



Programme Specification

1. General information

Programme title:	Visual Communication
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	2023-24

2. Programme Philosophy

At the heart of your experience with us in Visual Communication is the shared commitment to 'conversational practice'. By this we mean a practical and discursive approach to making. We see communication as essentially, a conversation to form bridges, to connect people and to exchange ideas.

You will be joining our community of critical thinkers and makers, leading the way in social, cultural and political practices. We have a long history of approaching the making of work through the collaborative, cooperative and compassionate ethos of listening, respecting and (un)learning. You will be introduced to a rich dialogic learning experience, where the conversation takes place between us, you, your peers and your audiences. Together, through a discursive inquiry and exchange, we will explore what it means to both speak *and* listen.

The dynamic nature of communication technologies continues to redefine not only how we make and consume information, but also how we connect to each other. We welcome students to our programme who will challenge the order of things, consider the multiplicity of perspectives and embrace complexity. Situated at the forefront of critical experimentation, you will seek to forge fresh connections between critical radical thinking and making. By harnessing your creative and critical abilities, you will explore new vocabularies for our contemporary times, speculate on new realities and collaborate across disciplinary boundaries to create transformative movements that invite activism & change.

Our students may come to Visual Communication from specific disciplines, such as graphic design and illustration but you will develop the critical and conceptual tools to enable communication and

connections across disciplinary boundaries. Our interdisciplinary environment will offer you a comprehensive understanding drawn from diverse geographies, rich cultural contexts and multiple intellectual and creative fields of study, enabling you to adapt to new subject areas and to situate your work in environments beyond the studio.

As a student you will become well practised in interpreting ideas, events, complex data, knowledge and experiences, translating these into artefacts, narratives or connections that might manifest across or between the physical, digital or the virtual. Through language, storytelling, tools & materiality you will learn to elicit new knowledge and in turn create new insights. Your role as a communicator of such experiences is to form a bridge; to facilitate forms of communication that can connect people and connect ideas. Referring to these exchanges as 'conversations' expands the possibilities for social accountability and creative consciousness.

As a student on the programme, you are given the creative agency to explore the ideas that drive your practice. Recent work has been as diverse as: the body in digital space, gentrification of communities, immigration rights, intangible cultural heritage, feminist and LGBTQ+ histories, media archaeology, the living archive, material labour, the privatisation of public space, protest, racial justice, visions of utopia and more.

Our open and inclusive vision of the practice of communication produces work that is every bit as divergent in form as in content, embracing multidisciplinary approaches including sound, type-design, performance, publishing, moving image, workshops, fieldwork, documentary, radio, virtual reality, comics, ceramics, happenings, drawing, walking and writing. We invite you to join a conversation based on our shared belief in the power of art and design to empower and transform.

3. Educational Aims and Outcomes of the Programme

Programme aims to:

- be the leading programme of its kind in foregrounding and developing 'Conversational Practices' to inhabit new disciplinary territories in a way that is unique to Visual Communication at the RCA.
- develop agile and adaptive critical thinkers who will challenge the order of things, consider the multiplicity of different perspectives and will harness the complexity of these times.
- situate visual communication practices in expanded fields by providing students with the critical, intellectual and dialogic skills to work across disciplinary boundaries.
- create a challenging learning environment that rewards experimentation, maintain a working ethos within which students feel free to experiment, to be innovative and provocative; to question existing practice, but to do so from the position of being well-

informed.

- prepare students technically for professional life by ensuring that they are fully acquainted with the processes of generation, reproduction and distribution; and to retain a balance between new and traditional media and processes.
- enable students to critically reflect on the impact of their creative, professional and scholarly practice and to consider their responsibilities as a practitioner in how they connect to specialist and non-specialist audiences.

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:

- Devise, apply and evaluate an inclusive critical practice for a real-world situation and audience, reflecting critically on the societal and environmental effects of your work;
- Examine and apply research-focused approaches and methods to translate ideas and research into individual or collaborative practice;
- Experiment in the use of materials, processes, technologies and environments in order to translate, test, demonstrate your ideas in relation to your creative practice;
- Identify and develop the appropriate deep learning technical skills and devise production methods for your creative practice;
- Engage in and contribute to the support and enabling of others in discussions with your peers and staff, and where relevant show thoughtful participation and/or leadership in

collaboration and working with others;

- Critically reflect on, situate and demonstrate awareness of the impact of your creative, professional and/or scholarly practice and your responsibilities as a practitioner to your audiences.

4. What will I learn?

Curriculum Map

Term 1	Term 2	Term 3
Encounters (45 credits)	Making Worlds with Others (15 credits)	Independent Research Project (60 credits)
	Affinities (30 credits)	
AcrossRCA (30 credits)		

Unit Title	Term	Credit Value	Core or Elective?
Encounters	1	45	Core
AcrossRCA	1 & 2	30	Core
Making Worlds with Others	2	15	Elective
Affinities	2	30	Core
Independent Research Project	3	60	Core

Encounters / Term 1: Together we will develop ‘conversations’ within a critical framework that aims to question existing ideas and models of knowledge production. By staging encounters with other disciplines, communities, and sites, we will examine and expand on lived experience, motivation and practice. We will formulate inquiries that unsettle the familiar and ask — What if?

AcrossRCA / Terms 1 and 2: Across **terms 1 and 2**, you will participate in **AcrossRCA**. This unit aims to support you to meet the challenges of a complex, uncertain and changing world by bringing you together to work collaboratively in interdisciplinary teams 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.

Making Worlds with Others / Term 2: This unit will allow you to work alongside students within and across the School. Working from the perspective of your individual practices and disciplines, you will develop a project that engages with others and/or creates mutual exchanges of ideas and understandings, with the intention to create critically engaged situations and/or outcomes resulting in convivial knowledge exchange. Through collaborative learning and making the unit will support you in understanding knowledge exchange and public engagement and how you are to situate your own practice in these territories. The unit will also ask you to question how socially engaged practice can contribute to cultural understanding, co-researching and co-creating methods for knowing *with*, not knowing *about*.

Affinities / Term 2: Following on from *Encounters*, you will begin testing the series of critical questions you've emerged with. You will identify which discussions you want to participate in and practice listening and connecting with others on a non-individualistic level. You will start a dialogue with the people, objects and ideas you want to engage with and be expected to connect to them with care and purpose. You will consider new modes and methods relevant to your research, and focus on making, exchanging and experimenting with this knowledge by working collectively.

Independent Research Project / Term 3: Here we ask you to focus on locating and establishing yourself and your work in the external contexts in which you seek to engage and connect your practice to emerging critical discourses. You will enact the critical frameworks, methods and tools you have developed through the programme.

Towards the end of the programme, you will have the opportunity to participate in a collectively curated and produced public facing activity. This could include developing a group exhibition, publication or curated events, and contributes to the body of work presented for your unit assessment.

5. How will I learn?

During the programme you will be given the opportunity to challenge, transform and situate your practice to address emerging contemporary cultural debates and/or broader societal issues. Crossing disciplinary boundaries, you will situate your work to inhabit new sites, to create new vocabularies and to speculate on new realities within a critical framework.

The programme will build a dynamic, responsive teaching environment that is responding to the cohorts' emerging interests. Through the units you are offered a range of learning support structures that are both visible and invisible frameworks for you to navigate your way through the programme. Our programme works with a variety of community-building and dialogic teaching methods that demonstrate and encourages student lead incentives.

The programme encourages you to connect to the wider RCA student body through the College- and School-wide units, with the aim to start conversations with others in forging innovative new partnerships, insights and connections.

In a **Process Group** you will develop experimental approaches to building expanded practical and intellectual tools and techniques. The aim of the process groups is to bring to the surface key questions through the process of critical making.

Encounters / Platforms and Group Tutorials will offer you a critical lens to explore your emerging areas of interest and to build a body of knowledge to work from. The role of these groups is to bring together the learning and synthesise your practice. The tutorials are timetabled at key points throughout the year. These should encourage discussion and peer review in a small group setting, and offer a space to engage in a discussion with you to foster, support and challenge your development, and ensure you are on track with your aims and ambitions for your projects.

The **VC Lecture** is a series of online conversations and in-person lectures and seminars with guest artists, theorists and alumni. The series sets a tone for the programme, providing a core set of ideas, challenges and approaches to inform your work, individually and collectively. The guests will span a range of practices, perspectives and contexts.

Briefings / Orientation - Introduction to core information on the programme and School.

You will have access to **technical workshops, negotiated technical sessions** with technicians, and many materials housed in the RCA's online database of instruction. Workshops offer an intensive learning experience focused on a particular creative approach or technique. These might include technical instruction relevant to letterpress, riso printing, printmaking, screen printing, lithography and etching, moving image, spatial design, photography, gaming, physical computing, or any other mode useful for you that is offered by the College. It may also include workshops related to presentation, designing portfolios, or other practical professional development skills. Inductions are activities that enable you to use technical facilities safely and, when appropriate, without supervision. Negotiated learning refers to sessions that you set up individually with technicians, to get one-to-one advice on your project needs and development goals.

Field trips - The programme will take you offsite to different resources and spaces to engage with different types of research or learning materials. We will visit archives, libraries, collections, communities and sites to learn how these might inform and expand your practice.

We see **blended learning platforms** as an inclusive space to explore other ways of engaging with knowledge, sharing and critic. Online platforms are where we engage mutually in a learning partnership through silent working and non-hierarchy approaches to learning.

6. Assessment and feedback

Regulations

Regulations for assessment and progression can be found [here](#). Please familiarise yourself with these.

Unit assessment

Assessment

We actively explore more inclusive and critically reflexive assessment approaches. We embrace assessment practices that empower you to judge your own work beyond traditional value systems, shifting the emphasis away from a focus on individual grades to knowledge acquired and the learning process.

Continuous assessment enables your performance and progress to be understood and accounted for through a wide variety of academic contact points, recognising that you are able to perform in different ways and through different means and aspects of the curriculum. This assessment ensures that your performance is evaluated from a range of perspectives and by a range of different tutors who are able to triangulate your experience and ensure parity of assessment across the cohort.

Formative Assessment is in the form of self and peer assessment, guided by tutors. You, along with your tutors will sit together to collectively assess and feedback on the work presented, offering you the ability to be an assessor and assessed.

Summative Assessment is usually conducted at the end of the unit. There will be a range of different assessment practices linked to the learning outcomes of the unit. Information regarding individual assessments will be included in the unit descriptors, and will be available to students at the beginning of the academic year.

Feedback

Will be offered regularly to you after formative and summative assessment points, in the form of verbal individual tutorials and written summaries, with bullet points and forward-facing agreed action points.

7. What award can I get?

The award of MA Visual Communication will be given to students who have successfully completed all elements of the programme. Successful completion is dependent on passing all units and gaining 180 credits.

A Postgraduate Diploma can be earned if a student exits at the end of term 2 without completing the Independent Research Project, provided the student has successfully earned 120 credits by passing all other units.

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 Student Visa 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.

Whilst there are still spaces available, successful candidates will be made an offer of a place. If there is no vacancy for a subsequent successful applicant, the candidate will be placed on a waiting list, and may be made a firm offer should a place become available.

Programme-Specific requirements

Specific advice on programme and 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.