



## Programme Specification

Please note that this specification is subject to change, in line with the national guidance on the response to the Covid-19 pandemic.

### 1. General information

|   |                               |
|---|-------------------------------|
| <b>Awarding institution:</b>            | Royal College of Art          |
| <b>Programme title:</b>                 | MA Curating Contemporary Art  |
| <b>Award:</b>                           | Masters                       |
| <b>Qualification framework level:</b>   | Level 7                       |
| <b>School/Department or equivalent:</b> | School of Arts and Humanities |
| <b>Programme duration:</b>              | 2-years                       |
| <b>Total UK credits:</b>                | 240 credits                   |
| <b>Mode of study:</b>                   | Full time                     |
| <b>Date valid from/to:</b>              | 2020-21                       |

### 2. Programme Philosophy

The ethos of the CCA Programme is defined by an emphasis on collaborative and situated, practice-based learning. Encouraging intellectual and creative engagement with the theories and practices of curating and the expanded field of the 'curatorial', the programme approaches its field critically, theoretically and through best practice in commissioning, curating, and programming. Acknowledging the changing role of curating as an interdisciplinary practice located at the intersection of creative and cultural practices, as much as in relation to the convergence of media, the programme is committed to ensuring student knowledge and practice is grounded in the context of public audiences. In the increasingly complex cultural environment in which curating takes place, our research-led and practice-led teaching by staff and visiting tutors ensures the curatorial and artistic significance, intellectual value and critical vitality of the MA programme. The partnership-based aspect of the programme, and in particular the graduate partnership project, provides students with unique training in terms of professional development and proven employability.

### 3. Educational Aims and Outcomes of the Programme

#### **Programme Aims**

The educational aim of the programme is to enable you to emerge as a competent and responsible professional, equipped with the knowledge and the intellectual and practical skills you will need to make an innovative and effective contribution to the field of curating and the curatorial. Specifically, the curriculum is designed:

- to develop your skills of observation, interpretation and critical analysis, based on detailed examination and discussion of collection and exhibition displays of contemporary art, commissions and projects in the public domain and public

- programming
- to develop your knowledge and understanding of a range of research tools and methods, theoretical models and conceptual frameworks which may be applied to the study of contemporary art and its public presentation
- to develop your ability to communicate ideas clearly both verbally and in writing in a structured and appropriate manner
- to enable you to become familiar with a range of working practices and curatorial approaches in galleries, museums, urban space, online networked cultures, and commissioning / event-based organisations
- to develop your practical, managerial and administrative competence and skills in relation to exhibition-making, project development and installation / realisation
- to develop your understanding of professional ethics and of a curator's responsibilities to and relationships with works of art, artists, audiences, institutions, lenders and funders both within analogue and digital culture

### **What will I be expected to achieve?**

On successful completion of the Masters we expect student to graduate who are:

- highly invested in contemporary art and curatorial practice
- proactive and highly motivated to contribute to the development of curating and the curatorial field
- confident to experiment and innovate through creative risk, critical thinking and problem-solving
- able to communicate with clarity and authority and can formulate arguments and articulate position
- socially, culturally and politically aware and critically self-reflexive with a view towards ethical practice
- professionally fit with a flexible skill-set for employment in a variety of contexts, organisations and funding situations

### **Programme-Specific Learning Outcomes**

| Able to: | <b>A. Intellectual Engagement</b>   |
|----------|---|
| A1.      | Develop innovative ideas that challenge the understanding and practice of curating and the curatorial.  |
| A2.      | Demonstrate an advanced understanding of the critical and curatorial context of contemporary debates about curating and the field of the curatorial and identify your practice within it. |
| A3.      | Demonstrate an advanced understanding of the principles and methods of research and apply them effectively to your own curatorial practice.   |
| A4.      | Effectively integrate and articulate the relationship between theory and practice in your writings, presentations, and curatorial projects.   |

| Able to: | <b>B. Technical Skills</b>  |
|----------|---|
| B1.      | Display a mastery of the technical skills required to operate as both an independent and organisation-based curator and to take risks to innovate as and when the opportunity arises. |

|          |  |
|----------|--|
| B2.      | Initiate and realise curatorial work at an advanced level that integrates thought, practice and innovation within the conventions and ethics of best practice.   |
| B3.      | Demonstrate an ability to work collaboratively and effectively communicate across different media, disciplines, platforms, sectors and audiences to identify and realise the potential of every opportunity. |
| Able to: | <b>C. Professional Development</b>   |
| C1.      | Adopt a pro-active approach to expanding your learning, knowledge and experience by taking full advantage of the opportunities, context and networks presented and managing your time appropriately.         |
| C2.      | Approach your practice with a sense of responsibility and with due consideration of its impact on the community and environment in which you work.   |
| C3.      | Define your academic authority and professional identity through critical self-reflexivity, active participation in and contribution to your field.  |

#### 4. What will I learn?

##### **Programme Units and Credit Weightings**

SoAH Unit: 20 credits

Critical and Historical Studies: Unit 20 credits

CCA Unit 1: Curatorial Thinking (30 credits)

CCA Unit 2: Curatorial Practice (50 credits)

CCA Unit 3: Research in Practice (20 credits)

CCA Unit 4: Graduate Project (50 credits)

CCA Unit 5: Independent Research Project (Dissertation) (50 credits)

## Curriculum Map

### Year One

| Term 1   | Term 2  | Term 3 |
|--|---|--------|
| CCA Unit 1: Curatorial Thinking (30 Credits)       | CCA Unit 3: Research in Practice (20 Credits) |        |
| CCA Unit 2: Curatorial Practice (50 Credits)       |   |        |
| Critical and Historical Studies (CHS) (20 Credits) |   |        |

### Year Two

| Term 1  | Term 2 | Term 3 |
|---|--------|--------|
| CCA Unit 4: Graduate Project (50 Credits)     |        |        |
| CCA Unit 5: Research in Practice (50 Credits) |        |        |
| School-Wide Unit (20 Credits)                 |        |        |

## 5. How will I learn?

*Please note that these are subject to change, in line with the national guidance on the Covid-19 response.*

### Tutorials

Throughout the programme there will be individual tutorials which are used:

- to discuss essays and other writing assignments and to offer advice on the development of research and writing skills
- to discuss the choice of subject for the dissertation, to suggest research sources and reading material, to advise on structure and approach and to discuss any problems you may encounter
- to discuss any problems, you may have with the programme or with coursework

### First and Second Year

#### First Year CCA Units 1-3:

The teaching programme of the first year includes a range of talks by visiting curators, critics, artists, gallerists, and academics providing students with knowledge of specific case studies, curatorial positions and artist perspectives. During the first year focus is placed on developing core knowledge of curating and the curatorial in relation to exhibitions, projects, texts and programming. It is assessed through a group-based speculative project, essay writing, and a portfolio of shorter texts. The First Year also includes Critical and Historical Studies.

### **Second Year CCA Units 4 & 5:**

The second year of the programme is comparatively more self-directed and with a greater focus on peer-led learning and builds on the skills and knowledge that have been developed throughout the first two terms of the first year and via the transition of the third term.

Unit CCA4 (Graduate partner project) will be taught through lectures based on core production skills, while elective project groups will develop their projects through bi-weekly meetings with project tutor and partners as appropriate, and alternate week self-directed group workshops.

Unit CCA5 (Dissertation) is taught through lectures and writing workshops

## **6. Assessment and feedback**

### **Assessment**

#### **Continuous Assessment**

Continuous assessment enables the student's performance and progress to be understood and accounted for through a wide variety of academic contact points, recognising that students are able to perform in different ways and through different means and aspects of the curriculum while still achieving the requisite performance standards.

#### **Final Examination**

Final Examination examines the students' ability to synthesise their learning and to express it in a formal exam context, either through their performance in a live event, such as the viva voce examinations (previously interim and final exams), or through the submission of a formal assessed element such as a dissertation or portfolio.

**CCA Unit 1** Curatorial Thinking (30 Credits): 3000-4000-word essay

**CCA Unit 2** Curatorial Practice (50 Credits): 500 critical review; Speculative Project and 1500 critical reflection; 500-word Graduate Project Brief selection proposal and oral examination on proposal selection.

**CCA Unit 3** Research in Practice (20 Credits): dissertation proposal and oral examination on proposal

**CCA Unit 4** Graduate Project (50 credits): project planning realisation, interpretation and documentation; critical reflection report (2000 words) and oral examination<sup>[SEP]</sup>

**CCA Unit 5** – Independent Research Project (Dissertation) (50 credits) 10,000-word dissertation and oral examination

#### **SoAH School Unit - (20 Credits)**

*Assessment: Critical Reflection*

Students will be required to produce a 1000-2000-word critical reflection on their learning from the School Unit. This written response offers the opportunity to consider the question of The Urgency of the Arts in relation to your own thinking and practice. The critical reflection should contextualise your work in relation to contemporary debates and needs to include:

- A reference to at least one speaker from the SoAH School Unit Lecture Series
- A reference to a text / concept / theme that was covered during the MA School Group that you attended
- Up to 3 images (max. 5mb each) relating to your participation in the School Crit with some evaluative commentary

This will be submitted to the joint assessment panel for the Joint Unit 2B / School Unit Exam, taking place toward the end of academic year.

### **Critical and Historical Studies - (20 credits)**

Students are required to submit one or two pieces of writing based on the lectures, seminars, reading groups, and resources from CHS scheduled in Weeks 7–12. Students are invited to join these sessions, where their programme timetable allows; they will also be expected to draw upon the materials and resources provided online in preparing their work for assessment.

The students can decide to pick either one task, or both; in either case, the total submission should consist of 3,000 words, with an overarching reflective summary that sets out what each text aims to communicate, its intended audience, and its potential impact upon its reader(s).

The tasks are as follows:

#### **1. Position**

Write a response to one of the texts distributed for the CHS Reading Groups, identifying how the author has articulated their 'position' within it.

You might respond to the following questions:

- What is the author's topic?
- What is the author's opinion on this topic?
- How do they persuade you to take their view?
- What is the author's writing style?
- Does it appeal to you?
- How would you write it differently?

#### **2. Voice**

Choose another text from those distributed for the CHS Reading Groups. Pair it with an image or object of your choice.

Write a response to the question of what makes this pairing so interesting and convincing.

You might respond to the following questions:

- In your opinion, how does the image/object relate to the text?
- Why have you brought them together?
- How can you persuade me of their relationship?
- Can you find any other writing to back up your opinion?

Please note that for this element of the submission, you are required to provide footnotes for the sources you reference. (You may include footnotes for 'Position' also, though this is not mandatory.)

Your work will be submitted at the beginning of Term 2; following this it will be assessed by members of the Programme staff, who will respond with a brief written report.

**Information regarding individual assessments will be included in the Unit Descriptors, and will be available to students at the beginning of the academic year.**

## 7. What award can I get?

To be awarded an RCA MA degree you need to gain 240 credits at level 7 of the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications (FHEQ). This will involve successfully completing all units.

If you fail a unit at the first attempt, you will be offered an opportunity to resit the unit. If you are successful you will be awarded the credits for that unit. If you are unsuccessful, you cannot progress further in your programme.

Exit awards:

If you have gained at least 120 credits at level 7 of the FHEQ, you may be eligible for the exit award of Postgraduate Diploma. An exit award is a final award from the College and cannot be rescinded.

For more detailed information about the College's assessment, progression and awards policies see the Regulations.

## 8. Admissions

### Cross-College requirements

#### **Academic Entry Requirements**

Candidates must normally have obtained a good relevant undergraduate degree or an equivalent qualification. The College recognises as an equivalent qualification any degree, diploma, certificate or other evidence of formal qualification awarded by a university or other higher education establishment where the award is made following the successful completion of a course of at least three years' study, the programme of study being open, as a general rule, only to persons holding a certificate awarded on the successful completion of a full course of upper secondary education.

Other qualifications may be approved, providing that the College's Academic Board for Concessions and Discipline (ABCD) is satisfied that the applicant has the ability to pursue the programme of study successfully. The ABCD is empowered to make judgements about the extent to which qualifications or experience gained elsewhere may be accepted in partial fulfilment of its requirements.

#### **Portfolio**

All applicants are required to submit a portfolio as part of the application process. A portfolio is a showcase of an applicant's work as an artist or designer and can be made up of images, videos or writing examples. The portfolio helps us to better understand the applicant and allows them to show evidence of their ability and motivation to undertake a given programme.

Each programme is looking for different things in a portfolio; each Head of Programme provides specific advice on portfolio requirements in the online application system. We advise prospective students to consider these requirements carefully before submitting their application.

## **Applicant Qualities**

Generally, we are looking for applicants to demonstrate their:

- creativity, imagination and innovation;
- ability to articulate the intentions of the work;
- intellectual engagement in areas relevant to the work;
- technical skills appropriate to the work;
- potential to benefit from the programme and achieve MA standards overall.

## **English Language**

Applicants who are not a national of a majority English-speaking country will need to demonstrate their English language proficiency. The College accepts a range of English language qualifications. The full list can be seen at <https://www.rca.ac.uk/studying-at-the-rca/apply/entrance-requirements/english-language-requirements/>

Applicants are exempt from this requirement if they have received a 2.1 degree or above from a university in a majority English-speaking nation within the last two years.

If a student would need a Tier 4 visa to study at the RCA, they will also need to meet the Home Office's minimum requirements for entry clearance.

## **Admission Process**

Applications must be made directly to the College through our online application portal: <https://www.rca.ac.uk/studying-at-the-rca/apply/application-process/ma-application-process/>

Upon completion of that first stage of the application process, candidates will be invited to submit a portfolio of their work, a 300-word statement of intent and a video communicating clearly their motivations, personal interests and why they are pursuing a Masters degree at the Royal College of Art. These materials are reviewed by members of the programme team who will communicate an academic decision to the College Registry, who manage the process of offer-making in line with the College's recruitment targets. In some cases, where the programme team is not able to make an admission decision based solely upon the work submitted by the applicant, we may invite the candidate to undertake an interview with us.

Applications are considered chronologically by date and time of final portfolio submission. Whilst a programme still has vacancies, successful candidates will be made an offer of a place. Once a programme becomes full, subsequent successful applicants will be placed on a waiting list, and may be made a firm offer should a place become available for them.

## **Programme-Specific requirements**

Specific advice on programme portfolio requirements is provided by the Head of Programme in the online application system. Please consult the College website for further information on programme-specific admission and portfolio requirements:

<https://www.rca.ac.uk/study/schools/school-of-arts-humanities/cca/ma-entrance/>