



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

Awarding institution:	Royal College of Art
Programme title:	MA Animation
Award:	Masters
Qualification framework level:	Level 7
School/Department or equivalent:	School of Communication
Programme duration:	2-years
Total UK credits:	240 credits
Mode of study:	Full time
Date valid from/to:	2020-21

2. Programme Philosophy

The programme critically and creatively examines animation to situate it in contemporary debates in visual culture and communication. We encourage our students to engage with contemporary cultural, political and systemic issues through a range of technologies and platforms. Structured around practice, experimentation and constructive critique, the curriculum has a particular emphasis on developing creative content informed by collaboration, process, writing, sound and editing. Students explore enduring historical relations with the material-based media of painting, drawing, illustration and sculpture – the ‘stuff’ of animation practice – that are enhanced by digital tools and processes and explorations in sound and film language. Students undertake contextual research to develop verbal and textual articulation in interdisciplinary contexts of drama, literature, philosophy, film and media theory, social sciences, art history, the sciences and architecture. The curriculum has a particular emphasis on developing creative content informed by sensitivity to subject matter, collaboration and research.

Within the extensive contexts of animation, a moving image form that extends across a global landscape of technologies, screen platforms, and human/nonhuman relationships, three low-walled pathways – Experimental Animation, Documentary Animation and Narrative Animation – additionally offer a specialist focus. Fluidity between and beyond the pathways is encouraged. Students deepen their own understanding of animation to develop their own individual approach, and challenge themselves intellectually with new ideas to broaden social, political and cultural perspectives through creative engagement.

3. Educational Aims and Outcomes of the Programme

Programme Aims

The MA Animation programme aims to:

- offer a singular approach to learning and teaching for developing creativity and skills to negotiate rapid cultural and technological change;
- help you engage imaginatively and sensitively with contemporary social, environmental, political and/or cultural issues using different technologies, innovative practice and creative media;
- maintain an ethos and environment of experimentation and creative practice built on a foundation of social and cultural interrogation, and contextual and critical thinking;
- support, foster and encourage innovative practice-oriented research sensitive to understanding nuances of contexts, cultures, identities, traditions and futures;
- enhance your development of fundamental research, interpersonal and presentation skills and expanded discipline expertise
- help you challenge the boundaries of traditional animation and moving image in your practice in process, aesthetic expression, variation on (non-)narrative forms, and representation;
- support your creative and transformative journeys to be ethically minded thinkers and creative artists, filmmakers and problem solvers.

What will I be expected to achieve?

By the end of the period of study, we aim for you to have achieved the programme's objectives, which can be summarised as follows:

- To enable you to emerge as an advanced creative practitioner working with the materials-based and/or digital techniques of animated moving image media and its related areas of sound;
- equipped with abilities in contextual and critical thinking to understand and interrogate nuances of contexts, cultures, identities, traditions and future, and with the necessary intellectual skills;
- to be able to pursue advanced practice-oriented research in these areas and to apply them across professional contexts, both academic and non-academic, within a variety of self-defined career paths.

Programme-Specific Learning Outcomes

Able to:	A. Intellectual Engagement
A1.	Initiate and develop innovative moving image projects, specifying the intellectual, creative and technical challenges involved.
A2.	Demonstrate originality in the application of new knowledge and techniques to a creative problem.
A3.	Integrate and evidence primary and secondary research on aesthetic, historical and critical perspectives in the development and presentation of projects and process.
A4	Evidence and articulate the intellectual processes involved in the production and communication of your work.
A5.	Demonstrate an awareness of the responsibility of the filmmaker to their audiences and sensitivity to the subject being represented.
A6.	Effectively communicate your intentions and knowledge by oral, written and visual means.
A7.	Demonstrate a strong understanding of structure with considered sounds and image juxtaposition.

Able to:	B. Technical Skills
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B1.	Evidence a working knowledge of pre-production and production methods to produce work at an advanced level that integrates thought, creativity and technique.
B2.	Experiment in the use of materials, processes and environments in order to translate ideas and primary research into moving image practice.
B3.	Identify, acquire and display a high level of specialist skills that integrates thought, creativity and technique.
B4.	Take responsibility for archiving your own media in preparation for screening and exhibition to a professional standard.

Able to:	C. Professional Development
C1.	Work responsibly and professionally with performers, collaborators and other contributors to your project.
C2.	Engage in constructive reflection and discussion with tutors and peers on your own and others' work.
C3.	Reflect on, articulate and document progress throughout the programme.
C4.	Participate thoughtfully and professionally when working and collaborating with others
C5.	Demonstrate the self-motivation, time and resources management, and discipline necessary to deliver creative projects within budget and schedule.

4. What will I learn?

Programme Units and Credit Weightings

Year One

Unit 1: Systems of Practice (60 Credits)

Unit 2A: School Elective 1 (20 Credits)

Unit 3: Critical and Historical Studies [CHS] (40 Credits)

In the first year, you undertake a Critical and Historical Studies dissertation (Unit 3), choose a school-wide Elective (Unit 2A) and, in Term 1, engage in a series of core workshops designed to impart knowledge and skills for research methods and exploration and development of moving image and sound practices. Towards the end of Term 2, you begin development of a first-year project based on a set of briefs that may include external collaborations that forms the main focus in Term 3. Discipline-specific and inter-disciplinary Articulation seminars, workshops and tutorials in Terms 2 and 3 support key intellectual development and creative practice as well as underpinning specific pathways.

Year Two

Unit 4: Development and Prototyping (60 Credits)

Unit 5: Independent Research Project (60 Credits)

In the first term you research, develop and prototype your second year, self-determined independent project in tandem with the Critical Forum. In Terms 1 and 2 you receive regular tutor and peer feedback crits and assessments. A series of specialist workshops, lectures and tutorials provides expertise on a range of practice, production skills and cultural, contextual and intellectual themes. In Term 3, a series of professional practice sessions supports your transition after graduation and the expectation is primarily of independent work on your final project.

Critical and Historical Studies

Critical & Historical Studies is the cross-College platform that delivers teaching and activities aimed at enabling critical engagement to take place within, and between, the different disciplines at the RCA.

All studio-based first year MA students have a CHS unit as a core part of their programme of study, designed to enable this critical dialogue and enhance each student's development. Led by a team of dedicated, highly skilled and deeply engaged staff, CHS delivers a programme of lectures, seminars, workshops and tutorials (both small group and one-to-one). Students will be encouraged to engage with vital and challenging ideas that relate to their practices. This both enriches and provides a broader intellectual framework within which to establish a coherent inter-relationship between theoretical and practice-based approaches to art and design.

As a team, our disciplinary interests span the fine and applied arts, architecture, design (including fashion, graphics, interior and product design), craft, communication, film, humanities, photography, digital media, science and technology.

CHS provides:

- contemporary, thought-provoking lectures by CHS staff and visiting tutors
- the opportunity for students to explore the theoretical background of their chosen discipline through a taught dissertation process
- individual and group tutorial support from our Programme's team of expert tutors

The CHS Handbook sets out the broad principles of CHS at the RCA. It outlines what you can expect of us and what we require of you to engage and produce work to your best ability. On the Moodle pages you will find details of the scheduled programme and the broad areas to be covered in each term,

details about the tuition and assessment of your CHS dissertation, and information on resources that will help you during your studies.

Your main points of contact for CHS will be your group tutor and your School Liaison Tutor for your School. You will be assigned your group tutor at start of the Autumn Term.

Curriculum Map

	Autumn	Spring	Summer
Year 1	Systems of Practice	(60 credits)	
		School Elective (20 credits)	
	Critical and Historical Studies – CHS DISSERTATION	(40 credits)	
Year 2	Development & Prototyping (60 credits)	Independent Research Project (60 credits)	

5. How will I learn?

The programme's teaching is delivered through a number of different ways as noted below. All teaching will be delivered as blended learning, a mixture of on-site and online delivery.

All with * are mandatory attendance; where unit-specific this is indicated:

*Core workshops: 3x 2-day workshops (Unit 1)

*Lectures

*Articulation Seminars (Unit 1)

Specialist Lectures and Workshops

Critical Forum (Unit 4)

Tutor and Student Crits

Blended and flipped learning: Zoom seminars, presentations and meetings, PebblePad, Moodle and associated digital platforms

Group Tutorials

*Personal tutor tutorials, twice-termly
*1:1 tutorials
College technical workshops and drop-ins
Peer-supported and initiated group learning sessions
Studio and external visits (where possible)

Projects

You are expected to develop a number of set and self-initiated projects.

In the first year, Unit 1 projects are the core learning and teaching element of the programme around which tutorials, workshops, crits, group debates and technical instruction take place. Projects can vary in length and outcome. In Term 1, you engage in a series of workshops. Towards the end of Term 2, during which you engage with an elective (Unit 2A), you select from a set of project briefs, which may include live projects or commissions with non-profit and other organisations outside the College. You complete a Unit 1 project by the end of Year 1. This project can relate to your pathway and you are expected to engage in experimentation and conceptual thinking, and develop sensitivity to the subject represented.

In the second year, you develop your own personal project, supported by the Head of Programme, tutors, and specialist workshops. The first term is research-intensive, and includes developing a detailed production plan. Term two is focused on production and refinement of your final project. Projects may also be collaborative.

Workshops

Workshops offer an intensive learning experience focused on a particular subject, creative approach or technique. Typically, in the first term, a series of workshops covers skills and knowledge development in sound, writing and experimental and digital practice. In Year 2, a range of specialist subject workshops are offered and can include creative writing, sound, animation techniques, movement, directing voice and film language. You are invited to collectively propose a number of these to the Head of Programme.

College-wide technical workshops for practical aspects are also available across a range of analogue and digital creative practices, from Adobe CC, Cinema 4D, Dragonframe and VR/AR to sound creation, Stop-Motion, Printmaking, Photography and more.

Tutorials

Personal Tutorials are scheduled with your Personal Tutor, who offer advice and engage in discussion with you to foster, support and challenge your development and ensure you are on track in your programme. You should expect to have a minimum of two tutorials per term. It is important that you are prepared for your tutorials and take a proactive role. It is good practice to make a list of points before each tutorial for a critical self-reflection of progress and any challenges or issues you are facing. Towards the end of term both you and your tutor are required to complete a joint progress report and action a plan for progress. The tutor will comment on current projects and give an overall report on your progress, which references the criteria used in assessment. The progress report is given to you for your comments and should be completed by the end of each term. In the third term, first year students will complete a progress report after the Interim Examination. In term six, second year students will complete a progress report before their Final Examination.

Tutorial Groups are timetabled at key points throughout the year, encouraging peer review in a small group setting with your Personal Tutor.

Reflection Tutorials in Year 1 consider your progress and to prepare for Year 2.

Completion Tutorials enable your Personal Tutor to give you advice on your future trajectory before you graduate.

Individual Tutorials: there are opportunities to sign up for one-to-one tutorials with other animation tutors, visiting lecturers and specialist professionals.

Progress Crits and Forums

Progress Reviews take place in Terms 1 and 2. You present your work-in-progress to tutors and peers for formal critical feedback.

Work-in-Progress Forums are self-organised by cohorts and offer an informal setting in which students can present research and work-in-progress to peers for support and discussion. You are expected to take an active role in providing feedback to your fellow students.

Professional Feedback Session provides specific feedback and careers advice to second year students from a group of professionals from a range of backgrounds following a screening of the Graduation Projects.

Theoretical Seminars

The Articulation Seminars in Term 2 is a series of lectures on Pathway subjects and interdisciplinary approaches to expanded critical contexts and history, theory and aesthetics of animation and related fields. Lectures are enhanced by reading lists, include film screenings and are followed by student-led discussion supported by tutors.

Critical Forum

The Critical Forum is a series of interdisciplinary tutorial groups for second year students with the aim of generating and sharing project-specific research methods for and approaches to the second year project. You are invited to consider, present and discuss a range of image, sound and text-based materials across animation and its many related creative and intellectual fields to explore rationales, criteria and starting points. The Forum is structured to encourage self-reflective practice, experimentation, independent thought, and to foster an in-depth critical understanding of making and thinking.

A key feature of the Forum is the initial group discussion to arrive at agreed terms of engagement: the purpose is to democratically self-organise, and this plays a significant role for the students in creating a platform that is empowering. It allows you to analyse and develop your approaches to and responsibilities in your practice in relation to each other, to other disciplines, and to cultural and representational issues and structures. It uses a student-led teaching strategy to develop a greater capacity for critical, constrictive and independent thought.

Master Classes

Artists and professionals present their work and give an insight into their techniques and creative processes.

Visits

Organised field trips led by tutors, online or otherwise, which can include digitally-assisted visits to animation studios, exhibitions, museums and archives.

You may get the opportunity to participate in an exhibition of your student work, either during or at the conclusion of your studies. Your Programme Handbook should provide more information on the nature of this participation.

6. Assessment and feedback

Unit assessment

You will be assessed at the conclusion of each unit against the learning outcomes. Information on assessments is included in the unit descriptors that are provided to you at the start of the academic year.

Assessments normally take place in the following weeks.

Unit 1 Systems of Practice: Rotational workshops: Term 1 Week 12

Unit 1 Systems of Practice: First Year Project: Term 3 End of Term

Unit 2A School-wide Elective: Term 2, end of term

Unit 3 CHS Dissertation Submission: Please see the CHS handbook and Moodle site

Unit 4 Development and Prototyping: Term 4 Week 12

Unit 5 Independent Research Project Mid-term Review: Term 5, mid term

Unit 5 Independent Research Project: Term 6, mid term

Continuous Assessment

Continuous assessment enables your performance and progress to be understood and accounted for through a wide variety of academic contact points. It recognises 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. This assessment is validated through a structure that ensures that your performance is evaluated from a range of perspectives and by a range of different tutors who are able to triangulate their experience of the student and enable parity of assessment across the cohort.

The School Elective (Unit 2A) and Systems of Practice (Unit 1) in Year 1 and Development & Prototyping (Unit 4) in Year 2 are assessed wholly or in part through a process of continuous assessment. This relies on staff who have had experience of the student coming together at the end of the unit in a Unit Assessment Meeting, chaired by the Head of Programme or a Senior Tutor, to review your self-evaluation and to share their experience of your work in relation to the relevant learning outcomes.

The process for referrals or illness is outlined in the College Academic Regulations and students can seek advice from the Head of Programme, Personal tutor or the Student's Union.

Pre-Assessment

To help prepare for Final Examination, Exam Briefings are held in advance of exams. Pre-Assessment is arranged for you approximately two weeks prior to examinations. Staff and students will respond with constructive critical feedback to your presentation and work. By this stage, all animation should be completed and in the form of a progressed edit with indicative sound. Year 2 students should discuss and rehearse their examination presentation with their personal tutor, well in advance of the examination, and they are encouraged to present to peers as well for feedback.

Final Examination

The examination is the culmination of your studies towards an MA degree. All units of the programme will have been completed before the examination. At the examination, you present work you have completed in your second year (Unit 5). You submit a Statement of Outcome in advance (approx. 500 words), in which you critically reflect on your work and its contextual and creative development. You should discuss your plans for the examination with your personal tutor, and prepare a presentation supported with visual, text and moving image/sound elements and work produced in the second year.

At the examination, you will give a 15-minute presentation, which includes a screening of your Independent Research Project to the Examination Panel. This is a visual and verbal presentation of contextual and primary research and development work, and it is expected to display a significant depth of enquiry and reflection. The project must be fully finished with a final sound mix and presented professionally in an appropriate setting to the Examination Panel.

You are assessed against the Unit Learning Outcomes and examined on the ability to produce work at an advanced level which is at or near the forefront of the discipline and demonstrates a creative, imaginative, innovative and individual response to a self-set brief. Your work will be assessed by a Panel of academics.

A School Examination Board is convened to agree the pass list and to recommend final examination results to ABCD for ratification. External Examiner(s) are also involved in the process of Examination, the details of which are explained in the College Academic Regulations.

The process for referrals or illness is outlined in the College Academic Regulations and students can seek advice from the Head of Programme, Personal tutor or the Student's Union.

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/programme-finder/animation-ma/#requirements>