current employment issues. Your comments and suggestions are always welcomed.

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students to identify, evaluate, and critique the many complex elements of film including the quality of scripts, direction, production and post production. Using different theoretical models, students analyse and interpret films. As active, critical viewers they ask questions, make inferences and identify how films connect to a wider social context.

Students do extensive **research** about all aspects of film – history, social context, genres, the development of cinematic techniques and technology. Research involves a process of asking questions, gathering information (facts and concepts) and evaluating material. Research skills are sought by many employers.

Students acquire high levels of **audio-visual literacy** as they learn to read, understand, interpret and communicate about films. Visual information is an increasingly prevalent means of communication. Understanding how the moving image creates meaning is a powerful skill of increasing relevance in many fields.

Film is all about developing verbal and written **communication**. As students become more proficient in understanding moving images, they will also become adept at conveying their own ideas by using the technical language of filmmaking and criticism. Through practical projects, oral assessments and written assignments students present their work in a range of exciting mediums.

Film provides many opportunities to develop original ideas and exercise **creativity**. Practical projects and written assignments encourage students to take unique and personalised perspectives on a variety of subjects. In the production courses creativity is encouraged and fostered through script writing, opportunities to direct scripts and creatively realise vision, and edit audio and visual materials in post production suites. The result is the shaping of a creative voice that is supported by a diverse set of skills relevant in many fields.

Film is very much about **teamwork**. In film production, projects cannot be completed alone, and in film theory students need to develop their work by drawing on the theoretical writing of others. For that



reason, studying film helps students actively develop team skills through collaborative production projects and on class assignments.

### WHERE DO FILM GRADUATES WORK?

The opportunities to make a career in film production in New Zealand are growing steadily. While Film offers practical courses that cover topics such as directing, production and post production, career training often happens on the job. That said, taking Film at university has been a starting point for graduate careers in film or television, journalism, content development, arts management and administration, teaching or academic careers, script-writing, production, post production, advertising, media and publicity. When combined with another skill or trade (e.g. electrician, building, design, art, audio-engineering) or another degree (music, IT, engineering, architecture, law), Film provides valuable background knowledge of cinematic practice and theory relevant to a number of careers related to the industry.

Graduates of Film may find positions with film companies, film archives and film festivals. Work for specific films and events is short term and contractual. A major in Film also develops the skills required to work in government, not-for-profit or private sector organisations. Areas include advice and policy analysis, communications, public relations, content design and development, and educational media.

Film graduates are found wherever there is a need for their critical thinking, analytical and communication skills, particularly in advisory, media or communications roles across the private and



public sectors. A postgraduate degree, along with research experience, is normally preferred for policy or research roles. However, research assistant, advisory, communications and media roles may be suitable for graduates with undergraduate qualifications. Useful skills and experience can be gained from part-time work and several employers offer summer internships in these areas.

**Ministry for Culture and Heritage** advises the government on arts, culture, heritage, sport and recreation, and broadcasting. The Ministry employs policy analysts and advisors, and administration staff. Another relevant government agency is the **Office of Film & Literature Classification**, who look for the ability to analyse material, and form opinions and arguments based on the provisions of the Films, Videos, and Publications Classification Act 1993. These skills are often gained through study and work experience.

**New Zealand Film Commission (NZFC)** is a crown entity working to grow the New Zealand film industry. They invest in feature films, short films, script and career development and marketing and promoting New Zealand films and filmmakers both here and overseas.

**NZ on Air** is a government broadcast funding agency that invests in a range of local television, radio, music and new media content to extend choices for New Zealand audiences. **NZ On Screen** is a state-funded online promotional showcase of New Zealand television and film. Funded by NZ On Air, it provides free worldwide access to New Zealand-produced television, film and music videos.

**Education.** Teaching in secondary schools is a rewarding career for graduates with a passion for the arts and the desire to work with young people. Film and visual literacy are included in the curriculum. Early childhood and primary teaching are options for

those wanting to work with children to establish the foundations of literacy and creativity. Teaching at university level usually requires a PhD. Film students can advance their research and teaching skills by undertaking a Master's or PhD degree, and may have the opportunity to tutor undergraduate students part time. Many students also go overseas to study. The creation of resources is an exciting growth area and may combine creative talent with skills in film production, instructional or learning design and multi-media, research and writing.

**Film, media and television companies** are involved in the production of films and television programmes and hire permanent and contract workers.

**Production** is the complex process of shooting and recording a film. About one third of production roles require conceptual creativity (actors, scriptwriter, director, producer, art direction, production design), two thirds are technical (camera, lighting, sound, makeup) or administrative. The industry in New Zealand is small; networking is essential to get a foot on the bottom rung of the film industry hierarchy. It is also useful to get an edge, being able to offer a skill that sets you apart from the competition (e.g. a First Aid Certificate or a Heavy Truck licence).

Depending on their skills, graduates may consider the entry-level support role of Runner, who helps to make shooting run smoothly by doing a myriad of basic jobs. Producer's Assistants work closely with Producers, providing administrative support. Graduates with the right skills and qualities may also consider this as a starting role. The role can involve script development, running the office, interviewing personnel, liaising between the producer and the post production team and helping to prepare publicity material.

Producers are responsible for managing the process of





**Post production** is the sum of all the things that happen after a film is shot, and the material is put together to make the final product. Post production processes include: picture editing, sound editing, composing and recording the score, music editing, adding visual special effects and audio sound effects. Technical expertise is helpful and systems engineering is advantageous for roles such as data wrangler as post production companies need people with IT skills to manage digital information from shooting to sound effects processes.

**Film distribution**, releasing films to the public, targeting the widest possible audience. Roles involve marketing, promotion, publicity and sales. Multinational distributors have offices in New Zealand and there are some small local companies.

production from the original idea to the final product. Producers need considerable experience, business acumen and a thorough understanding of the technique and technology of film and/or television.

Film graduates intending to work as permanent editorial staff (reporters, sub-editors, editors) in the **media** may find an additional journalism qualification or experience helpful. It is possible to write content without an industry qualification. Some journalists specialise in arts and entertainment or write film reviews for newspapers. Others work for film magazines and write in depth critical analyses, relating films to social contexts.

**Web development** and **digital** companies employ digital content developers and experience designers and the critical, analytical skills learned from studying Film, along with creativity and ability to apply ideas is a good skill base to start from. Further learning in coding or design methodologies can be helpful.

**Marketing and publicity** plan and implement marketing campaigns for films. Film publicists work within different levels of the publicity process. They liaise between producers, cast, crew and the media during film shoots. The publicity they generate helps sell films and create public interest. They work with producers, distributors and sales agents to plan all press strategy for film shoots, ensuring the right amount of information is released at specific times so press coverage is maximised when the film is released. They also develop press packs, write bios and film synopses, oversee still photography and provide captions. A publicist may also help distributors decide how to advertise films to maximise audience numbers. Planning how to position a film begins during pre-production, or early in production.



# GRADUATE PROFILES

## JOB TITLES

Following is a sample of job titles reported in graduate employment destination surveys. Some roles may require additional qualifications and training.

Actor • arts administrator • assistant director • casting assistant • cinematographer • community arts worker • content creator • costume designer • critic/reviewer • digital content specialist • film technician • film archivist • film critic/reviewer • film distributor – publicity, marketing, sales • film editor • film historian • film/TV producer • funding adviser • independent or industrial filmmaker • lecturer/tutor • marketing assistant • media developer • journalist • policy analyst • producer (assistant) • production designer • project manager • publicist • program researcher • prop maker • scriptwriter • set designer • social media coordinator • sound editor • visual effects artist • story editor • teacher • writer



### Sarah Adams

Communications and Digital Advisor, New Zealand Winegrowers



I chose to major in Film because I wanted to take a chance on my career and I knew studying film wasn't going to lead me to an ordinary 9-5 job. Subsequently, my jobs have always been interesting, involving some kind of practical aspect and a degree of travel because of the skills I learnt in film.

Honours was my favourite year of university. I really enjoyed the small class sizes, I really got to know my lecturers and classmates and I remain friends with some of them to this day. In film production the sizes also meant getting the opportunity to practice skills like directing, scriptwriting or lighting on a weekly basis.

In my Honours year, I also enjoyed writing a thesis and focusing on one topic throughout the year rather than changing it every week in class and it was fun to study something I had a personal interest in. Surprisingly, it also really highlighted weaknesses in my writing, presenting and researching skills and allowed me to hone them. I entered the workforce as a much more capable and confident graduate.

When I finished my degree I got an entry-level job in communications for Trilogy Skincare. People were just starting to take this thing called social media seriously, and Trilogy was looking for someone who had strong writing skills as well as someone with the ability to take photos or create stories out of their everyday business news. Because of my writing and practical skills, Trilogy gave me many opportunities from filming luxury media famils (familiarisation programmes) in Queenstown to going to Kenya to photograph their relationship with a charity they support.

As the importance of social media marketing grows, more businesses are looking for storytellers who can translate their brands into digital content – images, videos and websites. I took a Digital Content Specialist job at Yealands Wine where I produced brand videos, executed photoshoots, managed several brand's social media platforms and was trained in how to develop websites. You would be surprised how often I call on the skills I developed from my studies in all my jobs, when directing a video or developing a social media shoot.

### Mishelle Muagututi'a

Documentation Team Leader  
/ Kaiārahi Tira Pūranga ā-Tuhi,  
Ngā Taonga Sound & Vision



I am currently working as an Archivist at Ngā Taonga Sound & Vision, and have a keen interest in social history, community art initiatives and audio-visual technology. I work to preserve/ conserve paper documents, analog and digital photographic material as well as artefacts adjacent to the film, television, video and sound collections including equipment and some textiles. My core role is to lead our archive experts in Paper, Photographic and Research concerning the audio-visual history of Aotearoa (mainly film and television at the moment) and provide access to these materials.

I have always had an interest in social history. To be able to reconnect people with their history through our audio-visual collections is important to me and the other documentation archivists. Connected to our area of work, we have a small research facility where we can receive researchers.

If anyone would like to study Film at tertiary level, it is useful to have direction and to take relevant subjects that interest you. Experience is transferable. I initially worked in the performing arts sector. After attending PUAWAI Polynesian Performing Arts School in Christchurch, I honed my skills as an event coordinator, contemporary dancer (brief stint), theatre actor and tour manager with like-minded friends and family members. I worked mainly in theatre, in a pivotal performing arts organisation Pacific Underground, which proved successful as this year Pacific Underground is celebrating 25 years of productivity in the arts sector in New Zealand.

While working at the university library, I decided to study the theory of Film and Pacific Studies, which seemed a natural progression after many years in theatre. I enjoyed the classes that supported New Zealand film analysis, which became an integral part of my understanding of storytelling and moving image history in Aotearoa. It motivated me to take up postgraduate study in Museum and Heritage Studies, driven by the need to help preserve the creative work of friends working in the arts sector.

Life balance should always involve art. Supporting the community at the centre, I serve as part of the Kava Club Arts Collective supporting Māori and Pacific artists in Wellington and on the Board of Playmarket NZ, Playwrights Agency and PIFT – Pacific Islanders in Film and Television. I have also been an Arts Panel assessor for the last five years for Wellington City Council: Creative Communities Scheme as well as Curator and Artist Co-ordinator with the annual Siapo

### Costas Thrasyvoulou

Teacher  
Wanganui Collegiate

I studied Film and English Literature at undergraduate level. During that time, I could share my love for film writing an occasional film column for Salient and creating my own film review blog – I couldn't get enough of it! Film is the whole of life rather than a side interest. I find the making and critical analysis aspects of film fulfilling and am now passing on those unique skills and perspectives to younger learners.



I decided to go into teaching mostly for the satisfaction of feeling as though I was doing something worthwhile. I have never been especially motivated by big money and would prefer a job where I am able to mix with a lot of different kinds of people and help guide young people towards their future. I currently teach English and Media Studies at Wanganui Collegiate. It was always my plan to bring the expertise I gained from Film studies back to my hometown despite the fact there were fewer jobs in my specific subject areas.

Having a Master's degree from Victoria gave me the 'x-factor' when I was transitioning into teaching and I'm convinced it was one of the reasons I was appointed. This is because my Master's thesis was centred around creating a short film focussed on grief, and how men express their feelings of loss. It is called Brothers and takes four friends, one of whom dies, and shows how the other three deal with his death. I developed a lot of skills that I now use to help my students

– hands-on as well as thinking and analysing. Every student is different and will have their own way of approaching a task. This is something my supervisors at Victoria understood when they worked with me and it's fantastic to be able to take on that mentor role myself. It's so gratifying to watch a student conceive of an idea and then watch them see it through to completion.

## Shu Run Yap

Vendor Coordinator  
Cigna Life Insurance New Zealand



When I first enrolled at university, I really wanted to pursue my interests rather than studying for the sake of getting a job. I already knew that I liked film and wanted to do a bit of psychology. After investigating the majors available and areas of research I decided that I would major in Film and Criminology at undergraduate level, as I was really interested in the creative and social side of humanities.

I then enjoyed the practical skills and opportunities that the Master of Fine Arts (MFA) Creative Practice offered. They built on the skills I already had developed as a project administrator/coordinator during my gap year. I gained further real-world experience applying my theoretical knowledge of film. I found ways to implement my critical thinking and planning skills in real commercial projects and the internship (which was part of the MFA). I also enjoyed the networking opportunities provided by the MFA, whether it was through meeting guest lecturers/speakers, through the internship, or through working with industry people in the projects which were part of the coursework.

My studies also really honed my organisational and time-management skills. As the MFA was a full-time course, it meant that I had to plan each day and achieve multiple things across the different courses that were running at the same time. Not unlike undergraduate study, except the workload and expectations around your ability to manage yourself were much higher.

My MFA opened up work opportunities through cementing relationships with people in the creative industry in Wellington and providing me with the experience that gave me a head start in the job search process. I had many wonderful references and projects that added greatly to my portfolio even while I was studying. I also picked up many valuable skills that were transferable to other jobs as well, such as coordination and communication skills. I went on to apply these first as an intern producer, then a junior producer with creative video agency Wrestler.

Production is essentially project management and co-ordination at a fast pace with many moving parts. There is a lot of work behind the scenes and fostering of good relationships. It was therefore a natural progression into my current role in vendor coordination at Cigna Life Insurance, where I engage multiple vendors to facilitate good communications and relationships between the businesses, and to collaborate towards achieving the best outcomes possible for all.

## Duncan Anderson

Lecturer  
Victoria University of Wellington School of Film

My undergraduate and Master's degrees were in History (19<sup>th</sup> Century Public Health), however I was also always a film fan, and not surprisingly, was interested in the history of film. After a period of working as a researcher, I did a Graduate Diploma in Arts, studying Film at postgraduate level. I then gained some experience in public sector archives and records management. This was good preparation for my PhD in Film, that looked at film and video censorship during an interesting period in its history – 1976 to 1994.



During this period, there were some major changes in censorship law that influenced film. Controversial films included Life of Brian and Mad Max – my particular interest was the discourse around them, such as attitudes to gang culture and violence in the case of Mad Max. There were interesting discoveries, such as the degree of moral panic in response to some of these films. I wouldn't say it was easy doing the PhD as such but working with a subject (archives) that would not move or disappear, meant that I could work in a systematic and planned way. I decided to take a chronological rather than a theme-based approach, which told an interesting story about social change over time.

I currently teach a Film History course, where I encourage students to get engaged with and learn how to 'read' a film. Students may not have seen some genres of film before and they can be difficult to watch, so students need to look at them within their wider context. For example, you can really get to appreciate the drama of early black and white or silent films: the telling of a story without colour or synchronised sound. Film gives you the opportunity to study what interests you, while also being challenging and complex.