



## Programme Specification

### 1. General information

<b>Programme title:</b>	MA City Design
<b>Award:</b>	MA
<b>Qualification Framework level:</b>	Level 7
<b>School/Department or equivalent:</b>	School of Architecture
<b>Campus location(s):</b>	Kensington
<b>Total UK credits:</b>	180 credits
<b>Date valid from/to</b>	2023-24

### 2. Programme Philosophy

The MA City Design envisions new concepts of city and urban life by placing design speculation at the core of social innovation.

City life is undergoing momentous change. New forms of urban development and technologically driven forms of social innovation are transforming the way we live, work, reproduce and take care of the world around us, producing new lines of social solidarity as well as new sites of social conflict. Yet most of the methods used to research and design cities have resisted change, thus limiting our ability to perceive relevant changes and of conceiving radically different futures.

MA City Design believes in the unique capacities of design to conceptualise and propose new and original models of living in cities. It proposes an approach to city design education that unites architectural, social sciences and scientific research. The programme is site-focused and design-led and students have the potential to engage with NGOs, policy makers, government and industry.

The MA City Design makes use of digital design, analysis and visualisation tools, including moving image, animation, augmented and immersive design, as drivers of speculative innovation. Together with collaborative forms of knowledge production and exchange, the programme argues these are necessary for enabling the designers of cities to creatively imagine the future in just and equitable ways. Through invited guests, collaborators and site visits, you will have access to different stakeholders involved in contemporary urban transformation. These will range from industry and design practitioners to central and local government, or community and grassroots organisations. Students of the MA City Design will have the opportunity to pursue a degree within a world leading art and design institution, and to access the rich culture of radical and experimental interdisciplinary work at the Royal College of Art. Moreover, the programme will help you to establish a network of colleagues and mentors by offering you the opportunity of connecting to

leading figures in City Design both in London and internationally through an innovative practice mentorship scheme.

### **3. Educational Aims and Outcomes of the Programme**

#### **Programme aims**

The City Design programme aims to:

- Define the practice of city design and become a world-leading programme, contributing to the re-invention of contemporary knowledge on city design and research; [SEP]
- Contribute to ongoing academic and public debates on alternative models of city and urban life;
- Provide students with the skills to negotiate between multiple city-making actors and their constituencies;
- Create an outstanding academic platform that provides students with systematic and in-depth knowledge of city design research and practice informed by contemporary debates, scholarship and technological innovations;
- Provide students with a broad range of technical skills, with a particular focus on digital and immersive design tools and collaborative design methods;
- Provide a unique social and working environment that encourages students to develop their research while advancing their professional practice and academic abilities;
- Provide students with critical skills that allow them to pursue independent research and to apply advanced, practice-based knowledge to the field of city design.

#### **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

- Argue the intentions of your work in relation to the most recent scholarship in city design;
- Formulate original research questions that contribute to advancing social innovation within city design scholarship and practice;
- Master the use of digital tools that allow testing spatial transformation and social innovation within complex social and spatial contexts;
- Develop methods to effectively communicate research and practice to non-specialist audiences, making use of a comprehensive range of narrative and visualisation methods;
- Critically assess your responsibilities as a practitioner in light of the challenges posed by changes in urban development across the world;
- Demonstrate the ability to continue learning and practicing independently or in collaboration within other academic institutions.

**4. What will I learn?**

Curriculum Map

Term 1	Term 2	Term 3
Design Studio I: Conditions (15 credits)	Design Studio II: Propositions (15 credits)	<b>Independent Research Project (60 credits)</b>
Seminar I: Positions (15 credits)	Seminar II: Transformations (15 credits)	
Media Studies (15 credits)	School-wide elective (15 credits)	

## AcrossRCA (30 credits)

### Programme Structure

Unit Title	Term	Credit Value	Core or Elective?
Design Studio I: Conditions	1	15	Core
Seminar I: Positions	1	15	Core
School-wide elective	2	15	Elective
Design Studio II: Propositions	2	15	Core
Seminar II: Transformations	2	15	Core
Media Studies	1	15	Elective
AcrossRCA (College-wide unit)	1&2	30	Core
Independent Research Project	3	60	Core

### Independent Research Project

The Independent Research Project (IRP) is a continuation of the work previously developed in the Studio units *Conditions* and *Propositions*. This is an opportunity for you to reflect on the theme of the studio while pursuing your own research interests, either in continuity with studio units or in a new direction. Priority will be given to the use and exploration of digital research, design and visualisation tools.

Teaching consists of studio-based tutorials and seminar sessions. The IRP project can be submitted through project or by thesis, and includes a public presentation of work, that might take the form of an event or exhibition. The portfolio will be submitted in the form of a blog or online platform.

The IRP is a continuation of the work previously developed in the Studio Units 'Conditions' and 'Propositions'. This is an opportunity to reflect on the theme of the studio while pursuing your own research interests. The IRP includes a public presentation of work and exhibition, in a College space, alongside peers from your programme, and following the conclusion of taught elements of the unit. This activity will help students to orally and visually present the key strategic and design intentions of the work. Students can make use of a variety of media including film, animation, models, drawings or other as adequate – but priority will be given to the use and exploration of digital research, design and visualisation tools.

## 5. How will I learn?

### **Studio projects / case-study**

The MA City Design main teaching method is the design studio. The programme focuses on case studies and organises your research and projects around site-specific questions and spatial problems within cities. Working in groups, Design Studio 1 will ask you to investigate existing urban 'Conditions' and Design Studio 2 requires students to develop a series in 'Propositions'. Each year the design studio units focus a unique case study. Case studies are chosen according to their

capacity to challenge and inspire you, and to allow for critical and skills-based teaching within the studio.

**Individual and group tutorials:**

A significant teaching method is the weekly individual and group tutorials. For both *Studio* and *Seminar* units, a combination of individual tutorials, together with a mix of small and large group tutorials will be conducted regularly between students and staff. Specialists and invited guests will also contribute depending on research interests and sites.

**Technical learning:**

Studio teaching is supported by technical workshops delivered by faculty and invited specialists. Technical workshops aim to provide students with analytical and representational skills. Making use of Technical Services, as well as guest experts, you will be taught to explore digital modes of spatial analysis and representation, with a focus on digital detection, big data analytics, moving image, animation tools and VR.

**Student-led Roundtables:**

This is an essential teaching method that aims to foster autonomy and peer-to-peer learning processes. Student-led roundtables are crucial to both seminar and elective unit teaching methods, providing a model where you are allowed to lead collective discussion and learning processes.

**Lectures:**

Lectures to the entire cohort will be delivered by programme staff, School of Architecture staff, invited academics and practitioners. Lectures will make use of remote-learning models to allow for a broader range of guests, and to foster inclusivity. Apart from events organised by MA City Design, students will be encouraged to follow the School's international lecture series, across school symposia and interdisciplinary forums organised by the School in collaboration with other academic institutions.

**Critiques and reviews:**

In the *Studio* units, you will have to present your work to programme staff and invited critics multiple times each term. Panels will include School of Architecture staff, experts and specialists involved in the selected case studies or student project sites, UK-based and international academic and practitioners with a distinguished track record in city design and related fields, as well as the programme's practice mentors. Regular reviews will provide valuable opportunities for students to get feedback and to develop and improve their skills in oral presentation.

**Site Visit:**

One- or two-day site visits will allow you to engage local stakeholders, be it practitioners, governmental institutions, industry partners or local communities. Site visits are also key opportunities to verify and test site analysis methodologies.

**Practice Mentors:**

A practice mentorship programme connects you to the workplace through regular meetings taking

place in term 3 with prominent professional practice, policy makers and industry members, who will advise on work and career issues. Students and mentors are paired according to intercepting research interests. In doing so we hope professional practices and organizations might have a foundational role in the development of the student and the programme.

**In order to realise your work successfully you will be expected to attend:**

- . Briefing sessions
- . Individual and Group Tutorials
- . Student-led roundtables
- . Lectures
- . Technical workshops
- . Progress reviews and critiques
- . Site visit
- . Public presentation of work
- . Examinations and assessments

## 6. Assessment and feedback

### Regulations

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

### Unit assessment

The programme makes use of formative and summative assessment.

Assessment may include, but may not be limited to:

- Group submission of project work (written, visual, film, audio etc.)
- Group presentation
- Individual presentation
- Film submission (video, animation, etc.)
- Blog post
- Written research proposal
- Long-form written submission (essays, thesis etc)
- Short-form written submission (briefs, reflections, summaries etc.)
- Research Portfolio
- Viva Voce examination
- Public-facing presentation of work

You will receive oral feedback throughout the year. In the *Studio* unit this will be given weekly by the studio tutor, and in the case of the *Seminar* units by the seminar tutors.

Additionally, reviews with invited guests will provide valuable opportunities for you to get formative input on your design research, and to develop and improve your skills in oral and visual presentation.

Summative assessment takes place at the end of each unit. These are formal examinations of each student's work that evaluates progress part way of their studies. Further details will be included in the unit descriptors, which are delivered to you upon registration.

The assessment of the Independent Research Project has two main components:

- Public presentation of work
- Final submission of work (Portfolio + Thesis)

The Public presentation of work will take place as part of a public event or exhibition usually following the conclusion of taught elements of the unit. You will be required to orally and visually present their work to programme staff and a non-academic audience.

The Final submission of work will take place at the end of term and should include:

- A digital portfolio of work: this should be in the form of an online platform/blog and provide critical intellectual and material context to the IRP, from the original proposal up to the strategy for the public presentation of work.
- Written component of 5000 words for submission by 'Project' and 10000 words for submission by 'Thesis', supported by complementary visual elements.

**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 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 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.