Royal College of Art
Postgraduate Art and Design

Programme Specification
subject to validation

1.   General Information

Programme title:	Information Experience Design
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

Information Experience Design is the creative practice of intervening in, designing and generating experiences of complexity that communicate human, nonhuman and more-than-human perspectives and realities. Our medium of practice includes 'warm' data—information about interrelationship—as well as 'cold' data points, and we work actively with living, computational and speculative systems. The pieces we make include large-scale installations, immersive digital experiences, radical performances, and living artefacts and ecosystems. Our purpose on the MA in Information Experience Design (IED) is to inspire experimental works that generate transformation, seek better futures through the generation of compelling experiences, compose better questions and new ways of relating to and being in the world.

The intellectual content of the programme is cutting-edge and challenging, with our staff and students continually working in ways that are research-led and self-critical, never content with superficial responses or easy answers. Complexity and deep structure often feature in IED approaches, as these lend themselves to interrogations of media-cultural interchange and processes of modelling futures. Students of IED engage deeply with society and the environment, where rigorous experimentation is integrated with forms of activism, empathy, and good ancestry. Our approach to theory is wide-ranging and transdisciplinary, involving technologists, ecologists and quantum physicists alongside those working in the arts, and IED practices have a wide range. Throughout, the programme aims for a criticality that does not take an objective or purist tone, but rather situates the artist and thinker as always already complicit in ongoing social and environmental processes, and we frequently leave the ivory tower and test ideas in the wild. Your work will be evaluated on technical construction as well as logical and ethical soundness, aesthetic dimensions as well as critical and philosophical ones.

In IED you might design a large-scale light installation in a forest, a distributed museum spanning the globe, a serial podcast fiction, a chair that breathes, a VR adventure in a microbiome, an emotionally responsive game for dogs, or a wearable that senses deep time. IED projects are human(e) but not only for humans, and move beyond the personal and individual, reaching toward perspectives and approaches that are collective, transindividual, superpersonal, and have more-than-human value.

Technical instruction in IED is based on a plan that you design and our technicians support, thus you leave the programme with a composite technical skill set generated by and unique to your body of work. This may involve technical skills as diverse as ceramics and VR, botany and blockchain. You'll have a core aim of experimenting with a diversity of methods and approaches that cross boundaries between digital and analogue, toward composing a distinctive body of work that coheres by intention: what you aim to achieve in the world. You'll be encouraged to work playfully, with experts providing guidance as you stretch your abilities and explore the multisensory, material and immaterial, digital and analogue, "high" and "low" art forms.

Human civilization is learning, or attempting to learn, to operate more effectively within expanded temporal and spatial structures, to think holistically about the planet and more long-term about our role as 'good ancestors'. For this reason, you'll be challenged to conceive ideas, speculatively or not, that might operate at multiple scales, from the micro to the planetary. Societies are now actively questioning the ways in which we define value and conceptualise human and nonhuman relations—a paradigm shift in which artists and philosophers are leading. To solve increasingly intense complex challenges, the world needs creative visionaries who can generate systems shifts. In IED this is by designing interventions that interrupt entrenched multilateral processes, and engage us with reality differently through disruptive experiences.

We promote an active community who are thoroughly ambitious in practice and research. Throughout the programme we will encourage you to be adventurous, to pose new or uncomfortable questions and answers through your work. In IED you'll be part of an environment that is inclusive and postdisciplinary in nature, where there is plenty to read but no theoretical 'canon' and no correct way of thinking about creative practice, except to use whatever is available as creatively as possible. For this reason, we require no specific skill set or disciplinary background to join the programme, with students arriving from many different backgrounds.

3.   Educational Aims and Outcomes of the Programme

Programme aims

The MA in Information Experience Design Experience aims to:

- Be the leading programme of its kind in the world;
- Produce adventurous practitioners with deep understanding of postdigital experience through a frame of selected emphasis;
- Generate a holistic understanding of the social and environmental implications of creative interventions;
- Create new academic and professional relationships with others doing similar work, research and study;
- Produce students with informed and nuanced understanding of contexts for their work;
- Develop a pragmatically-informed understanding of how IED experience fits into industries relevant to your practice, which includes attentiveness to the perspectives of different stakeholders;
  Develop confidence in contributing to knowledge production, enabling you to take critical and ethically informed positions;
- Develop an understanding of research and analysis, and the crucial role they each play in the refinement of practice;
- Prepare you to develop technical skills in an ongoing and integrated way, responding proactively to technical challenges and opportunities that arise;

- Cultivate emotional intelligence, as a key attribute of those who generate experiences for others;
- Encourage a balance between independent working and collaboration, through the formation of communities of practice and creative-professional partnerships;
- Balance global and planetary concerns with lived and situated experiences, encouraging work that engages with civic life, grounded histories and local communities and environments.

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:

- Translate abstract issues into tangible design proposals, grounding projects with real-world social, cultural, technological, and economic issues.
- Adapt and combine appropriate concepts and vocabularies from appropriate intellectual frameworks to frame your conceptual approach, and engage actively in critical discourse.
- Construct a technical approach that exploits the aesthetic and functional possibilities of different tools and materials.
- Synthesise technical tools and methods to design, refine and implement a technical plan suitable to your project.
- Develop an individual practice-based and research-led approach that relates to the context within which you wish to practice.
- Construct relevant and meaningful ways of involving collaborators and audiences into your design and research processes.
- Compose presentations of your work for others, ensuring they make the subject engaging and legible to your audience.

4.   What will I learn?

Curriculum Map

Term 1	Term 2	Term 3
Form & Method (45 credits)	School Wide Unit (15 credits)	Independent Research Project (60 credits)
	Systemic Phenomena (30 credits)	
College Wide Unit (30 credits)		

Programme Structure

Unit Title	Term	Credit Value	Core or Elective?
Form & Method	1	45	Core
Systemic Phenomena	2	30	Core
Individual Project	3	60	Core

Through the programme, you'll gain a working knowledge of experimental postdigital and cultural systems theory and practice, and its influence in society at a variety of scales, and from a variety of perspectives. You'll use this context to build your own conceptual tools and framings, illustrate and test these tools through creative practice. You'll continually refine your approach, and select technical skills to develop that suit the precise pieces and experiences you wish to create. This will allow you to generate a body of work that has conceptual depth as well as technical skill.

You'll develop a rich transdisciplinary knowledge base, including language and terminologies for engaging with critical intellectual and practical discussions, leading-edge theory, and influential and foundational works in postdigital and systems theory and practice, with emphasis in a chosen area. Throughout the programme you'll be discouraged from looking for a 'correct' way of thinking about or generating meaningful work, or of doing the programme, but rather you'll be encouraged to cross boundaries and design your own way. Likewise, your intellectual work will not draw from textbook' readings, as this programme does not have a disciplinary boundary. Instead, with the input of your tutors and Field Collective, you'll select many of your core texts yourself, and you might draw on readings and approaches from games, interaction design, critical theory, anthropology, speculative design, posthumanities, philosophy, ecology, literary studies, environmental communication, and more. You will also be encouraged to engage with relevant contexts such as emergent technologies and platforms, media convergence, play, emerging forms of and views on intelligence, and experimentation in relation to social justice and change.

In **Form & Method**, you'll be immersed in foundational and state-of-the-art practice and theory in experience design and intervention. This unit launches you into the programme with an outward-looking orientation, where understanding of cultural needs, social challenges, and technological possibilities are central. Experimentation in this unit should be bold, playful and undirected, with

the guiding aim of building understanding of the affordances of many conceptual and technical tools and reflecting on outcomes. Alongside practical experiments, through the unit, you will be working in and out of sessions on a description of emphasis (see below) and drafts of a Technical Plan and Conceptual Framework that will support you in developing your practice.

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 **Systemic Phenomena**, you'll be challenged to situate your practice conceptually and culturally, focusing on skills related to analysis, audience awareness and collaboration. Your focus in this unit will be experimentation that is more specific and directed than in the previous term, now adapting what you have learned from broad experimentation to develop your practice in intentional ways. Where Form & Method was outward-oriented, Systemic Phenomena is more inward-facing, requiring you to apply continuous critical analysis to your processes, to evaluate them with the support of your tutors, and to refine your practice and conceptual framing so that these taken together are stable, coherent, and distinctive.
In **Term 2**, the **Exchange and Engage** School-wide Unit will allow you to work alongside students within and across the School.

Your **independent research project** will enable you to integrate your practice into a larger critical discourse, to reflect on its significance and to generate knowledge through a research piece and presentation. This unit challenges you to integrate your technical and conceptual processes into a single research project. It also requires you to reflect on the outcomes of your work in the first two terms, to trace its trajectory and consider the direction of your work in the future. Where earlier programme units focused on exploration and experimentation, this unit focuses on transformation: emphasising the wider relevance of your practice, drawing out its strengths, and exploring how it can generate evolution or revolution in the world.

5.   How will I learn?

You will apply a practical and intellectual method involving iterative stages of **exploration, experimentation, evaluation, and transformation** within projects and across the programme as a whole. With the support of tutors, you'll author your own version of the programme through the proposal and refinement of key elements, including your area of emphasis, a conceptual framework, and a Technical Plan, which will guide you through a range of subject material.

By the middle of the first term, you'll describe an **area of emphasis,** a real-world challenge or theme that you feel passionately about, which may be practical, cultural, social and/or existential. Your emphasis will be refined as your progress in the programme, guiding and situating your practice.

You will also be supported in designing a **Technical Plan**, beginning in the first term and refined in term 2, that will allow you to customise your practice by mixing methods and models, toward consciously and conscientiously developing a personal form of composition that is best suited to your ongoing project. By the middle of the second term you'll also have a **Conceptual Framework** in development, a mapping of concepts and theoretical positions guiding your work, which you'll refine and use in term 3 for your Independent Research Project.

You will be supported in developing your practice in stages through the programme. In term 1, you'll focus on broad experimentation, producing a large number of studies, prototypes, and drafts as you diversify your technical skill set and determine what works best to express your ideas. You will be encouraged to take risks, try hard, fail often, and draw insight from outcomes of your experiments. You'll document these processes, and you'll have a chance to regularly discuss in group sessions and with your personal tutor. In term 2 you'll be preparing your work for the public exhibition, which may adapt and refine work you have created in term 1 or introduce a new variation on ideas you're exploring. Again, you'll document your process and have plenty of opportunity to discuss the work in progress. In term 3, following the exhibition of the work, you'll focus on refining your concept for presentation in the symposium, and in framing your work for your portfolio.

Your contact with tutors and technicians is likely to be most intensive at the start of the programme, and to be less in your final term as you work more independently on your final project. Your cohort will have a rhythm of intensive and contact-driven periods, matched by lower contact periods for deep attention and focus on your practice. You'll have the support of your personal tutor through the programme. You will also have the support of your community of peers, with our students actively engaged in **Field Collectives, Technical Alliances** and the programme **Seminar Series**.

Field Collectives are home groups formed early in the programme, linked by an area of focus or emphasis. These are described as 'field' collectives to express dynamic processes of fields, as opposed to subjects or disciplines. Collectives are the spaces where you will engage in discussion, analyse texts, conduct experiments, show work, provide critique, and exchange knowledge on the most regular basis. Fields are not pre-set within the programme, but will be newly formed based on the interests of each new cohort. Examples of Fields might be Nonhuman Perspectives and Multispecies Design, Regeneration and Circularity, World-Building, or Artificial Intelligence. The field, like your chosen emphasis, provides a frame through which to engage with experience design. Each Collective will be led by tutors who bring expertise relevant to the area, who will set the structure of sessions and assign readings and tasks.

Technical Alliances are dynamic groups that form in response to a need for developing a particular technical skill or skillset (for example: Unreal Engine, laser cutting, projection mapping, set building, or horticulture). Alliances are focused on sharing skills and collaborative learning and making. Alliances are student-led and student-driven beyond the first term, but the first stages of forming alliances will be facilitated through an initial workshop in alliance-building. Alliances can include a small or large number of students, and can form and disperse at any time. They will be supported in attracting new members, and will have the ability to request specialised workshops, negotiate Technical Services support for the group, request funds for specific projects as relevant, and have a platform for sharing developments via the Knowledge Exchange Forum if they wish.

Several times per term, Field Collectives will come together as a complete cohort and participate in a **Knowledge Exchange Forum**. KE Forum will be facilitated by staff, with greater structure in the first term, and serve as a space for Collectives to share their findings and discussions of recent weeks, present problems, ask each other questions, and identify common themes and through-lines within the programme. Technical Alliances will also be invited to share during the KE Forum, but this is not required. Outcomes of the forum will inform the shape of study across the programme in an ongoing way, allowing tutors to be responsive to collective interests and ideas, as well as encouraging students to connect with each other, gain context for their weekly discussions, and be active in collective knowledge production.

Approximately four times per term, the whole programme will be invited to a seminar in the **Programme Seminar Series** involving a speaker whose work or ideas are particularly relevant to the programme. This is an annual cycle of seminars that will change each year and is embedded within all three programme units. The seminar series sets a tone for the programme each year, providing a core set of ideas, challenges and approaches to inform your work, individually and

collectively, through engagement with compelling voices from outside the programme. These may be artists, writers, scholars or thinkers with significance to relevant contemporary theory and practice who will usually be external to the RCA's immediate network. Speakers are invited to present in ways they feel are most meaningful, and the format provides spaces for you to ask questions and engage with speakers directly.

You'll have access to **Technical Workshops** organised by the programme team, as well as negotiated technical sessions with technicians that you set up yourself. Workshops offer an intensive learning experience focused on a particular creative approach or technique. These might include technical instruction relevant to moving image, spatial design, gaming, physical computing or any other mode useful for you that is offered by the College. This also includes technical inductions, which are activities that enable you to use technical facilities safely and, when appropriate, without supervision. It may also include workshops related to presentation, designing portfolios, or other practical professional development skills.

You will have a **Personal Tutor**. This is a supportive relationship, and each meeting with your tutor has the aim of supporting your academic work, and assessing your progress in a continuous way. Individual tutorial sessions are documented as part of your assessment (see Assessment below), and in preparation for each tutorial you will submit a short written report reflecting on your progress and identifying challenges you'd like to discuss.

Facilities: On site in London, you will have workspace and access to facilities to support you in practical skills-building, for example computer rooms, editing rooms, 3D printers, VR equipment, Capture Studio, printmaking and cutting, moving image studios, photography studios, and more. You will also be able to hire equipment to support your practice from our equipment stores. Depending on demand, studios may need to be booked in advance. All students have access to software licenses whether remote or on-site. Study in IED will, appropriately, happen in a **blended** way, meaning parts of this programme will be on-campus and parts will be online. This will be planned with college schedules and external factors in mind.

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

In programme-specific units, we assess your work in a way that is ongoing, iterative and conversational rather than solely outcome-focused. This is to encourage a greater amount of risk taking and ambition in your approach, where unsuccessful experiments are considered part of the process and are valued in assessment. We also do this to ensure you are able to respond to feedback and integrate this at several points before your final mark is determined for a unit. This mode allows assessment to be a conversational process supporting you in confidently submitting final outcomes.

Assessment of your submitted outcomes is crucial to retaining a rigorous approach to marking based on quality, and the feedback you receive from the panel will include attention to both elements.

Your ongoing meetings with your personal tutor will inform your final assessment on the unit. Ahead of each meeting, you will submit a short written report reflecting on and documenting your progress and identifying challenges you'd like to discuss. The aim is to track progress against Learning Outcomes in a transparent way, and to identify challenges and areas where you need support, as well as areas where the work may be faltering and require more dedication. The progress reports will be submitted once a term and retained for examination panel discussions. Your overall summative mark for the unit will be determined by your achievement of the learning outcomes, as demonstrated through your submitted outcomes

Your term 3 final outcome (submitted IRP) will be considered along with your symposium presentation, viva voce and progress reports for the term. The viva voce will require you to respond to questions from the assessment panel on your work. The questions will be based on the criteria for the unit, and will allow the panel to have questions addressed which have arisen from reviewing the submitted IRP.

At the end of each programme-specific unit, an assessment panel will meet and discuss your outcomes and the ongoing progress noted in the tutorial reports, and confirm your summative assessment mark for the unit. You will receive feedback.

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.