



Programme Specification

1. General Information

Programme title:	Communication
Award:	MFA
Qualification Framework level:	Level 7
School/Department or equivalent:	School of Communication
Campus location(s):	White City (+ electives across all campuses)
Total UK credits:	180
Date valid from/to:	January 2026/December 2026

2. Programme Philosophy

The January-cohort version of the MFA Communication program begins in January and runs to December of the same calendar year. It is comprised of three terms with a summer recess.

The MFA Communication programme interrogates the fundamental ways in which communication shapes our lives, and uses this knowledge to develop new ways of experiencing, interacting and communicating with the world. The programme makes space for conversation, inter-cultural exchange, new ideas and diverse voices. You will explore social, political, environmental and philosophical implications of communication practices and how these may be manifested within your chosen field of practice. The program stresses the need to explore key themes of technology, ethics, environmental sustainability and social justice, in order to meaningfully locate your professional practice in an evolving future.

You will be part of a community of peers across the Royal College of Art. Opportunities for networking and collaboration with peers in other schools and disciplines will take place throughout the programme, including electives and cross-college networking events. Much of this networking will take place across the RCA's 3 campuses.

When you enter the programme you may have an existing practice in creative disciplines such as Visual Communication, Illustration, Animation, Film and Television, Digital Direction, Extended Reality of User Interface Design, Information Experience Design, or Sound Design. You will be encouraged to take a critical approach to your discipline, as the programme invites you to locate your existing practice in multidisciplinary contexts, and to innovate in ways that challenge disciplinary boundaries, through interdisciplinary collaboration and elective units available from across the Royal College of Art. Through these explorations you will be prepared to operate at the forefront of professional practice in your field.

You will explore ways that experimental communication systems and interfaces can be employed to communicate narratives and information with a view to provoking social, cultural, and political change. You will explore varied practices across the broad spectrum of disciplines in the wider field of communication, and the cultural, social, and technological conditions that have shaped these disciplines. Through these explorations, you will interpret and critique your chosen field of practice through the lens of other disciplines and contexts.

The programme views research and professional skills as fundamental to your creative practice. In your creative practice you will need to apply critical research skills in the investigation and interpretation of materials and sources to inform your creative practice. Other skills required will be collaborative, discipline-based and an understanding of your professional context. You will undertake practice-led and practice-based research, as well as academic research that informs your practice. You will be required to reflect upon the ways that these skills can be deployed in the professional environment, including your approaches to research and practice, and the ways that you collaborate and network with peers on the programme.

The first term of your studies will include a mixture of core MFA Communication units, and electives that may be chosen from any of the College's Schools. In the core units you will come together with other Communication students to reflect on your position within the broad and evolving field of Communication and collaborate on projects addressing the UN's Sustainable Development Goals. Alongside the common units, your choice of electives will provide opportunities to personalise your journey, and broaden your horizons by exploring subjects beyond the School, and critically reflecting on their relationships to your own discipline.

The electives allow you to adapt your journey through the programme. You will graduate with a unique set of experiences and expertise, enabling you to locate yourself at the forefront of new and emerging industries, and to contribute to leading and shaping new industries as they emerge. You will be given the tools to become a pioneer in emerging sectors, applying your skills at the intersection of disciplines and with multi-disciplinary teams. You will also be supported to identify and pursue opportunities for public output during and beyond your programme of study.

Through the core units the program takes you through the key stages of challenging, testing and redefining your practice. In the first term of your study the core units introduce you to the interdisciplinary nature of the program, and help you to identify your position in relation to the cultures and contexts your work operates in. As you move to your second term of study you will study a combination of units that include the key communication modes of digital storytelling and worldbuilding as ways to develop your approach to your practice. Alongside these you will be asked to develop and define the methods and methodologies that drive your practice and then use these to develop a robust research project proposal. This prepares you for your final term of study, where you will apply what you have learnt in a substantial research project, where you will also be supported to independently disseminate and position your work in public contexts.

3. Educational Aims and Outcomes of the Programme

Programme aims

The programme aims to:

- Challenge you to innovate and advance common understanding of their discipline, taking a variety of critical approaches to locating practice in relation to discipline;
- Provide opportunities for engagement with a variety of disciplines and peers across the RCA and in external professional contexts;
- Prepare you to locate communication practice in urgent and emerging social, cultural, political and technological contexts;
- Enable you to understand the social, ethical, cultural and practical impact of communication practice, and empower them to operate with integrity in multi-disciplinary networks;

- Support you to independently plan and produce a provocative and original work;
- Support you to select appropriate methods to communicate complex data related to the UN's Sustainable Development goals.

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

Upon successful completion of the programme, you should be able to:

- Interrogate your understanding of communication disciplines and their professional contexts
- Apply appropriate methods for collaboration and team-working across disciplines
- Independently produce innovative work that is located in relation to emerging communication sectors and at the forefront of emerging professional and technological contexts
- Demonstrate an advanced understanding of the impact of your practice and present narrative information in ways that are appropriate for your audience(s)
- Locate your work in urgent cultural, social, and political contexts, demonstrating meaningful engagement with one or more of the UN's Sustainable Development goals
- Demonstrate integrity and ethical awareness in the production of communications for appropriate audiences and in collaboration with others.

4. What will I learn?

Curriculum Map

Term 1 (Spring)	Term 2 (Summer)	Term 3 (Autumn)
Communication and Interdisciplinarity (15 credits)	Methods & Methodologies (15 credits)	Independent Research Project (60 credits)
Cultures and Contexts (15 credits)	Consolidating your Practice (15 credits)	
Cross-College Elective (15 credits)	Digital Storytelling (15 credits)	
Cross-College Elective (15 credits)	Worldbuilding (15 credits)	

**Students may not repeat a unit that they have already taken, either during this programme or during a previous programme of study.*

Programme Structure

Unit Title	Term	Credit Value
Communication and Interdisciplinarity	Term 1 (Spring)	15
Cultures and contexts	Term 1 (Spring)	15
Cross-College elective (x2)	Term 1 (Spring)	30 (15 credits per unit)
Methods & Methodologies	Term 2 (Summer)	15
Consolidating your practice	Term 2 (Summer)	15
Worldbuilding	Term 2 (Summer)	15
Digital Storytelling	Term 2 (Summer)	15
Independent Research Project	Term 3 (Autumn)	60

Please note, there are three **Independent Study** weeks included in your programme (one per term). During these weeks there will be no scheduled teaching or assessment, and limited access to Technical Services. Self-service will be available for inducted users, and you may independently use computing and technology zones, bench spaces, and the resources store and art shop. These weeks are intended for you to work independently, and technical supervision, fabrication support, or supervision of high-risk activities will not be available.

Communication and Interdisciplinarity

This unit is structured around a series of activities designed to orient students on the programme and within the broad discipline of communication, with a particular focus on methods and

approaches to interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary working. Recognising that students come from very different backgrounds, this unit will establish students' position within a multidisciplinary community that will benefit their practice.

Cultures and Contexts

This unit challenges you to consider how skills and approaches in your own discipline may be applied in new contexts. You will be asked to reflect upon how your own skills are transferable, how your work can be informed by ideas and approaches in other disciplines, and what new professional opportunities exist for your practice within the expanding field of Communication.

Methods & Methodologies

During term one you were introduced to the expanded interdisciplinary approach to communication practice that the MFA explores. You were then asked to consider how your existing practice could be considered in relation to these new contexts and cultures. Now as we begin term two we ask you to test and develop these emergent practices and contexts in order to develop and test your practice so that you can articulate it in terms of clear and focused methods and methodologies.

Consolidating your Practice

This unit supports you to consolidate your learning across the programme, including the core and elective units, in preparation for the Independent Research Project. This unit is a period of planning, and pre-production in which you formulate your studies into a coherent proposal for your final major research project. You will conclude this unit with a coherent, tested and practical plan of action with which to undertake your research project.

Digital Storytelling

Digital Storytelling looks at the way we inhabit and travel through the world. You will explore the way narrative structures are built - both conceptual and actual - to order the world and make sense of our time here. This unit will consider the forefront of digital storytelling techniques and technologies, and new ways to tell and document stories. You will explore the ways that narratives are used to humanize and make concrete crises and events and will learn to critique these methods when employed by others.

Worldbuilding

The aim of the unit is to gain insights on worldbuilding and storytelling theories, methodologies and processes. Working collaboratively, you will explore approaches to building fictional and speculative worlds addressing real-life challenges.

The elective unit available within the School is **Interventions**. Further electives are also available from other Schools. You must select two elective units for the spring term. These may be delivered at another location or online. You are encouraged to choose electives from across the Schools of Architecture, Arts and Humanities and Design. The elective handbook contains more information about the electives available and the process of selection.

Independent Research Project

The 60-Credit *Independent Research Project* is an opportunity for you to develop and realise a body of work that addresses the key ambitions of your research and practice. You will draw on what you have learnt on the programme to devise a project which might be individual or collaborative. You will also be prepared to identify opportunities for the professional or public dissemination of your work, and to exploit your project for career progression in the communication sector. The nature of these opportunities will be specific to the individual and the nature of the practice that you choose to undertake during the unit. Your project will be supported by an allocated tutor.

During the unit you will be required to consider how your work will reach your audience. The College will provide you with an opportunity to co-curate an event or exhibition, working collaboratively with your peers. You may choose to take part in this event or may, alternatively, choose to explore other ways to exhibit or disseminate your work, for example, you may wish to take advantage of your own professional networks to reach a public audience in an external forum, managed independently of the College, particularly where your Independent Research Project was produced with or for an employer. This may be an event, or a digital or physical publication. Participation in an event is not mandatory, but an individual reflection of your plans for public output will form part of assessment for the unit.

5. How will I learn?

Units are delivered through a combination of lectures, seminars, individual and group tutorials, including in-person and online delivery. Concurrent units will be delivered through burst learning, with intense on-campus activity in blocks to provide a more sequential experience of the units. Between on-campus activity, online seminars, group tutorials and peer-led asynchronous activities support and structure your independent study. Depending on your selection of electives, you may experience a different range of teaching activities to your peers. Unit specifications list the kinds of teaching that takes place on each unit.

You will be encouraged to engage with your network of peers and to collectively contribute to common learning resources, student-led seminars, and peer critique. You are encouraged to treat your peers as critical friends, and to engage in critique in ways that are informed by their existing experiences of industry and practice. By participating in peer critiques, you will receive constructive feedback and learn to critique their own work more effectively. Alongside your taught units, scheduled community events will provide opportunities for you to network with your peers across other programmes and schools.

The physical location for the MFA is a Studio Base Room. The room is the focus for discussion, social interaction and tutorial contact as well as being a space for making and a place to host events. Studio Base Room is a networked workspace that enables practice, discussion, documentation, learning and broadcast. Studio Base Room acts as a focus for engaging audiences, inviting interaction with the extended RCA community.

Opportunities for formative feedback are used to support and structure your learning. Peer and tutor critiques form an important part of the teaching and occur in every unit.

Unit specifications identify the number and type of contact hours you will have in each unit. The majority of programme delivery is academic, taking place in seminar rooms and lecture rooms, and delivered by academic staff. In this programme, some units have a number of technical contact hours included, such as technical and library orientations & inductions into the use of equipment, spaces and processes required during the unit. Please note that this programme does not include technical workshops for skills acquisition. If you wish to access other specialist technical equipment, spaces or processes or acquire additional technical or library skills outside of your timetabled unit contact time, you will be required to make independent bookings, which are available on a first-come-first-serve basis from Technical Services and the Library.

You are expected to begin the programme with existing technical expertise in the field in which you intend to practice. Students will join the programme with different existing technical expertise, and so the programme provides opportunities for you to identify individual gaps in your technical knowledge and individually sign-up to technical inductions and workshops. You will be required to undertake inductions or orientations where you wish to make use of on-campus technical facilities. Any new

technical expertise that you wish to acquire in order to realise your proposed projects will be mostly gained through independent access to Technical Services that take place outside of the unit structure on a first come first served basis, and subject to availability. Some electives may offer specific access to technical activities.

You are expected to take a professional and independent approach to the programme, including determining your journey through choice of units, managing the demands of multiple concurrent units, and working towards deadlines. Unit leaders will support you through structured journeys within individual units, but your overall journey through the programme will be unique to you, depending on the specialisms and electives that you have chosen.

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

Assessments are designed to encourage you to critically reflect on your own discipline and its boundaries, locating their practice in wider social, cultural, political, and technological contexts.

The programme consists of small units that scaffold your learning journey, and this is reflected in the assessments. Assessments will take a variety of forms, including presentations, reports, proposals, and portfolios representing a body of work. You will normally be required to contextualise your work, considering professional, ethical, social and cultural contexts. There is one summative assessment point for each unit, worth 100% of the unit and testing all unit learning outcomes. Where multiple activities have taken place within a unit, these form part of a portfolio of work representing your activity on that unit, assessed holistically at 100% of the unit. Summative assessment normally takes place at the end of each unit.

In the core unit, *Communication and Interdisciplinarity*, you will collaborate with your peers on team projects. Where group work forms part of a unit, the summatively assessed component will include individual critical reflections.

During most units, assessed activities will be small, reflecting the 15-credit size of the units. While these assessments may be small, they are significant to your overall journey, and you should continually reflect upon how they might inform the larger Independent Research Project. The assessment for the Independent Research Project will take the form of a larger, self-initiated project that should be informed by the themes and ideas that you have explored during your studies.

Formative assessment takes place in the form of peer and tutor critique of proposals and work-in-progress.

Written feedback will be provided for all summative assessment within 3 working weeks of the date of assessment.

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 MFA 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 do not pass a unit at the first attempt, you may 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.