



**Royal College of Art**  
Postgraduate Art & Design

# Strategic Plan

2016  
– 21

# Executive Summary

Founded in 1837, the RCA is the world's oldest Art and Design university in continuous operation.

The RCA was ranked as number one Art and Design university in the world 2015, as judged by the QS World University Rankings.

It is wholly postgraduate, offering Master's, MPhil, and PhD; in 2016–2021 this strategic plan welcomes the introduction of MRes and MDes degrees.

The RCA's vision is to be the world's most influential art and design university, training a greater percentage of the world's prominent artists and leading designers than any other HEI.

The RCA offers a transformative experience to students who go on to transform the world.

## **This Strategic Plan comprises three goals.**

**Goal 1:** To advance art and design education.

At present, the RCA offers 24 distinct pathways or programmes of study. By 2021, this will increase to 34 with the addition of such subjects as Landscape Architecture, Curating Performance, Robotics, and Design Gaming. This plan works to three financial scenarios with three different student numbers of 2,300, 2,500 and 3,000.

**Goal 2:** To create new knowledge in art and design through research and scholarship.

The RCA will increase the number of research centres from three to seven with the addition of: Materials Science; Computer Science; Intelligent Mobility; Drawing research centres.

**Goal 3:** To enhance knowledge exchange and foster innovation.

The RCA will create two new centres of expertise: 'Modelling and Manufacturing Futures' and '2D and 3D Imaging'.

**This Strategic Plan is supported by four enabling strategies: Institutional Positioning; Finance; Estates; People.**

**Institutional Positioning:** The RCA is currently ranked at number 1 for art and design in the QS World University Rankings. The College will occupy the same position in 2021.

**Finance:** The RCA currently operates on a budget of £40m; this is forecast to increase to £68m by 2021.

**Estates and Infrastructure:** The net usable square metres of estate is currently 22,724sqm; this will increase to 37,500 to accommodate 3,000 students, through an estates strategy working to a ten-year timeframe.

Expansion is planned at both Kensington and Battersea campuses.

**People:** The RCA has 291 FTE staff in 2015; this will increase to 421 by 2021.



# 1

## Where have we come from?

- Ranked the world's number one University of Art and Design in 2015 and 2016 by QS World University Rankings.
- In REF 2014, the RCA submitted a higher percentage of eligible staff than any other specialist art and design university. It achieved the highest level of research intensity of any submission.
- In 2012 the RCA celebrated its 175th anniversary, having been established as the Government School of Design in 1837.
- In 2014/15, it operated on a budget of £40m.
- In 2014/15 its student body comprised 1,450 drawn from 60 different nationalities, studying on 24 different programmes.
- 10% of the RCA student population comprised research students registered for MPhil or PhD degrees.
- Five new MA programmes were launched during the five-year period 2010–2015. Prior to 2010, the last new programme added was Curating Contemporary Art in 1992.
- In the timeframe of the last strategic plan 2011–2016, public funding decreased from 65% to 33% of the total operating budget, as tuition income, research grants and other income rose and government support decreased.

# 2

## What do we want to become: the vision for the RCA in 2021

- To become the world's most influential art and design university, training a greater percentage of the world's leading designers and prominent artists than any other HEI.
- To be an institution that provides transformative experiences for individuals who will go on to transform the world.
- To be an international thought leader, demonstrating the value of art and design to society.
- To become a crucible where artists, curators, engineers, fashion designers and scientists create new knowledge.

In order to deliver this vision, the RCA will need to expand its postgraduate taught (PGT) provision across a much broader spectrum of design and fine art enquiry than it currently offers. It must capture the opportunity to partner with world-leading universities in London and abroad in order to maximise the opportunities for cross-disciplinary work; it will create greater interchange of ideas and knowledge exchange between science, art, design and the humanities; its graduates will assume leadership roles in the creative and other industries. The institution will play a vital role in addressing the global challenges of the twenty-first century, such as climate change, rapid urbanisation, ageing populations, healthcare and job creation within the creative industries.

Thought leadership requires frontier research and the generation of new knowledge. The RCA must ensure that it disseminates new knowledge within its taught Master's programmes – knowledge that is distinct from that offered by other institutions, and which is derived from its own research excellence.

The RCA must ensure that it increases its knowledge exchange activities with industry, government, the cultural sector and NGOs if it is to become a thought leader demonstrating the value of creativity to society and industry. Knowledge generation, exchange, and commercialisation/innovation will become increasingly important success metrics by which the higher education sector will be valued internationally.

Offering taught, research and knowledge exchange programmes across a much broader spectrum of design and fine art will result in a larger RCA. The university will grow its student body over the five-year period of this plan, creating critical mass, and contributing to greater knowledge outputs and strengthening research intensity above the levels of the RCA 2015.



The three goals which will deliver this vision for 2021 are:

1

To advance art and design education

2

To create new knowledge in art and design through research and scholarship

3

To enhance knowledge exchange and foster innovation



# 3

And – why  
do we want  
to go there?

- Because art and design are essential to societal good.
- As a thought leader and knowledge generator, the RCA must articulate how art and design address key issues of healthcare; well-being; wealth creation; rapid urbanisation and climate change.
- To maintain and strengthen the influence of the RCA community globally.
- To lead change in art and design teaching and research internationally.

# 4

How do we  
get there?

**Our progress will be informed by the culture and values that define and guide the RCA:**

- Community
- Intimacy
- Practice and the haptic
- Interdisciplinarity
- Collaboration and connectivity
- Diversity and internationalism
- Depth
- Excellence
- A commitment to high staff-to-student ratios
- The provision of individual studio spaces and industry-standard workshops/labs
- The enhanced MA (240 credits versus 180)

## The three goals set for 2016–2021:

# 1

To advance art and design education

# 2

To create new knowledge in art and design through research and scholarship

# 3

To enhance knowledge exchange and foster innovation

## The enabling strategies (ES) that will underpin the delivery of three strategic goals:

# 1

Institutional Positioning

# 2

Finance

# 3

Estates and Infrastructure

# 4

People



# Goal 1

## To advance art and design education

### Where have we come from 2011–2016?

- New School structure with 'executive' Deans.
- Increased percentage of staff with PG Cert to 20%.
- Launched five new programmes (Critical Writing in Art & Design; Global Innovation Design; Information Experience Design; Interior Design; Service Design).
- Introduced pathways in Moving Image and Performance, in Fine Art.
- Four Fine Art programmes united on one campus.

### Where do we want to go 2016–2021?

- i) Deliver an academic offer that reflects the spectrum of practice and enquiry in Fine Art and Design today – i.e. Landscape Architecture; Design Gaming; City Design.
- ii) Provide new flexible models of learning to match the needs and profile of the twenty-first century student: for example, one-year MRes degree; one- and two-year Master's programmes; Executive Master's; and professional PhDs for those based in industry.
- iii) Strengthen our research in targeted areas and develop PGT courses/pathways that are born from these research findings – rather than vice versa – achieving seamless integration of programmes and curriculum innovation with our generation and sharing of new knowledge. For example, an MRes in Healthcare Design in partnership with ICL's faculty of Medicine.
- iv) Collaborate with world-leading partners allied to our internationalisation strategy. For example, transnational partnerships to advance learning in Ceramics, Curating, and launch GID2.0.
- v) Leverage STEM+D within the PGT and PGR programmes: for example, Robotics.
- vi) Strengthen interdisciplinarity: for example, a collaborative Critical Practice pathway in the Schools of Fine Art and Humanities.
- vii) Partner with world-ranked London universities: for example, in the delivery of City Design, an MBA, or Design Gaming.
- viii) Improve the student experience.

# Goal 2

To create new knowledge in art and design through research and scholarship

## Where have we come from 2011–2016?

- 65% of faculty entered into REF 2014 (the highest submission to our unit of assessment from any specialist art and design university).
- 4\* REF rating for the 'impact' of our Research; 4\* rating for the university 'Environment' in which our research is conducted.
- Research Office, Knowledge Exchange, SustainRCA, Helen Hamlyn Centre for Design and InnovationRCA operate as one ecosystem.
- Pipeline model for research grant submission introduced with School Research Leaders, creating £3m p.a. in successful research grant funding.
- CX Research Centre established in 2013 with universities of Newcastle and Lancaster, to explore publicly accessible big data.
- HELIX Centre established in partnership with Imperial Health Trust's St Mary's Hospital and Imperial Medical School.

## Where do we want to go 2016–2021?

To be a research-intensive university, where teaching  
ii) is informed by research.

To realise an improved REF result in 2020 to that of 2014,  
iii) increasing quality rather than quantity of research.

For research income to increase as a percentage  
iv) of overall budget.

To have two cross-disciplinary centres of expertise operating  
v) across all six Schools.

To increase the level of scientific input within design research projects and on offer to PGT students. Create new research centres operating transversely across the six  
vi) schools, in Materials Science and Computer Science.

To define a stronger role for Drawing as a distinct art and design discipline, with a dedicated cross-university Drawing Research Centre.

- vii) To build upon our research strengths in vehicle design and accessible design, and create an Integrated Transport Research Centre.
- viii) To build SustainRCA into a standalone Research Centre.
- ix) To improve provision for PGR and record improved student experience.

# Goal 3

Enhance  
knowledge  
exchange  
and foster  
innovation

## Where have we come from 2011–2016?

- InnovationRCA housed in purpose-built Clore Innovation Centre.
- 60% of start-ups in InnovationRCA either sell, license or set up companies around their concepts.
- Funds secured from HEIF and Nesta to support InnovationRCA.
- Funds secured from James Dyson Foundation to support IP protection in InnovationRCA.
- Director of Research & Innovation appointed.
- New role of Head of Knowledge Exchange (KE) created.

## Where do we want to go 2016–2021?

- i) Centres of expertise in high-technology areas established at RCA that enhance knowledge exchange: 'RCA Manufacturing Futures Lab' and 'RCA Imaging Lab'.
- ii) Faculty, as well as graduate, knowledge and ideas commercialised in InnovationRCA.
- iii) Re-align studio projects within KE, rather than as a corporate sponsorship opportunity.

## Academic vision summary 2016–21

The RCA will be in the vanguard of new research and teaching in creative disciplines. Four new research centres and ten new postgraduate taught programmes will be added to the academic offer. The student body will consequently have increased to between 2,300–3,000 by 2021. Two new centres of expertise will enhance knowledge exchange and industry collaboration.

# Enabling Strategy 1

## Institutional Positioning

### **Where have we come from 2011–2016?**

- Ranked number one Art and Design university in the world by QS World University Rankings.
- Modernised and professionalised Alumni relations, with database of 10,500 active contacts internationally.
- Launched a new website.
- Run annual survey of international students to benchmark competitors.
- Launched an internationalisation strategy.
- Created a communications strategy built on the findings of an international competitor benchmarking survey.
- Run public value/benefit of RCA and competitor survey with consultant EKOS.
- 175 Exhibition demonstrated the contribution and value of the RCA over its long lifetime.

### **Where do we want to go 2016–2021?**

- i) To be recognised internationally as the world's most influential art and design university, graduating more world-leading artists and designers than any other single university.
- ii) To be a voice of authority for Design and Art internationally – influence, practice, pedagogy and research.
- iii) An institution that provides transformative experiences for individuals who will go on to transform the world.



# Enabling Strategy 2

## Finance

### **Where have we come from 2011–2016?**

- Reduced dependence on HEFCE funding (from 65% to 33% of income).
- Increased percentage of income from tuition fees.
- Appointed new directors of Finance, Buildings & Estates, Human Resources, and Development & Alumni Relations.
- Introduced Agresso Finance system in 2013 – replacing a 20-year-old predecessor.
- Begun to develop a financial effectiveness strategy.
- Increased philanthropic income by 270% since 2011.

### **Where do we want to go 2016–2021?**

- i) To have developed a financial strategy and capability that delivers sustainable proactive investment in the institution, in student experience, research capacity, and estates and infrastructure upgrades.
- ii) To ensure resources are aligned to strategic priorities, not historic funding patterns.
- iii) To diversify income streams beyond HEFCE and tuition fees.
- iv) To continue to improve the efficiency of our academic and operational support functions so we can demonstrate value-for-money to our students and funders.

# Enabling Strategy 3

## Estates and Infrastructure

### Where have we come from 2011–2016?

- Increased the RCA footprint by 33% with creation of Dyson Building, Woo Building and Hester Road sites.
- Invested c. £1m per annum in addressing backlog of deferred maintenance.
- Commissioned comprehensive masterplan by Haworth Tompkins 2011.
- Commissioned condition survey by Drake & Kannemeyer 2013.
- Commissioned space utilisation survey by iDEA 2014.
- Appointed new Director of Buildings & Estates and restructured B&E team.
- Introduced university-wide timetabling system to maximise space use in 2015.



## **Where do we want to go 2016–2021?**

- i) To develop and deliver a unified, customer-focused approach to the delivery of academic and operational services to students, staff and other stakeholders, regardless of organisation boundaries, backed up by effective and accessible systems.
- ii) To chart a 20-year Estate Strategy that delivers the immediate needs of this five-year cycle 2016–2021, but which presents a 'Horizon 2' vision up to 2036, capable of accommodating a student body of between 2,300–3,000 (c.f. 1,600 in 2015/16) and future proofs for continued expansion of facilities.
- iii) To create new spaces that accord with the RCA's culture and values.
- iv) To maintain one studio space per Master's student in the five practice-based Schools, working to agreed space norms per School.
- v) To improve social/catering spaces.
- vi) To revitalise Darwin Building.
- vii) To expand our footprint in Battersea and Kensington.
- viii) To reduce our carbon and waste output.

# Enabling Strategy 4

## People

### Where have we come from 2011–2016?

- Created Director-level positions in Buildings & Estates, ILTS, Human Resources, and Development & Alumni Relations.
- Achieved 50% gender balance at SMT.
- Introduced iTrent software.
- Created new 'executive' Dean structure.
- We have agreed and published our core values:  
'The RCA is committed to creating an environment of mutual respect, where differences are valued and respected and where innovation, creativity and diversity can flourish. Positive working relationships – whether between staff and staff, staff and students, or students and students – are central to this. Mutual respect is facilitated by the promotion of values of dignity, courtesy and respect, alongside a zero tolerance of bullying and harassment.'

### Where do we want to go 2016–2021?

- To develop a consistently high performance culture and environment that attracts and retains talented and ambitious staff.
- To improve student satisfaction ratings.
- To achieve more effective deployment of staff.
- To offer industry contact to students via the Visiting Professors and Lecturers framework on a consistent basis.
- For 100% of academic Heads of Programme to be on 1.0 or 0.8 contracts.
- For 90% of faculty to be eligible for REF entry at estimated 4\* and 3\*; and provide 20% of contracted time as research.

**Design Concept/Template**

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