



Programme Specification

**subject to validation*

1. General Information

Programme title:	Digital Direction
Award:	Masters
Qualification Framework level:	Level 7
School/Department or equivalent:	School of Communication
Campus location(s):	White City
Total UK credits:	180
Date valid from/to:	2022-23

2. Programme Philosophy

Digital Direction addresses our urgent need for inclusive and relevant storytelling. Our programme examines the emergence of new technologies for telling stories, such as VR, AR and mobile platforms, alongside the future of storytelling itself. Our purpose is to inspire communication practitioners to approach contemporary communication critically, and to discover new and meaningful ways to tell stories in our world today. Our programme is not just open to practitioners from the arts but aimed at journalists, writers, musicians, theatre makers and anyone who wants to experiment creatively and collectively with new narrative approaches driven by ethical, environmental, epistemological and social imperatives. It's for students who want to use emerging storytelling tools and technologies critically, working with others to assemble and amplify stories that should be told and heard.

In a climate of continually shifting social, political, cultural and technological contexts, global challenges, pervasive and systemic inequalities, new communication paradigms are emerging that require bold, imaginative and critically informed concepts, processes and practitioners. Entangled with the social and material implications of digital technologies, contemporary media platforms such as VR, mobile apps, web environments and the time-based narrative content they host are ubiquitous in contemporary life. They have the potential to be accessible to us all and to support individual and shared forms of authorship, expression and curation, yet they can also be exclusive, inextricably linked with technological innovation and the politics of control.

Our programme sets out to enhance our understanding of the role that digital culture can play within these broader contexts, looking at how media and storytelling in a post-digital era can help to positively change the terms and means of global communication. We look at ways to rethink what storytelling can be and what it can achieve, we invite new perspectives, we explore the ethics of technology and the politics and poetics of storytelling from diverse intellectual and practical standpoints. As our relationships with species, our planet and technologies evolve we look at ways of rethinking and reframing storytelling itself, at parallel human and nonhuman realities, other futures, at sensuous modes of storytelling experience, at new forms of narrative intelligences and subjectivities. Our approach is informed by critically reflexive, situated, cooperative and exploratory forms of research, and we expect students to continuously interrogate emerging storytelling

knowledge and practice in and across relevant disciplines.

In Digital Direction you might set out to develop research-led social and sustainable communication strategies responding to urgent needs for urban housing, responsive and accessible production methods to raise awareness of environmental threats, or explore new storytelling questions, contexts or challenges. You might work with families to create augmented documentaries, develop an open-source storytelling platform with a local community, design accessible social VR experiences, or experiment with performance to examine the implications of narratives created with or by machines. You could collaborate with others to tell stories that have been marginalised in contemporary culture, investigate distributed forms of human and nonhuman intelligence, or explore what it means to tell stories with frogs, ponds, plants and trees. You might engage with political or intercultural issues, material and intangible heritages, explore ways to leverage the power of contemporary media platforms to instigate positive social or cultural change, deconstruct (post)colonial storytelling practices, narratives and tropes, or experiment with forms of storytelling guided by nature to speculate on our comprehension of the world or to ask questions about who we understand ourselves to be.

Appealing to creative and critical practitioners from a diverse range of backgrounds and with a passion for exploring how storytelling can inform positive change, our programme addresses the need for creative leaders, makers and critical thinkers who can engage with fast changing social and professional contexts, develop inclusive and impactful practices that leverage the power of emerging media, and open up new storytelling possibilities for the benefit of us all.

3. Educational Aims and Outcomes of the Programme

Programme aims

MA Digital Direction aims to:

- provide a critical and connected environment for digital storytelling pedagogy, research and practice at the forefront of the field;

and to enable students to:

- address the future of storytelling, exploring emerging storytelling practices, cultures and technologies critically and cooperatively;
- engage meaningfully with urgent social, environmental, epistemological and technological challenges through imaginative, collective and critically reflective forms of practice;
- define and develop inclusive, accessible and relevant storytelling in digital cultures;
- form connections and build relationships with others, guided by critical practices in relevant disciplines;
- build a nuanced understanding of digital storytelling in relation to diverse storytelling traditions, cultures and knowledges;
- experiment with materials, processes, technologies, forms and environments to gain the skills needed for rapidly changing professional contexts;
- explore and develop ethical forms of leadership for the creative industries.

What will I be expected to achieve?

Upon successful completion of the programme, you will be expected to meet the requirements of both the College-wide Learning Outcomes and your programme-specific Learning Outcomes.

College-Wide Learning Outcomes

You should be able to:

- Interrogate and articulate the intentions of your work in relation to the critical and conceptual context of your field(s) of study;
- Independently plan and produce work that is informed by developments at the forefront of your field(s) of study;
- Evaluate and critique the principles and methods of research in your field(s) of study, and apply these principles to your creative, professional and/or scholarly practice;
- Demonstrate originality in how you translate knowledge into practice;
- Communicate your creative, professional and/or scholarly practice to a non-specialist audience;
- Critically reflect on the likely public impact of your creative, professional and/or scholarly practice, and on your responsibilities as a practitioner;
- Define your professional ambitions and identify the challenges involved in meeting them

Programme-Specific Learning Outcomes

You should be able to:

- Experiment with digital storytelling concepts, processes and environments, working with and in consideration of others to raise the visibility of narratives currently marginalised in contemporary culture.
- Investigate future possibilities for digital storytelling, examining urgent and emerging concerns situated within real-world media contexts, communities, cultures, traditions and professions.
- Devise, apply and evaluate inclusive digital storytelling approaches for real-world situations and audiences, reflecting critically on the societal and environmental effects of your work, and ensuring that the needs of others are addressed within your practice.
- Design and test a technical approach to global, inclusive storytelling that critically applies digital technology through cooperative forms of practice.
- Prototype experimental content for extended reality contexts using relevant technical approaches informed by research, critique and collaboration.
- Design, direct and manage a complex storytelling project in a relevant format and environment using innovative methods and techniques ethically within your practice.

4. What will I learn?

Curriculum Map

MA Digital Direction		
Term 1	Term 2	Term 3
Programme Unit 45 Credits	School-Wide Unit 15 Credits	Independent Research Project 60 Credits

Critical Stories		
	Programme Unit 30 Credits Immersive Adventures	
College-Wide Unit 30 Credits		

Programme Structure

Unit Title	Term	Credit Value	Core or Elective?
Critical Stories	1	45	Core
College Wide Unit	1 & 2	30	Core
School Wide Unit	2	15	Elective
Immersive Adventures	2	30	Core
Independent Research Project	3	60	Core

Through **Unit 1, Critical Stories**, we will explore the foundational approaches of the programme, focusing on critical, cooperative and experimental storytelling methods, media ecologies and artefacts. You'll be introduced to diverse concepts and practices relevant to contemporary media and communication. Working with others, you'll be asked to assemble a project that proposes, tests and evaluates social and sustainable digital storytelling practice, using responsive methods to explore contexts and/or raise the visibility of stories that have been marginalised in contemporary culture.

Across **Terms 1 and 2**, you will participate in the **College-wide** unit. This unit aims to support students to meet the challenges of a complex, uncertain and changing world by bringing them together to work collaboratively on a series of themed projects informed by expertise within and beyond the College. These projects will challenge you to use your intellect and imagination to address key cultural, social, environmental and economic challenges. In doing so, you will develop and reflect on the abilities required to translate knowledge into action, and help demonstrate the contribution that the creative arts can make to our understanding and experience of the world.

In **Term 2**, the **Exchange and Engage** School-wide Unit will allow you to work alongside students within and across the School.

Unit 4, Immersive Adventures, focuses on working critically and experimentally with immersive environments, mobile platforms, and emerging areas of media practice to conceptualise, test and evaluate future directions. You'll be asked to produce a prototype for an immersive storytelling environment and/or mobile platform, looking critically at the shape of the near future, and to collaborate with others to explore the emerging effects of interactive time-based media on human communication, behaviour and experience.

In Unit 5, the Independent Research Project (IRP), you'll have the opportunity to work independently to develop a comprehensive programme of research-led practice, critically exploring a topic of your own choosing through individual or collaborative approaches. The unit provides scope for you to bring together the core competencies, methods and processes you've developed during the programme and to define, contextualise, produce and evaluate a substantial body of creative practice.

5. How will I learn?

In Digital Direction, learning and teaching is organised through a range of activities, which may include workshops, theory/practice seminars, individual and group tutorials, groups critiques, projects and critical forums. These activities may be organised on-site and/or online and may comprise synchronous and/or asynchronous elements. Students are required to be self-directed and autonomous learners, fully engaged with the programme, and exploring opportunities for cross-programme learning. A degree of self-determined initiative is also expected when working with external or internal contributors/collaborators, particularly during periods of research and/or production.

Briefings

Introduction to core information on the programme and school, providing key information about programme units, projects, schedules and assessment processes.

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, critical thinking and a material understanding of digital and post/non-digital cultures and practices. Projects may be developed in partnership with organisations and communities, creating opportunities to co-originate and co-locate work in specific contexts. For each project you'll be asked to identify any associated technical needs and ethical or health & safety issues in a **Project Proposal**, along with a plan to help you and us manage them.

Programme Seminars and Critical Forums

Theory/practice seminars enable discussion, debate and offer a collective take on expanded, poetic and critical perspectives on media, communication, and contemporary art and design practices. The **Digital Direction Critical Forums** are seminars co-led by students, staff and guests who are active practitioners and/or researchers. They are based around key texts and artefacts that students will be expected to read and review. Theory/practice seminars address topics such as: new materialisms, intra-actions, diffraction, augmented and virtual realities, digital sensuousness, surveillance and control, architectures of power, indigenous epistemologies and ontologies, AI language and translation, symbiotic systems, coevolution, rituals, resistance and collective making, futurisms and counterfuturisms.

Programme Lectures

Lectures are provided by key staff and guests who bring new perspectives and insights to themes and subjects offered by each unit. Lectures can be delivered as conventionally understood or adopt more experimental, performative and unorthodox approaches.

Tutorials

There are three kinds of tutorials: personal, group and programme. Several themes underlie most tutorials and will be addressed throughout the programme. Your relationship with your tutor is based on discussion and collaboration and it's important to establish a professional working relationship with them. Tutors generally have a great deal of expertise in their field so professional concerns are an area of focus too. In advance of a tutorial, you'll be expected to prepare notes reflecting on the progress of your work. You should use your personal blog to document any challenges or issues you're facing, as well as your wider learning journey. Following the tutorials, you and your tutor will complete a progress report and an action plan. Your tutor will comment on your current projects and give an overall report on your work, referencing criteria used in relevant assessments. With your tutor you'll be asked to complete one progress report each term.

Technical Inductions

Arranged by ILTS, these are activities that enable students to use technical facilities safely and, when appropriate, without supervision.

Technical and Practical Workshops

Workshops, which are skills and knowledge-based, are designed to introduce students to practices associated with the production and understanding of digital and post/non-digital communication, media and design. Workshops provide students with practical and critical tools to apply to unit projects and/or to their own self-initiated work. Workshops may address practical or technical areas, for example, cultural sensitivity, experimental, transmedia, sonic, community or participatory forms of storytelling, research methods, audio/media description, performance, digital filmmaking, audio production, AR/VR/MR prototyping, creative coding, physical computing or locative media. Workshops are specific to each unit and are detailed in the relevant descriptors.

Blended Learning

Blended learning is an important aspect of the programme. You'll be asked to make extensive use of online platforms and learning environments (e.g. blogs, podcasts, Moodle, Padlet, Zoom, Panopto) to develop your learning, to share your ideas and work in progress with your tutor and with your peers, and to gain their feedback on the development of your projects. Social and career forums are used on the programme Moodle site to support student learning too.

6. Assessment and feedback

Regulations

Regulations for assessment and progression can be found [here](#). Please note that College regulations are subject to annual updates and amendments.

Unit assessment

Assessment in programme units 1, 4 and 6 takes place through a structured process of documenting, presenting and discussing the progress and outcomes of your work, alongside your responses to feedback provided by your tutors and peers. Your meetings with your personal tutor and the tutorial reports you and they prepare inform this process too.

An assessment panel is convened at the end of each unit to review the portfolio of work you have created. This typically includes your project proposal, a statement of intent, the body of work you have created during the unit, individual reflective blog posts, a short process film, a short

presentation, and your tutorial report. Assessment in unit 6 includes an individual viva-voce presentation and discussion of the work you have produced.

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 180 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 at resit 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 programme 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 programme 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>