



## Royal College of Art Admissions Policy

### Introduction

1. This policy applies for all applications to Programmes of postgraduate study at the Royal College of Art ('RCA'). It outlines the commitments made by the College in ensuring that its admissions procedures are fair, transparent and equitable.
2. The admission of each student to the RCA shall be based on clearly published criteria for entry; each student that achieves these criteria shall be offered a place on a Programme unless that Programme is full for the year. The entry criteria shall be defined with a view to ensuring that there is a reasonable likelihood for each admitted student that the student is able to fulfil the objectives of the Programme and achieve the standard required for the academic award.
3. In addition to its legal obligations under the Equalities Act, the RCA is committed to the recruitment of students with the greatest academic ability and potential, irrespective of their social, cultural and economic background.
4. The RCA is committed to equity of treatment for all of its applicants, and applications are considered on their individual merits. Admission to a Programme of study offered by the RCA is based solely on information provided to the College during the application process.
5. The RCA is committed to fair, transparent and consistent admissions practices and aims to offer clear advice and guidance to prospective applicants to enable them to make informed choices.
6. This policy is consistent with good admissions practice in higher education, as defined in the Quality Assurance Agency's 'UK Quality Code for Higher Education' and the Schwartz Report 'Fair Admissions to Higher Education: Recommendations for Good Practice' and complies with current legislation applicable to the admission of students.

### Roles and Responsibilities

7. An Admissions Board shall be appointed for each Programme by the Dean of the relevant School(s)<sup>1</sup>. The purpose of an Admissions Board is to assess a candidate's

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<sup>1</sup> For the purposes of this Policy, Deans of Schools incorporate the director of any research centre based outside of the School structure that offers Programmes, or the Head of Research Programmes for Programmes overseen by the central Research, Knowledge Exchange & Innovation unit

suitability for a Programme of study, in accordance with published criteria that the Admissions Board shall set for that Programme, and to make offers of places on RCA Programmes to applicants, on behalf of the Academic Board for Concessions & Discipline ('ABCD'). For research Programmes, Admissions Boards shall be responsible for making recommendations to ABCD on whether appropriate facilities and supervision are available to enable the student to satisfactorily complete their intended Programme of research.

8. The minimum composition of an Admissions Board is one member of academic staff of the RCA<sup>2</sup>, at senior tutor level or above, appointed by the Dean of the relevant School, as Chair. For research Programmes Admissions Boards shall also include a member of academic staff with experience of research supervision.
9. For research Programmes, where the Chair of an Admissions Board is expected to be appointed as a supervisor of an applicant, an alternative Chair should be appointed to consider the admission of that applicant.
10. The Chair may choose to invite other members of academic staff and/or student representatives<sup>3</sup> to join the Admissions Board.
11. The membership of an Admissions Board may change during the course of an academic year, but must always conform to the minimum composition described in paragraph 8 of this Policy.
12. Where student members of Boards are appointed, the duties and responsibilities of student members of Admissions Boards do not differ from those of any other member of the Admissions Board. All student members must have received selection training as approved by the Department of Human Resources.
13. Where an Admissions Board does not include a member of the School to which the applicant has applied, the formal offer of a place must be confirmed by the Dean of the admitting School.
14. It is the responsibility of the Chair of the Admissions Board to ensure that the rights and responsibilities of the Board are known to each member. The Chair of the Admissions Board shall have the final say in the selection of candidates to be recommended to the Dean of School for the offer of a place. The Dean of School is required to approve all Admissions Board results for recommendation to the Academic Board for Concessions and Student Discipline.
15. Chairs of Admissions Boards shall be provided with regular training to ensure

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<sup>2</sup> Defined as a member of staff employed by the RCA on an academic contract of one year or longer.

<sup>3</sup> Defined as one currently registered student of the College or sabbatical officer of the Students' Union.

decisions comply with this Policy and other related policies.

### Academic Entry Criteria

16. The RCA publishes entry criteria in its online prospectus. These may be reproduced in external sources of information, advice and guidance.
17. The RCA aims to ensure that its published information is accurate, clear and unambiguous, and is published within a timeframe to enable applicants to make a considered decision on whether to apply to study on a Programme offered by the College. The College commits to complying with the Competition and Markets Authority Consumer Law Advice for Providers and Students of Higher Education. As such, the College commits to avoiding altering admissions criteria during the course of the application cycle.
18. The published entry requirements reflect a typical offer; however, meeting or being predicted to meet these requirements does not guarantee an offer.
19. Applicants considering postgraduate taught Programmes are expected to have obtained an undergraduate degree at the point of enrolment on to the Programme at the RCA; the typical minimum entry requirement is a lower second class degree (2.2) or equivalent, or alternatively relevant, equivalent professional practice. Individual Programmes may specify higher entry requirements; these will be published on the College's online prospectus. 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 year's 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 course of upper secondary education. Where an equivalency is not clear, enquiries should be directed to the RCA Registry ([admissions@rca.ac.uk](mailto:admissions@rca.ac.uk)).
20. Applicants considering postgraduate research Programmes are expected to have obtained an undergraduate degree (typically a 2.1). In addition, they will typically be expected to have achieved a taught postgraduate degree in a relevant subject, or equivalent.
21. Exceptionally, other qualifications may be approved, providing that the ABCD is satisfied that the applicant has the ability to pursue the Programme of study successfully.
22. The Quality Assurance Agency for the UK is responsible for safeguarding the quality and standards of degree Programmes across the UK. The RCA does not explicitly discriminate between UK degrees awarded a similar classification. However, where

similar regulatory institutional standards are not in place for other countries, the College reserves the right to differentiate between different institutions of that country. The College may do this through the use of research, market intelligence and/or the performance of existing students.

### **Subject Specific Requirements**

23. Subject specific requirements for each Programme are clearly listed in the online prospectus. If a degree in a specific subject or field is listed as required, an application will not be considered if the student has not completed, and is not pending completion, of that award.

### **English Language Requirements**

24. Applicants shall be expected to demonstrate that they have adequate proficiency in the English language, such that they can reasonably be expected to gain the award that they are registered for.
25. For taught postgraduate Programmes, candidates who do not speak English as their first language will be required to provide evidence prior to registration that, within the previous two years, they have achieved a standard equivalent to an overall IELTS exam score of at least 6.5, with a score of at least 6.0 in the Test of Written English (TWE).
26. For postgraduate research Programmes, candidates who do not speak English as their first language will be required to provide evidence prior to registration that, within the previous two years, they have achieved a standard equivalent to an overall IELTS exam score of at least 6.5, with a TWE score of at least 6.5. Postgraduate research students will not normally be permitted to register for the degree of PhD unless they have achieved a standard equivalent to an overall IELTS score of 7.0, with a TWE score of at least 7.0.
27. Candidates for the College's taught postgraduate Programmes who have, within the previous two years, achieved a degree from a majority English speaking country<sup>4</sup>, as defined in Home Office guidance, at a level equivalent to at least a second class (upper division) degree, shall be exempt from the requirements outlined in paragraph 25.
28. Candidates who do not achieve the standards articulated in paragraphs 25 - 27 of this Policy may, at the discretion of the College, be admitted to Programmes subject to participation in one of the College's 8 week Pre-sessional English for Academic Purposes (EAP) Programmes. Participants in EAP Programmes will be liable for an additional fee (£3,000 for 2017/18). Candidates required to participate in an 8 week

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<sup>4</sup> This includes degrees taught in English and validated by UK higher education institutions, such as the University of Nottingham Ningbo China campus

EAP Programme, who do not enroll on such a Programme to the satisfaction of the College, shall have any offer to study on a Programme of the College withdrawn. Under no circumstances shall a student who requires a visa to study in the UK, and who does not meet UKVI requirements in relation to English language, be admitted to a pre-sessional or any other Programme of the College.

29. Some Programmes, with the approval of the Academic Standards Committee, may require a higher English language standard than provided for in this Policy. The online prospectus lists the requirement for each Programme and what is accepted as meeting this requirement.
30. Appendix One identifies qualifications and grades that the College regards as equivalent to IELTS qualifications. Other evidence demonstrating English language proficiency shall only be accepted by the College at the discretion of the Registrar.
31. Students requiring a visa to study in the UK are subject to Home Office requirements in relation to English language qualifications. Where these differ from RCA requirements, applicants will be required to satisfy both UKVI and RCA requirements before being admitted to a Programme of the College.

### **Application Assessment**

32. The RCA considers all aspects of each application in coming to a decision on whether to offer the student a place on one of its Programmes. This may include some or all of the following elements:
  - Predicted or achieved performance in undergraduate and / or postgraduate qualifications;
  - A personal statement;
  - A research proposal;
  - Up to two references;
  - Work experience;
  - Evidence of English language proficiency;
  - Performance at interview;
  - Quality of portfolio.
  - The academic and geo-demographic context in which qualifications have been achieved, or are being completed;
  - Extenuating circumstances.
33. The RCA may require applicants to supply additional information as part of the selection process, in addition to their application forms. For Programmes where this is a requirement, this will be clearly indicated in the online prospectus.
34. Some Programmes of the RCA require students to submit a portfolio for consideration as part of the admissions process. Detailed information on what any

portfolio should contain, and the criteria which will be used in assessing the portfolio, shall be made available via the online prospectus.

35. As PGR Programmes require advanced research into very specific academic fields, successful applicants will be those whose proposed area of research could be appropriately supervised according to the College's current academic expertise and supervisor availability. It is the applicant's responsibility to identify an appropriate supervisor for their research prior to submitting an application. Information regarding staff research areas is available in the online prospectus. However, the appointment of any supervisor is at the College's discretion, as approved by the ABCD.

### **Application Procedure**

36. Applications to all degree Programmes of the RCA must be submitted via the College's online admissions portal.
37. Applicants are only permitted to register once with the portal, but may apply to more than one Programme within a single admissions cycle.
38. The RCA normally permits applications to be submitted no earlier than 12 months preceding the intended admission date the following year. The College will publish annually dates ('the application deadline date') by which applications should be submitted in order to ensure their consideration for that year; the College reserves the right, following that date, to consider individual courses full, or to continue to accept applications, up until the first day of term. Applications received by the application deadline date will be considered equally; applications submitted after that time will be considered on an individual basis. It is the applicant's responsibility to ensure that their application is submitted in time to make the necessary arrangements to study at the College, including completion of all steps to ensure that the student has obtained a valid visa prior to the start of the Programme.
39. Applicants should be aware that, in addition to general application deadlines, there may be additional funding deadlines for both RCA and external grants, scholarships and other funding options.
40. Individual Programmes may require applicants to submit a digital portfolio of their work. Hard copy portfolios will not be accepted, and will be returned to the applicant, at the applicant's expense. Guidance on the expected content of each portfolio will be published on the online prospectus. Applicants should submit their application forms first, and then follow the College's instructions for submission of the portfolio.
41. Successful applicants may be made either conditional or unconditional offers. Where a conditional offer is made, the conditions will be spelt out clearly in the offer letter. Each condition must be met prior to the date of Registration; where any condition of

the offer is not met prior to the date of registration then the offer will normally be considered withdrawn. In such circumstances the applicant will need to re-apply in order to be considered for a future place on the Programme.

42. Successful applicants must meet all of their offer conditions in sufficient time to complete registration by the registration date published by the RCA. This includes obtaining a Tier 4 visa where required. International students should be aware that applications submitted after 31 July are unlikely to enable them to complete the necessary steps to obtain a Tier 4 visa before the registration date and may therefore not be considered.
43. Applicants for taught postgraduate Programmes may be permitted to defer entry for one academic year. Applicants for postgraduate research Programmes may defer at the discretion of the Director of Research Studies (or equivalent) for the relevant School, who will need to consider whether appropriate supervision will still be available the following year. All deferral requests must be submitted in writing (via email) to the Admissions Office at least 10 working days before the date of registration. ABCD may also defer offers of admission, for example when a Programme is considered 'full', or where the College wishes to impose conditions of offer that could not reasonably be fulfilled before the start date of the Programme.
44. Applicants should be aware that, under the Data Protection Act, the RCA is only able to speak directly with them unless the College has been provided with verifiable, written permission from the applicant that they give permission for the College to speak to a representative.

## **Interviews**

45. Programmes of the RCA may use interviews as part of the selection process. The interview shall normally be conducted in person with the Admissions Board; interviews using video conferencing, Skype and / or with one, or two, designated nominees of the Admissions Board are permissible at the discretion of the Chair of the Admissions Board. Any recommendation to offer a place may only be made by a properly constituted Admissions Board, after having reviewed application forms, interview records and the applicant portfolio.
46. Some Programmes may elect to interview some applicants, while making offers to others who have not been interviewed. For example, this may be to enable decisions to be made for applicants who have not demonstrably met all of the criteria for admission, or to assess for specific required competences including spoken English. In such cases the criteria for selection for interview, and selection for offer without interview, shall be published on the College's online prospectus
47. Invitations to interview shall make clear that the applicant is invited to attend a formal

interview as part of the selection process.

48. Clear information shall be sent to each applicant in advance of the interview and in sufficient time for any travel arrangements to be made and for the interviewee to prepare. This information shall include:
  - The date, time, duration and location of the interview and a contact name and number in case of queries on the day;
  - Details of any documentation which should be brought to the interview, including verification of the applicant's identity;
  - Clear instructions for the submission of the portfolio;
  - A specific date by which they must respond to confirm their attendance;
  - Information about opportunities to reschedule, how to request this and the possible consequences of not attending an interview;
  - Details on how to prepare themselves for the interview;
  - A brief outline of what to expect at the interview, including the format of the interview and any test that may be included as part of the process;
  - Information regarding whether it is appropriate to bring accompanying guests;
  - A question to applicants in relation to any accessibility requirements they may have for the interview to allow for a clear opportunity for this to be declared and any reasonable adjustments implemented.<sup>5</sup>
49. The aims of the interview and the skills and attributes sought from the interviewee must be identified in advance by those administering the interview, and be fair, clear, transparent and implemented consistently.
50. On no account should any information be divulged to an applicant at interview about the outcome of that interview. Applicants must not be given any impression as to whether they are likely to be successful or unsuccessful.
51. Any interview must be conducted with regard to the RCA's equality and diversity policies. All interviewers must complete unconscious bias training offered by the College and any other selection training required by the College's Human Resources department.
52. Applicants shall not be accompanied, supported or coached by individuals external to the College in interviews other than as a reasonable adjustment in the case of a disability. In such cases, this adjustment must be approved in advance by the Chair of the Admissions Board. Where an applicant is accompanied, supported or coached during an interview the College reserves the right to terminate the interview and/or to reject the application.

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<sup>5</sup> Suggested text: 'If you have any specific needs, such as requiring extra time for tests, or mobility or sensory concerns, please contact us as soon as possible so that any reasonable adjustments can be put in place for the interview. This may include communication support, lift access or other types of support.'

53. A formal, written record of the interview, such as a score sheet and interview notes, shall be kept by the School with responsibility for the Programme, in accordance with the RCA Data Protection Policy. ABCD shall have access to all of these records upon request. Notification of the outcome of each interview shall be communicated to the Registry, who will notify each applicant.
54. Interviews may be conducted by video conference or telephone, at the discretion of the relevant school<sup>6</sup>. Video conference and telephone interviews must follow this policy.

### **Fraud and Plagiarism**

55. It is essential that the portfolio or other material submitted as part of an application are the work of the applicant. The RCA may use similarity detection software to evaluate the originality of a piece of work.
56. Any irregularities in the personal statement or other written materials will be investigated by the Admissions Board. The applicant shall be contacted and notified of the evidence to be considered as part of this investigation, and given the chance to make representations. Where an application is rejected on academic grounds, no further action will be taken with regard to any suspected plagiarism or fraud.
57. The RCA reserves the right to reject any application, or withdraw an offer, where any part of the application is identified as having been plagiarised or is otherwise fraudulent.
58. The RCA reserves the right to withdraw any offer that it issues in error. In such circumstances it will write to the applicant to apologise formally and explain the nature of the error.

### **Disclosure of Criminal Convictions**

59. The RCA recognises its duty to protect the College community and the communities around it, and that information regarding an individual's criminal convictions may need to be taken into account when deciding whether that individual may begin or continue their studies. The application process requires applicants to disclose relevant unspent convictions.
60. Programmes involving interaction with children and/or vulnerable adults require applicants to disclose all convictions, including cautions, reprimands, final warnings, bind-over orders and spent convictions. For such Programmes, where enhanced

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<sup>6</sup> Including research centres and Research, Knowledge Exchange & Innovation as appropriate.

disclosure is required, the online prospectus will give details of this requirement and instructions and guidance will be available from the Registry.

61. Applicants with declared criminal convictions are initially assessed on standard academic and non-academic selection criteria. If it is recommended that an offer be made, further investigation of the relevance of the criminal conviction(s) will be carried out before the final decision is made.

### **Mitigating Circumstances**

62. The RCA understands circumstances beyond an applicant's control, such as illness or bereavement, may detrimentally affect their academic progress. In such instances, and for entry to RCA Programmes, the College expects applicants to have taken appropriate action to ensure the relevant examination bodies have allowed for such circumstances prior to the announcement of results or following an appeal.

### **Disabled Applicants**

63. The RCA is committed to fulfilling its obligations in accordance with the 2010 Equalities Act. Applications from disabled applicants will be considered upon academic merit and potential for their chosen Programme. Any support needs or required adjustments shall be considered independently of the admissions decision. Where an applicant believes that their disability has impacted detrimentally upon their academic performance to date, they should provide details in their personal statement. Student Support may provide applicants with information, advice and guidance on disability support available during the admissions process and after registration.
64. The RCA is committed to ensuring fair treatment of all applicants, including disabled applicants. The College shall make reasonable adjustments during the application to ensure that disabled applicants are treated no less favourably than other applicants, in consultation with the applicant. In the event that there is disagreement between an applicant and the RCA on the nature of a specific adjustment, a final decision shall be made by the Registrar.

### **Age Requirement**

65. The RCA does not operate a minimum or maximum age requirement for its Programmes; however, students must be able to demonstrate the maturity and personal skills, as well as academic potential required to succeed on a postgraduate higher education Programme.
66. The only exception to this is where Programmes require a Disclosure and Barring Service check, which may have a minimum-age requirement. The online prospectus

provides details of any such requirement and additional guidance is available from the Registry.

## Feedback on Unsuccessful Applications

67. The RCA receives high numbers of applications to its Programmes. The College does not normally provide feedback to applicants whose applications are rejected prior to interview. Feedback on applications rejected following interview may be provided at the discretion of the Chair of the Admissions Board, provided any such request is received within one month of notification of the rejection of the interview. Any such request should be submitted to the Registry.

## Appeals

68. Appeals against decisions to reject an application will only be considered on the following grounds:
- Mitigating circumstances have not been taken into account;
  - The College has made an administrative error;
  - The provisions of this Policy have not been followed.

Appeals against the academic judgement of the College will not be considered.

69. Any appeal must be submitted within 28 days of notification of the decision to reject the application. Appeals must be made in writing or via email to the Registrar, outlining the basis of the appeal, with evidence as appropriate. The Registrar may then investigate the decision to reject the application. Following any such investigation the Registrar shall then either:
- Reject the appeal;
  - Refer the application back to the Chair of the Admissions Board for re-consideration, with guidance;
  - Refer the application to the Dean of the relevant School to request its re-consideration by a new Admissions Board.

The Registrar's decision shall be final.

## IELTS EQUIVALENT QUALIFICATIONS

IELTS	6.0	6.5	7.0
TOEFL	80	90	100
Pearson	54	61	68
Cambridge CPE (test taken before Jan 2015)	Grade C	Grade C	Grade C
Cambridge CAE (test taken before Jan 2015)	Grade C	Grade C	Grade B
Cambridge CPE and CAE (test taken after Jan 2015)	169	176	185
TEEP	6.0	6.5	7.0
OIBEC	Pass	Pass	Pass
Cambridge ESOL (Skills for Life)	Level 1	Level 1	Level 2
Trinity College ISE	ISE II with Distinction in all four components	ISE III with Pass in all four components	ISE III with Merit in all four components

## International qualifications

IELTS	6.0	6.5	7.0
GCSE English Language	C	C	B
Cambridge O-level	C	C	B
Cambridge International GCSE	C	C	B
International Baccalaureate	4 in SL EL	4 in SL EL	5 in SL EL
European Baccalaureate	80% in EL	80% in EL	90% in EL

IELTS		6.0	6.5	7.0
Austria	Matura/Reifeprüfung	Grade 2	Grade 2	Grade 2
Brunei	GCE/O-level 1120 Syllabus	C	C	B
Bulgaria	Diploma za sredno Obrazovani	Grade 5	Grade 5	Grade 5
Cameroon	GCE O-level English	C	C	B
Denmark	Bevis for Studentereksamen	Grade 7	Grade 7	Grade 10
Finland	Ylioppilastutkinto	Grade 5	Grade 5	Grade 5
France	Baccalauréat L'option International English	Grade 12	Grade 12	Grade 12
France	Baccalauréat General	Grade 14	Grade 14	Grade 14
Germany	Abitur, English	Grade 12	Grade 12	Grade 13
Hong Kong	HKDSE	Grade 4	Grade 4	Grade 5
Hong Kong	HKAL	C	C	B

Iceland	Stúdentspróf, Compulsary English	Grade 8	Grade 8	Grade 8
India	National Board Standard XII	70%	70%	80%
India	State Board Standard XII	80%	80%	90%
Malaysia	English Language GCE-O (Syllabus 1119)	C	C	B
Malta	Matriculation Certificate, English	C	C	B
Mauritius	Cambridge Overseas Schools (COS), English	C	C	B
Namibia	HIGCSE	C	C	B
Netherlands	VWO, English	Grade 7	Grade 7	Grade 8
Norway	Vitnemål	Grade 5	Grade 5	Grade 5
Sri Lanka	O-level in English	Credit	Credit	Distinction
Sweden	Fullständigt från Gymnasieskolan, English	VG	VG	VG
Switzerland	Maturità	Grade 5	Grade 5	Grade 5