



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 Digital Direction
Award:	Masters
Qualification framework level:	Level 7
School/Department or equivalent:	School of Communication
Programme duration:	15-months
Total UK credits:	240 credits
Mode of study:	Full time
Date valid from/to:	2020-21

2. Programme Philosophy

Communication lies at the heart of our School. In a climate of continually shifting technological, social, political and cultural contexts, new communication paradigms are emerging that require innovative and forward-thinking strategies, methods, and processes. Enabled and informed by advances in digital technology, contemporary media platforms and time-based content are increasingly integrated: they are mobile and fluid, seamlessly embedded in multiple types of environments, infrastructures and products, often user-controlled with an engagement in more democratic forms of content generation and curation. These require new responses to their growing impact in social, cultural, political and industrial environments.

MA Digital Direction aims to inform and enhance our understanding of the role of communication within these broader contexts; specifically, that of media and storytelling in a digital era. Appealing to creative professionals, this mix of practice addresses the need for innovative creative leaders and content generators who can engage with fast changing social and industrial contexts and develop innovative delivery strategies that leverage the power of emerging multiple media ecologies.

3. Educational Aims and Outcomes of the Programme

Programme Aims

The MA Digital Direction programme aims to:

- develop students' that have a material understanding of both digital and post-digital cultures and practice across media and communication design;
- develop the professional, intellectual and technical skills of students, and provide a centre of excellence for the training of digital directors to develop content-led strategic leadership for the creative industries;

- develop students' ability to both embrace and harness the change presented by rapid technological development across media and communication design.

What will I be expected to achieve?

Students on this course will gain a practical, political, philosophical and theoretical understanding of emergent storytelling practices, they will have insight into their future as digital creatives, whether by activism, self-employment, employment or the form of practice which best suits their own needs and ambitions for the future. Students will also be engaged in innovating new forms of storytelling and in being active agents for change through their skills and new knowledge.

Programme-Specific Learning Outcomes

Able to:	A. Intellectual Engagement
A1.	Demonstrate a systematic and coherent understanding of discrete ways in which technological developments are shaping innovative practice in contemporary media and communication environments.
A2.	Demonstrate a critical awareness of the potential of emerging technologies and associated modes of practice to both enhance and disrupt contemporary media and communication environments for diverse audiences.
A3.	Evidence an ability to deal with the complexity presented by contemporary media and communication environments in agile and innovative ways.
A4.	Evidence and articulate the intellectual processes involved in the production and communication of your work.

Able to:	B. Technical Skills
B1.	Direct and edit complex narrative content across moving image, audio and experience contexts using a range of software platforms.
B2.	Assemble innovative non-linear and time-based media using the professional skills of post-digital filmmaking and interactive communication design.
B3.	Plan and produce experimental mixed reality content for augmented and virtual reality contexts using relevant 3D software workflows.

Able to:	C. Professional Development
C1.	Evidence an ability to provide creative leadership in the development of complex innovative multiple-media projects including an ability to articulate complex media strategies to professional audiences.
C2.	Demonstrate and ensure that the needs of diverse audiences are considered in the deployment of powerful multiple-media projects.
C3.	Demonstrate an advanced knowledge of digital practices at the cutting-edge of the design, media and communication industries.

C4.	Participate thoughtfully and professionally when working and collaborating with others.
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4. What will I learn?

- **Unit 1 Media Architectures** (40 Credits)
- **Unit 2A: School Elective** (20 Credits)
- **Unit 3: Critical Historical Studies [CHS]** (40 Credits)
- **Unit 4: Assembly and Amplification** (40 Credits)
- **Unit 5: Immersive Adventures** (40 Credits)
- **Unit 6: Independent Research Project** (60 Credits)

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

TERM 1	TERM 2	TERM 3	TERM 4
Media Architectures (40 credits)	Assembly & Amplification (40 credits)	Immersive Adventures (40 credits)	Independent Research Project (60 credits)
	School Elective: I (20 credits)		
Critical and Historical Studies – CHS (40 credits) DISSERTATION			

5. How will I learn?

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- Workshops
- Seminars
- Blended Learning – blogging and social forums as well as Zoom lectures, Pebblepad and Miro
- Studio Crits
- Individual tutorials
- Group tutorials
- Peer assisted learning
- Technical workshops
- External Visits/field trips, as constrained by Covid-19

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.

Tutorials

There are three kinds of tutorials: personal, group and programme.

Each term students have two in-depth 1-hour tutorials with their personal tutor to discuss their current work and development. Several themes underlie most tutorials and will be returned to. The first relates to the intention of the work as a piece of communication – it's one of the tutor's concerns that the student's professional future is considered. The student's relationship with the tutor is based on discussion and collaboration rather than authority. Tutors generally have a great deal of expertise in their field so professional concerns are an area of focus.

In advance of the tutorial, students are expected to fill in a 'self-analysis form', which is a critical self-reflection of their progress and a place to document any challenges or issues they are facing. Following the tutorials both students and tutor are required to complete a progress report and action a plan for progress. The tutor will comment on current projects and give an overall report on the student's progress, which references the criteria used in assessment. The progress report is given to students for their comments and should be completed by the end of each term.

Once a term, students meet together in a group with their tutor to present work in progress, discuss

and support each other. In addition, students also have the opportunity to sign-up for a 45-minute programme tutorial once a term with other tutors in the programme in addition to their own personal tutor.

Blended learning is also an appropriate aspect of this programme, where students use online platforms (e.g. blogs, technical podcasts) for reflecting and gaining tutor and peer feedback on their work, alongside more conventional modes of learning.

Theory/Practice Seminars

Theory/practice seminars enable discussion, debate and explore the broader key concepts in media and communications practices, social, participatory and critical design, broadcasting and Digital Humanities. Each seminar will be led either by students, active practitioners and/or researchers drawn from across the School of Communication and the wider college research community and based around key texts/practice that students will be expected to have read or viewed.

Theory/practice seminars will address the following topics such as: digital aesthetics, the practice of data, narrative practice, time-based media, documentary, participatory cultures, immersive media environments.

Lectures

Lectures are provided by key staff, visiting lectures and guests who may bring new perspectives and insights to particular themes and subject domains offered by each unit. The lecture is delivered as conventionally understood, and may be delivered online, in line with local and national restrictions.

Workshops (Technical and Professional)

Workshops which are skills and knowledge-based are designed to introduce students to practices in the production of and strategic understanding of communication design/media-led digital and post/non-digital practice. Workshops provide students with the practical and critical tools to apply to unit projects and/or to their own self-initiated work. Workshops may include, for example, digital filmmaking, audio production, social strategy, AR/VR prototyping and expanded spatial practices. Workshops are specific to each unit and are detailed in the relevant descriptors.

Projects

Projects are the core learning and teaching method for the programme. Projects can be structured to suit the ambitions of an individual student or a collaborative group. Each unit has a set project – focused on making – that leverages the knowledge and skills delivered through seminars, workshops, tutorials, critical reviews and technical instruction. Projects for each unit can vary in length and intended outcome. They build on the core principles of experimentation, strategic and critical thinking and a material understanding of both digital and post/non-digital cultures and practices. Some projects may also build on the College, School or Programme's industry/professional and commercial/non-profit partnerships providing a 'live' context to their learning and giving the opportunity to locate work in a specific context.

Critical Forum

The Critical Forum is a student-led weekly opportunity to engage with tutor(s) and the programme peer-group in support of current design project work. The Forum is structured to encourage self-reflective practice, experimentation, independent thought, and to foster an in-depth critical understanding of making and thinking. The Forum also supports the programme's aim in developing student confidence and 'thought' leadership. Key to the successful outcome of the Critical Forum is that each year students agree (together with staff) a group structure and develop the aims and

objectives of the weekly Forum meetings.

The forum is designed to foster a bridge between theory and practice and develop the interdisciplinary work in the programme and inform the development, and delivery of student-led learning. This initiative allows students to analyse and develop their practice in relation to other disciplines' key theoretical debates, and uses a student-led teaching strategy to develop a greater capacity for critical thinking with making, constructive and independent thought.

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. This assessment is validated through a structure that ensures that student 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.

Units 1, 2A, 3 and 4 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 the student's self-evaluation and to share their experience of the student 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.

Final Examination

A Final Examination takes place following the completion of Unit 6: Independent Research Project. Students will prepare an oral presentation and a portfolio of process and final work as outlined in the unit descriptors, for the Final Examination Board.

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. Required assessment elements are fully detailed within the programme's unit descriptors. The full-time and part-time modes share assessment points, apart from Unit 6 - Independent Research Project - which extends into Term 5.

All units on the programme (240 credits) will have been completed by the time of the final examination. After the work has been assessed by the staff team, the viva (oral presentation) is the main event in the Final Examination process. Discussion in the viva focuses on the Independent Research Project and a portfolio of documentation and process work.

At the Exam, you will have 15 minutes to speak about the work providing the context, rationale and findings of your research and practice outcome(s).

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/digital-direction-ma/#requirements>