



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 Photography
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

Photography plays a crucial role in contemporary art. The Photography programme at the RCA aims to provide a critical and educational environment in which students can develop as artists with photography at the core of their practice. We have a fluid approach to image making. Whether still or moving, analogue or digital, the photographic image is, for us, a visual form that aims to be thoughtful as well as playful: an allegorical and thoroughly visual form.

The programme understands photography as a discourse that encompasses multiple practices. This disregard for a fixed essence is photography's strength: no aesthetic purity but a range of rhetorical forms used for the creation of fact, fiction and fantasy. Equally the boundary between the still and the moving image is now fluid and porous, enabling new forms of image making to be created.

An informed practice of photography acknowledges the heterogeneous traditions of fine art and visual culture. It engages with practices of reading and writing about the image. On our course, theory and practice inform each other and this dialogue characterises committed study at postgraduate level.

The Photography programme is within the School of Art and Humanities. Photography relates specifically to practices and theories of contemporary art, rather than to media and communication studies.

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 coordinates 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.

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 MA Photography programme aims:

- to provide a learning environment which privileges experimentation and self-reflexivity in order to advance the practice and understanding of photography within contemporary art.
- to teach how to plan and produce works that are challenging and innovative technically and conceptually.
- to place photography within the context of contemporary art practices and theories.
- to establish a dialogue between theory and practice and to produce a practice which negotiates received theories.
- to enrich the students' experience by facilitating interdisciplinarity within the postgraduate culture of the School Art and Humanities

What will I be expected to achieve?

By the completion of your studies, you will have achieved a significant and rigorous body of work that contributes to the development of the theory and practice of photography within contemporary art. You will be able to discuss your work in relation to relevant theories and histories of the discipline. Your practice will demonstrate an intellectual engagement expected from studies at MA level.

Programme-Specific Learning Outcomes

Able	A. Intellectual Engagement
------	-----------------------------------

to:	
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
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 are assessed through a combination of continuous and summative assessment methods.

Students are assigned a personal tutor with whom they discuss their work in tutorials five times per academic year and assist their progress through Units 1A and 1B..

Although working primarily on their own practice, students are also invited throughout the year to attend group critiques, seminars, lectures, workshops and tutorials with other members of the course team. Students will produce work for studio critiques that take place in term one and two.

At the beginning of the Spring term, they will contribute to the Work-in-Progress Show. This is a chance to take risks, try new materials and explore new ideas. Students' practice is not expected to be resolved at this stage however as this is in a public context, it is an opportunity to consider the

role of the viewer. This enables students to test the efficacy of the visual forms they have been using. Throughout the first year, they will also take part in regular Critical and Historical studies events and work on a dissertation which will help them to further develop their practice. Each unit is assessed in full at its conclusion as per the following:

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

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.

In the second year, students' select a personal tutor who appraises their work. They produce a self-initiated body of work, which is evaluated and discussed in group critiques and tutorials during the year.

In the third term the work students exhibit in the graduating show is part of 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. They will be asked to articulate this process of producing work in the viva voce.

Professional Practice:

To involve students in outside projects and teach them how to manage and respond to a specific context of image production.

To broaden the scope of professional art practice beyond the context of the exhibition.

To provide experience of publication production as a form of dissemination.

To think critically about context and audiences.

<p>Unit 2A:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 40 Credits • Self-assessment then progress feedback from programme unit assessment meeting 	<p>Unit 2B:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 60 Credits • Self-assessment (continuous assessment) and Exam feedback (Final Examination) from 	<p>SoAH School Unit:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 20 Credits • Assessed Portfolio at 2B/School Unit Joint Panel. (Final Examination). • May • School Exam Board then
--	---	---

<p>(staff double marking meeting) (continuous assessment)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • December • Learning Outcomes: A1. A2. A4. B1. B2. C1. C2. 	<p>2B/School Unit Joint Panel.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • June. • Learning Outcomes: A2. A3. A4. B1. B2. B3. C1. C2. C3. 	<p>reviews marks from all units and recommends pass or fail.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learning Outcomes: B2. C2. C3.
--	--	---

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

MA Photography Year 1		
Term One	Term Two	Term Three
Unit 1A Studio (40 Credits)	Unit 1B Studio (40 Credits)	
College-Wide		
Critical Historical Studies (CHS) – (40 credits)		
MA Photography Year 2		
Term One	Term Two	Term Three
Unit 2A Studio (40 Credits)	Unit 2B Independent Research Project (60 Credits)	
School Unit Portfolio		
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.

You will meet your personal tutor 5 times a year and have 3 additional sign up tutorials. There will be a programme of 8 lectures a year and six seminars dedicated to the discourse of photography. Workshops with academic and technical staff deal with specific subjects and practices relevant to photography within contemporary art practice.

General

Teaching consists of individual and group tutorials, theory seminars, group critiques and lectures by leading artists and theorists.

Tutorials

Students are allocated a personal tutor and will meet five times per academic year. There are opportunities to arrange tutorials with other members of the programme team. Tutorials may also include a small group of students discussing work in progress with a tutor or visiting artist.

Critiques

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

Workshops

Students arrive with very different expertise. To refine skills, all students are inducted into the necessary workshops for their practice at the beginning of their studies. To continue their learning, students will be supported and advised by Technical staff offering various photography

and new technologies workshops.

It is possible that these sessions will take place online, according to government guidance and College policy.

Research Colloquia

In the autumn and spring term, a series of lectures, addressing the discourses of the 'photographic image' gathers presentations by artists, writers and cultural theorists on specific themes and issues related to research in photographic practice and theory.

6. Assessment and feedback

Assessment

Continuous Assessment

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

All Studio based Units (1A, 1B, 2A & 2B) 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.

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 examination, 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 at the beginning of the third term as a Viva Voce. A Unit Assessment Meeting 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. The students' self-evaluation report will be read and considered in relation to their performance in the viva and the Unit Assessment Meeting will recommend one of the following outcomes to the School Exam Board: Pass, Referral, Fail.

A pass entitles students to be awarded the credits pertaining to the relevant unit. If the board concludes that their work is not developed enough, they will be referred and will be asked to submit new work by a set date. A fail indicates that work does not meet the required criteria for the continuation of your studies.

Unit 2B

The Final Examination for Unit 2B is held at the beginning of the third term as a Viva Voce. A Unit Assessment Meeting 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. The students' self-evaluation report will be read and considered in relation to their performance in the viva and the Unit Assessment Meeting will recommend one of the following outcomes to the School Exam Board for further reference to ABCD: Pass, Referral, Fail.

A pass entitles students to be awarded the credits pertaining to the relevant unit. If the Unit Assessment Meeting concludes that their work is not sufficiently developed, they will be referred and be asked to submit new work by a set date. A fail indicates that work does not meet the required criteria for the continuation of studies.

SoAH School-Wide 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/schools/school-of-arts-humanities/photography/ma-entrance-requirements/>