



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 Contemporary Art Practice
Award:	Masters
Qualification framework level:	Level 7
School/Department or equivalent:	School of Arts and Humanities
Programme duration:	2-years
Total UK credits:	240 credits
Mode of study:	Full time
Date valid from/to:	2020-21

2. Programme Philosophy

The Contemporary Art Practice Programme supports a diverse approach to the making of artworks. The programme is delivered via three pathways: Critical Practice, Moving Image, and Public Sphere. We believe that by arranging the programme in this way we can allow for specificity in the discussion and production of artworks; the pathways enable the students to develop a refined understanding of the context of their practice via an engagement with recent histories, theories and practices of their specific field. Reflecting the contemporary diversity of an expanded field, artists engaged in developing performance work as all or part of a broader working practice are supported within each pathway and through cross-programme teaching and events. Students are encouraged to situate their practice within the social, political and economic conditions of the contemporary world; identifying what art can contribute to ongoing material, critical, technological, and philosophical debates. Research and experimentation through the production of concepts and arrangements for new types of global space, politics and social engagement are some of the ways in which students will develop their practice and enquiry. Writing and the development of strategies for new ways to envisage art production and engagement are embraced by the programme. Discourse is a key aspect of 21st century art production we expect students to be involved in navigating the relationship of art and the function of art's discourse for art's reception.

Our approach to teaching is premised on an understanding that artists, makers, writers, curators, critics and historians today are neither constrained by their discipline, the medium they use nor by a sense of what content their work should address. Practitioners in the Arts & Humanities are valued for their contribution to culture and the broader economy because they test and reflect upon the way in which we try to engage with our rapidly changing world; exploit the possibilities of new technologies while also engaging with the value of traditional approaches; they enact new philosophical positions as well as reflecting upon how our thinking has led us to where we are. And they often adopt stances informed significantly by the past to antagonise our assumptions about society.

We also conceive of the Arts & Humanities as a range of subjects that are accessible to

collaboration with other fields and disciplines; subjects that celebrate the deployment of diverse methods of research and production that are invented, borrowed and even stolen. At the Royal College of Art, we enjoy an environment that is supportive of the varied research enquiries that the Arts & Humanities can enable. We support customary methods and processes whilst enabling others that we cannot even anticipate. We are committed to examining and researching both the means by which enquiries in the Arts & Humanities emerge – the rich array of positions, techniques, methods and materials used by practitioners to develop their research – as well as the subjects, ideas and issues that are successfully articulated, with a view to understanding a broader cultural, societal and economic impact.

Teaching in the School is organised around programmes that provide specific material and historical co-ordinates as points of reference from which students are encouraged to consider the development of their own work. Regardless of their programme of study, students interact across the broad area of the Arts & Humanities and are also encouraged to engage with other areas of the College.

Research in the School of Arts & Humanities often leads staff and students to less immediately cognate fields of the Arts & Humanities as well as the sciences, and the School works with a range of significant partners such as the V&A and Imperial College to further its ambitions in this regard.

We therefore view all our programmes in the School of Arts & Humanities as useful pedagogical structures, in that they focus specific areas of activity within an ever expanding field. The programmes enable directed study within an environment that is ambitious not to proliferate and perpetuate what we know but to generate new practices and insights.

3. Educational Aims and Outcomes of the Programme

Programme aims

The programme aims to:

- to provide a learning environment which privileges experimentation and self-reflexivity in order to develop an ambitious art practice
- teach how to plan and produce works of high quality and significance both technically and conceptually
- to rethink the contemporary medium of art practice through social, critical and conceptual frameworks and technological advances
- to establish a dialogue between theory and practice and to produce a practice which negotiates received theories and demonstrates ways of departing from accepted norms
- to support a self-reflective and critical understanding of professional contexts

What will I be expected to achieve?

The Contemporary Art Practice programme offers a discursive environment in which to discuss contemporary issues for thinking about, making and displaying art. Students are expected to work independently and also collaboratively in the production of work across a diverse range of materials, forms of expression, theories and contexts. Students are expected to participate in tutorials, seminars, cross-pathway critiques and events and to be active, responsive and responsible members of an international community of artists. CAP students will be expected to

develop their art practice within a dialogical and critical context with an emphasis on wider socio-political issues, developing their understanding of how their work might intersect with, draw upon, challenge and remap the expansive field of contemporary art practice; in this way students also further their knowledge of the investigative skills and intuition often required for research.

Programme-Specific Learning Outcomes

Able to:	A. Intellectual Engagement
A1.	INNOVATION: Develop innovative ideas that challenge the understanding of their practice and discipline
A2.	CONTEXT: Demonstrate an advanced understanding of historical and contemporary debate and how it relates to their practice
A3.	RESEARCH: Demonstrate an advanced understanding of the principles and methods of research and apply them effectively to their own practice
A4.	COMMUNICATION: Effectively articulate and debate the intellectual and technical processes involved in the production of their work

Able to:	B. Technical Skills
B1.	PRODUCTION: Produce work at an advanced level that integrates thought, creativity and technique
B2.	EXPERIMENTATION: Experiment in their use of materials, processes and environments in order to translate ideas into practice
B3.	SKILLS: Display a mastery of the technical skills required in the creation, display and documentation of their work

Able to:	C. Professional Development
C1.	INDEPENDENCE: Take responsibility for directing their studies through setting goals and managing time and resources effectively
C2.	COLLABORATION: Participate as an active, thoughtful and responsible member of a community
C3.	IDENTITY: Define their professional identity through self-reflection and an understanding of the creative economy

4. What will I learn?

Year One

During the first year of the programme students undertake three units of study: Unit 1A, Unit 1B and CHS. These units are each worth 40 credits and assessed through a combination of continuous and summative assessment methods.

To support their progress in Units 1A and 1B students are assigned a personal tutor with whom they discuss their work in tutorials, the programme will schedule five per academic year. Students will also be given opportunities for tutorials with other members of the programme team, and will have the opportunity to request tutorials from other staff in the School and a broader range of visiting tutors

Although working primarily on their own practice, there are also throughout the year group critiques, seminars, lectures, workshops and tutorials with other members of the programme team and, more widely, with staff and students from across the school. Students produce work for studio critiques that take place throughout term one and two.

First year students contribute to a Work in Progress presentation. Their work is not expected to be resolved at this stage. It is an opportunity to take risks, trying new materials and ideas. As this is in a context of public display it includes the question of spectatorship. This enables students to reflect upon the efficacy of the visual forms and concepts with which they have been working.

Each unit is assessed in full at its conclusion as per the following table:

<p>Unit 1A:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 40 Credits • Self assessment then progress feedback from programme unit assessment meeting (staff double marking meeting) (continuous assessment) • December. • Learning Outcomes: A2. A3. A4. B2. C1. C2. C3. 	<p>Unit 1B:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 40 Credits • Self assessment (Continuous assessment) and Exam feedback (Final Examination) from 1B exam panel. • May. • Learning Outcomes: A1. A2. A4. B2. B3. C1. C2. 	<p>CHS:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 40
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Year Two

During the second year of the programme students undertake three units of study: Unit 2A (40 credits), Unit 2B (60 Credits) and SoAH School Unit (20 Credits). These units are assessed through a combination of continuous and summative assessment methods.

Students are assigned a relevant personal tutor who supports their practice throughout the year. They produce a self-initiated body of work, which is evaluated and discussed in group critiques and tutorials throughout the year.

In the third term the work students exhibit in the graduating show is linked to the examination of their final unit 2B - the Independent Research Project. It consists of a major project undertaken in the second year of the programme. Their art practice should now demonstrate that they are able to make, develop and realise work at Masters level. Students' work should now have a clear direction and resolution, demonstrating a level of conceptual and technical competence appropriate to their own aims and objectives. Students' practice is expected to be self-initiated and thoroughly researched.

Alongside their participation in programme-based units, students will also participate in the SoAH School unit, which, through study groups, lectures, symposia, critiques and tutorials will support students in discussing and evolving their work against a broader frame of reference.

Each unit is assessed in full at its conclusion as per the following table:

Unit 2A:	Unit 2B:	SoAH School Unit:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 40 Credits • Self-assessment then progress feedback from programme unit assessment meeting (staff double marking meeting)(continuous assessment) • December • Learning Outcomes: A1. A2. A3. A4. B1. B2. C1. C2. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 60 Credits • Self-assessment (continuous assessment) and Exam feedback (Final Examination) from 2B/School Unit Joint Panel. • June. • Learning Outcomes: A2. A3. A4. B1. B2. B3. C1. C2. C3. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 20 Credits • Assessed Portfolio at 2B/School Unit Joint Panel. (Final Examination). • May • School Exam Board then reviews marks from all units and recommends pass or fail. • Learning Outcomes: B2. C2. C3.

CHS Information

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.

We hope that you will enjoy working with the CHS team and use all the opportunities offered to you as a student at the Royal College of Art.

Curriculum Map

MA Contemporary Art Practice Year 1		
Term One	Term Two	Term Three
Unit 1A Studio (40 Credits)	Unit 1B Studio (40 Credits)	
Critical & Historical Studies (CHS) – (40 credits)		

MA Contemporary Art Practice Year 2		
Term One	Term Two	Term Three
Unit 2A Studio (40 Credits)	Unit 2B Independent Research Project (60 Credits)	
Portfolio (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.

General
Teaching consists of individual and group tutorials, workshops, reading groups, group critiques, symposia and lectures by leading artists and theorists.
Tutorials
Students are allocated a Personal Tutor and will meet with them five times per academic year. There are opportunities to arrange tutorials with other members of the school team. Tutorials may also include a small group of students discussing work in progress with a tutor or visiting artist.
Students will also have a tutorial each year as part of their integrated school-wide group.

At the end of each studio unit, students write a self-assessment form, which is a critical account of their practice, its development and reception in tutorials and critiques. This enables students to articulate and clarify in writing what their work attempts to achieve and the direction it takes. At the end of each unit of study, the student's Personal Tutor writes an evaluative feedback report in response both to the students' self-assessment and to the considered and moderated assessment of their work.

Critiques

Group critiques take place throughout the school and programme and may also involve guest tutors. The group critique collectively appraises and evaluates the reception and processes of students' work.

Workshops

Students come from a wide range of backgrounds, with very different expertise. In the autumn and spring terms the programme provides workshops primarily for first year students. As part of their school-wide group, students will participate in a yearly workshop around a particular theme.

6. Assessment and feedback

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.

All Studio based Units (1A, 1B, 2A & 2B) are assessed wholly or in part through a process of continuous assessment.

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) at the conclusion of Units 1B and 2B, or through the submission of a formal assessed element such as a dissertation or portfolio at the conclusion of the SoAH School Unit and CHS.

Unit 1B

The Final Examination for Unit 1B is held as a Viva Voce. This Unit Assessment Meeting is chaired by the Head of Programme or a Senior Tutor and reviews the work produced by the student on the unit. Students will be asked to demonstrate that their practice is evolving and that they are able to position your work within the context of contemporary art practice and theory, as per the relevant Learning Outcomes.

Unit 2B

The Final Examination for Unit 2B is held at the beginning of the third term as a Viva Voce. This Unit Assessment Meeting is chaired by the Head of Programme or a Senior Tutor and reviews the work produced by the student on the Unit. Students will be asked to demonstrate that their practice is evolving and that they are able to position their work within the context of contemporary art practice and theory, as per the relevant Learning Outcomes.

SoAH School Unit

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.

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/contemporary-art-practice-ma/#requirements>