



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 Information Experience Design
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. Philosophy of the Programme

In IED we design experiences to communicate information, creating installations and interventions using a range of senses, modes and media, including sound and moving image. We approach social and technological systems critically, and work across art and design, grounded in theories and research methods from science and philosophy.

Creative practitioners today can no longer afford to be constrained by traditional specialisms and outdated definitions of art, design, science and technology. IED thus takes a post-digital and post-disciplinary approach, working across these areas, undertaking advanced research and practice on the intellect, the senses and the imagination, using a wide range of digital and physical media, materials and methods. IED looks beyond the object, product and screen to content, context and concept; and beyond binary concepts such as human, artificial and natural, aiming for individual and societal transformation.

IED is about information and experience, not technology. We use investigative and experiential research through a range of methods to create transformative, immersive and multisensory experiences. IED develops a mind-set as well as a skillset. No specific technical skills are required; applicants come from diverse backgrounds in design, science, fine art, technology and the humanities, with a common critical interest in research, materials and making. Our pathways in Sound Design, Moving Image Design, and Experimental Design are interrelated, focused around different ways of approaching IED's core aim of transforming information into experiences.

3. Educational Aims and Outcomes of the Programme

Programme Aims

The programme aims to develop students' powers of analysis and critical judgement, to inform technological and/or aesthetic innovations. Underpinning this is a well-developed philosophical understanding of relevant subject areas, student work and its context. Students should be able to articulate their ideas and intentions, communicating them, with cultural sensitivity, to a wide audience.

Specifically, the programme aims to:

- produce confident practitioners with expert understanding of contemporary art & design practice relevant to the needs of society, with a holistic understanding of the social and environmental implications of their actions;
- create new academic relationships with others doing similar work, research and study;
- maintain an atmosphere within which students feel free to experiment, and to question existing practice, but to do so from the position of being well-informed;
- help students develop an understanding of research and its relation to practice, and to make judgments that are critically informed both aesthetically and professionally;
- encourage students to develop the social skills which are increasingly necessary in designing informational experiences; and
- prepare students technically for professional life by ensuring that they are fully acquainted with the processes of generation, reproduction and distribution of information and experiences; and to retain a balance between new and traditional media and processes.

What will I be expected to achieve?

Students on this programme will gain an understanding about transforming information into experiences through critical, experimental creative practice and research. They will develop an awareness of current issues, social responsibility and conceptual thinking whilst maintaining strong links with multiple disciplinary fields and cultures. Through a strong focus on research, production, and experimentation with craftsmanship (both digital and physical), they will learn to create meaningful experiences which are situated in the real world, and which engage multiple senses, modes of communication, and media techniques.

Able to:	A. Intellectual Engagement
A1	Demonstrate and understanding of principles and methodologies that enhance how to meet contemporary information experience design challenges
A2	Translate abstract issues into tangible design proposals, grounding projects with real-world social, cultural, technological, and economic issues
A3	Engage in intellectual and creative research in order to develop self-awareness, and to contextualise your work
A4	Evidence and articulate the intellectual processes involved in the production and communication of your work
A5	Demonstrate a clear understanding of to disseminate information across all platforms and media included in the experience

Able to:	B. Technical Skills
B1	Engage with relevant tools, materials and processes from functional, aesthetic,

	commercial and critical perspectives
B2	Identify and exploit the aesthetic and functional possibilities of different tools and materials
B3	Employ the necessary skills for testing and communicating ideas in appropriate media, materials and with contexts and audiences
B4	Synthesise intellectual understanding (the information) with the choice and execution of technical skills to produce work at an advanced level that is coherent and articulate
Able to:	C. Professional Development
C1	Evidence imaginative and meaningful ways of involving people in the design and production process
C2	Present work clearly and engagingly, in ways that are appropriate to the audience
C3	Demonstrate an individual design approach that relates to the context within which you wish to practice
C4	Participate thoughtfully and professionally when working and collaborating with others
C5	Communicate and present your work using traditional or contemporary media, and/or public facing events to a relevant audience outside of the College environment
C6	Identify when and how to access expertise in realising your design ambitions and manage ongoing relationships with collaborators ethically, imaginatively and proactively
C7	Develop innovative briefs for projects that question, challenge and further your understanding of Information Experience Design

4. What will I learn?

Programme Overview
<p>Year One</p> <p>Year One is split into three units:</p> <p>Unit 1 is Informed Practice. This runs in term one and provides a grounding in relevant theory and methods, which are put into practice in projects that are grouped in themes. The informed practice options related specifically to each of the pathways of Sound Design, Moving Image Design and Experimental Design. Core IED theory is taught by a lecture series linked to this unit. Core IED research methods are similarly taught by a research methods series linked to this unit.</p> <p>Units 2A & 2B relate to School Electives, which run across the School. Students choose from a range of School-wide elective options. For IED students, electives run in term 2 and term 3.</p>

Unit 3 is focussed on dissertation. It is run by Critical and Historical Studies, and takes place in terms 1 and 2.

Each student has a personal tutor and has two in-depth individual tutorials per term.

Year Two

Unit 4 is the Experiential Research unit, where students explore a chosen topic in depth, to propel them into their self-directed design project which takes place in Unit 5. Work in Progress show sits at the intersection between Unit 4 and 5 and becomes a key part of considering the relationship between their work and the audience.

In Unit 5 is the Independent Research Project (Design Project). Students set their own brief and timetable with their Personal Tutor, presenting their project in the Final Examination. Students have a personal tutor for the year, and have regular tutorials. A series of professional practice lectures are offered to support the transition from graduation to employment. As well as additional workshops such as advanced research methods, and exhibition design.

Critical and Historical Studies

This relates to Unit 3 where Year 1 students undertake a dissertation.

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.

Programme Units and Credit weightings

- Unit 1 Informed Practice, 40 credits
- Units 2A & 2B School Elective I & II, 40 credits
- Unit 3 Critical and Historical Studies (CHS), 40 credits
- Unit 4 Experiential Research, 60 credits
- Unit 5 Independent Research Project (Design Project), 60 credits

Programme Curriculum Map

	AUTUMN	SPRING	SUMMER
YEAR 1		School Elective I (20 credits)	School Elective II (20 credits)
	Informed Practice (40 credits)		
	Critical and Historical Studies – CHS (40 credits)		
YEAR 2	Experiential Research (60 credits) PATHWAY PROJECTS		Design Project (60 credits) INDEPENDENT RESEARCH PROJECT

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

Students should expect a minimum of two in-depth tutorials each term, in which discussion will encompass all the student's current work and development. Tutorials are an opportunity to talk at length with the personal tutor. Tutorials offer the opportunity for students to talk about the work being done or planned, and for their tutor to offer advice and critique. Where possible, personal tutorials take place in student studios where their practical work is present for discussion.

Several themes underlie most tutorials and will be returned to again and again, regardless of the nature of the work. The first relates to the intention of the work as a piece of communication – it is one of the tutor's concerns that the student's professional future is considered; they will relate the student's work to their own professional experience, and will criticise and advise based on that experience.

The student's relationship with the tutor is based on discussion and collaboration rather than authority. Whilst a student might decide not to follow specific aspects of their tutor's advice, the tutor will expect continuing progress from the student, regarding the quantity and quality of the work produced.

Projects

Projects help develop students' awareness of current issues, expressive capacity, social responsibility, and conceptual thinking. Students develop their own approach, in small groups or individually.

Projects in all three IED pathways are strongly focused on production and experimentation with craft, multiple senses and modes of communication, materials and techniques. We take a systems approach to topics, zooming in and out of phenomena to develop close and distant readings. We also maintain strong links with multiple fields and cultures.

In Year 1, both Informed Practice and Electives include one or more project briefs.

Year 2 is dominated by the research, design and construction of a final major project which serves as a key point of assessment followed by exhibition in the Final Show. Experimental Research starts the year with projects to help frame and ground students' own practice.

Elective Projects

These projects are designed to focus on particular issues or themes, and – by limiting the number of students working on a specific project – to enable a deeper level of debate and critique. These elective projects may make use of the programme's industrial/professional and academic contacts; a project may be built around an actual commission, or designed with a specific end use, such as an exhibition or publication.

Workshops

College technical workshops support the majority of practical taught aspects of the course. These may be delivered online, in line with College and government guidance. Occasional additional workshops are led by IED staff to support programme specific needs, projection mapping and pathway-specific workshops. In addition, a series of research workshops support students for one term of both year 1 and year 2.

Lecture Series

A lecture series runs in Term 1 and 2 to support key intellectual engagement with IED theory. Attendance is compulsory for students doing Unit 1 as they form part of the curriculum of that unit. Term 2 lectures are extra curricula, but contribute to the School-wide community running alongside series run by other programmes such as the Visual Communication's *Bright Labyrinth* series.

In Term 3 there is a professional practice lecture series delivered by invited guest speakers from a range of studio practice and industries. These form part of the curriculum for Unit 5 but are also open to year 1 students should they wish to attend as extra curricula.

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

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.

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 each unit. Students will prepare an oral presentation and a portfolio of process and final work as outlined in the unit descriptor, 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.

All units on the programme 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 primary element in the Final Examination process. Discussion in the viva focuses on the Independent Research Project and a portfolio of documentation and process work.

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/information-experience-design-ma/#requirements>