MA ANIMATION

School of Communication

With over 30 years of being on the cutting edge of animation, the Animation programme has an international status as a subject leader. During this time, the discipline of animation has undergone many changes with developments not only in production methods, but also in how it is conceptualised, distributed and positioned. In response, three pathways have been introduced as fluid specialist routes through a common programme that is concerned with developing practitioners who have the critical tools, conceptual overview, specialist knowledge and the confidence to creatively innovate and take the authorial lead in their respective fields. These are: Documentary Animation, Experimental Animation and Narrative Animation, one of which students select as part of their application.

The programme’s location within a visually sophisticated, multidisciplinary art and design school, rather than a film school, is crucial in the development of creative and critical thinking, research skills and expanded discipline expertise that’s applied to ideas, styles, genres and technological approaches. Both the MA and research degrees attract artists and makers from a broad background of disciplines: science, maths, architecture, literature, art history, computing and fine art, as well as communication.

The programme offers:
— a unique learning and teaching environment, developing the creativity and skills required in an age of rapid cultural and technological change
— an exceptionally stimulating multidisciplinary environment, complemented by the College’s award-winning programmes in art and design
— a curriculum that allows students to explore the creative slip between diverse forms of moving image: animation, documentary, fiction, process and interactivity
— innovative, practical research and an understanding of different contexts, traditions and histories
— a potent combination of workshops, lectures and tutorials, with the opportunity to develop your own practice, individually and collaboratively

240 credits 2-year programme Full-time study Pathways: Documentary Animation, Experimental Animation and Narrative Animation
MA Animation comprises of three specialist pathways: Documentary Animation, Experimental Animation and Narrative Animation, one of which students select as part of their application. These categories are not prescriptive with all students expected to innovate, experiment and take inspiration and influence from the other pathways, alongside the core programme offer and the wider School.

**Documentary Animation** investigates epistemological concerns in questioning how we represent and apply the ‘real’.

**Experimental Animation** takes a more exploratory and innovative approach to Animation, extending beyond conventional models to post-screen, post-digital and installation/live environments.

**Narrative Animation**: is a new development proposed for launching in Autumn 2017 and focussing on the innovative exploration of different forms of storytelling. This is not intended as a film-school training in conventional ways to tell a story, but as a serious interrogation of narratology in the moving image.

All students on MA Animation follow a similar curricular structure with a common system of units as follows:

1. Critical & Historical Studies, 40 credits
2. School of Communication Elective, 20 credits
3. Systems of Practice, 60 credits
4. Development and Prototyping, 60 credits
5. Independent Research Project, 60 credits

**First Year**

During the first year, students choose a School of Communication elective, attend CHS sessions and write a dissertation. Unit 3 is intended to ground students in core theories and methods that will both build on and provoke a re-examination of previous systems of practice. To put this into action, they are asked to initiate and produce a First Year Project, which can take the form of a short film, installation or interactive project that can be created either collaboratively or independently.

**Second Year**

In the Second Year, students are expected to initiate and take responsibility for the production planning, conceptual and visual development of a Graduation Project that reflects the thematics of their chosen pathway. They will work independently to realise, disseminate and critically reflect on their project. This will include both animation production and plans for promotion, installation and exhibition at the Summer Show.

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**Student Story**

**Dann Parry MA Animation, 2015–17**

"The programme has really good links with organisations like the National Film and Television School, for example, who’ve initiated connections and skill-sharing for sound mixing, and so on. Before I came to the RCA I hadn’t collaborated with anyone outside the animation bubble, and it’s been really good because it gives you experience of a professional working relationship."

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**Alumni**

Gaelle C Denis
Jonathan Hodgson
Philip D Hunt
Ruth Lingford
Mikey Please
Julia Pott
Suzie Templeton
Due to the catalysing impact of digital technologies, established approaches to production, direction, content creation and communication/digital media design are transforming at an exponential rate, employing innovative forms of storytelling and narrative experience to engage audiences in new ways.

Digital Direction is an exciting new MA that addresses media and storytelling in the digital era, assessing emerging issues associated with contemporary digital communication and the creative economy, and developing the new creative leaders responsive to continually changing contexts, infrastructures and technologies to engender a new wave of creative leadership. Graduates will develop a deep understanding of critical and experimental communication/media production, creation and design practices, and through applied innovation will address current and future contexts.

The programme prepares students to evolve and lead new approaches to media and storytelling through predictive innovation, enabled by rapidly changing cultural and industrial practices, plus uses of, and developments in, digital technologies.

Centring on the interrelated domains of broadcasting, film and experience/brand, the programme addresses knowledge and skills gaps in four key areas of practice: production, direction, content development/making/writing and communication/digital media design.

The programme offers:

- Subject contextualisation, looking at new imperatives and multiple media forms for storytelling in an age of alternative facts and fictions
- Grounding in traditional skill sets involving narration, scriptwriting, production design, direction, set design, casting, photography, filming, lighting, and sound recording
- Training in coding and programming, interactive design, AI, cross-platform and cross-media integration (e.g. transmedia), data visualisation and analytics, visual design, gamification, virtual/augmented reality and social media
- Real-world contextualisation and information through visiting and guest lecturers from key industries and practices
- Cross-School and College inter-disciplinarity opportunities through joint projects and mixed environments alongside real-world industry projects and visits to key practitioners
- Close links between MA, MPhil and PhD students, funded research and professional practitioners

240 credits
15-month programme
Full-time study
Programme Description

The first two terms (120 credits) are delivered through cross-school electives (20 credits), in parallel with programme-specific workshops and projects (100 credits). In addition, students will enrol on the College-wide delivery of Critical & Historical Studies (20 credits). The third term (40 credits) will continue programme-specific work alongside College-wide elective (20 credits). A Postgraduate Diploma is offered as an exit award, where appropriate, after successfully completing 120 credits. The Independent Research Project has the potential to foster partnerships with creative economy businesses and cultural organisations. The fourth term will focus on the final Independent Research Project (60 credits). The final degree show takes place at the end of unit 4.

MA Digital Direction will be structured as follows:

**Term One**
- **Unit 1:** Programme – Media Architectures (40 credits)
- **Unit 2:** School-wide Electives (20 credits)
- **CHS:** College-wide Core (CHS) (20 credits)

**Term Two**
- **Unit 3:** Programme – Assembly and Amplification (40 credits)
  - **Unit 2:** School Electives (20 credits)

**Term Three**
- **Unit 4:** Programme – Immersive Adventures (40 credits)
- **Unit 5:** College-wide Elective (CHS) (20 credits) (In 2017 only: delivered as CHS)

**Term Four**
- **Unit 6:** Programme - Independent Research Project (60 credits)

MA Entrance Requirements

Students will normally have completed a first degree undergraduate qualification in a related subject or be able to evidence equivalent professional experience in fields such as filmmaking, broadcasting, media and communication, graphic design, illustration, HCI, and digital production.

For more information on portfolio requirements and interviews, visit: rca.ac.uk/digital-direction

For cross-College entrance requirements, visit: rca.ac.uk/ma-entrance-requirements
The programme offers:

— specific training in working with data, programming and electronics, prototyping and a range of research methods
— tutors, visiting lecturers and guests who are at the forefront of practice and thinking internationally
— an Experimental Lab for making and hacking, stocked with a range of specialist hardware and software and set within the mixed studios of the School of Communication
— highly interdisciplinary projects with other RCA programmes
— industry partners large and small, museums and universities in the UK and around the world
— close links between MA, MPhil and PhD students, funded research and professional practitioners
— opportunities for exhibition, publication, intervention, online and offline dissemination, and commercialisation of student work and research
— international exchanges and trips, as well as real-world projects and research set in and around London

IED is set within the vibrant mixed studios of the RCA’s School of Communication, with a specialist Lab as its hub. Information for us can be quantitative or qualitative, numerical data, personal narratives, or sociopolitical issues. These are investigated through investigative and experiential research through a range of methods, to create transformative, immersive and multisensory experiences, with emphasis on content, context, materiality and atmosphere. Our students and researchers work alongside the School’s graphic designers, animators and illustrators, and in interdisciplinary teams with other RCA programmes as well as external scientists, companies, architects and academics.

IED develops a mindset as well as a skillset. No specific technical skills are required; applicants come from diverse backgrounds in design, science, fine art, technology and the humanities, with a common critical interest in data, design and making. Graduates have gone on to work in visualisation, artistic practice, technology companies, set design, exhibition design, journalism, cultural and educational institutions, research labs and studio practice. Others have started record labels, opened galleries, become performers.

The three distinct pathways offered by the IED programme of Sound Design, Moving Image Design, and Experimental Design, one of which students select as part of their application, are interrelated, focused around different ways of approaching IED’s core aim of transforming information into experiences.
Programme Description

First Year
Aligning with the School-wide academic framework, the main practical work takes place in School-wide Electives in Terms 1 and 2. The Informed Practice unit runs alongside, providing a grounding in relevant theory and methods, which are put into practice in workshops where students engage directly with various tools and technologies, operating across pathways. Term 3 enables students to focus primarily on dissertations, whilst focusing them on their chosen pathways in the Experiential Research unit. Seminars and workshops are held weekly across all three terms, with core curriculum and skills being front-loaded in Term 1. Each student has a Personal Tutor for the year, who organises weekly group tutorials and at least one in-depth individual tutorial per student per term.

Second Year
Through the Experiential Research unit, second-year students are engaged in brief initial projects and workshops, to explore a chosen topic in depth, and to propel them into their self-directed practical work, with Work-in-progress as a key milestone. In the Design Project unit, they set their own brief and timetable with their Personal Tutor, presenting their project in the Final Exam. They have a pathway-specific Personal Tutor for the year, and weekly and individual tutorials continue as before. Weekly crits maintain their progress as second-year students specialise, and there are occasional commercial or other projects offered. Practical workshops remain open to second-year students, and a Professional Practice series also supports pathway-specific aims.

MA Entrance Requirements
No specific technical skills are required by applicants; rather, students come from diverse backgrounds in design, science, fine art, engineering and technology, with a common critical interest in data, research, design and technology. The quality of the student will be demonstrated by the standard of a portfolio of work and qualified by the award of an Honour’s degree in the subject or appropriate associated subjects. Candidates who do speak English as their first language are required to produce evidence that within the previous two years they have achieved at least 93 in the TOEFL internet test with an additional writing test score of TWE 24 or an IELTS exam score of 6.5 with 6 in writing.

For more information on portfolio requirements and interviews, visit: rca.ac.uk/ied

Student Story

Yinan Song MA Information Experience Design, 2015–17

"I like the freedom to experiment with cutting-edge technology. In a job, you are more likely to repeat what you do every day, but here I get to go out of my comfort zone and do things I’ve never done before – the sky is the limit."

Alumni

Monika Bansal Information Experience Designer at Feld Studio
Anna Dakin founder of The Artist Expedition Society
Jacqueline Ford and Yashaswini Raghunandan operate as sound artists Gekiyasu
Lucy Hardcastle interdisciplinary artist and designer
Andreas Koller Principal Visual UX Designer at Logitech
Shobhan Shah develops interactive installations for Random International
Oliver Smith and Francesco Tacchini founded The Demystification Committee
The Visual Communication programme has a longstanding reputation for providing students with the foundation and critical reflection to challenge, reframe and situate their individual practice within a global context. At no time is this more pertinent than today.

The programme offers three pathways of study: Experimental Communication, Graphic Design and Illustration. These are structured to facilitate well-informed risk-taking and experimentation, anchored by strong subject knowledge. Pathways offer both an interdisciplinary perspective and a subject-specialist approach. Our tutors are well-known practitioners and researchers engaged in both the core and margins of communication practice.

As noted by our students, critical discourse around what it means to be a ‘visual communicator’ today opens up possibilities about the process and contexts of communication; and in doing so shows that the designer and artist’s skill set is transferable beyond the sole confines of the visual to include sound, code, text, space, event and experience.
Programme Description

The core curriculum is delivered through projects, workshops, lectures, and individual and group tutorials.

In the current programme structure, School-wide electives form the foundation of teaching in the first year. Electives run for two terms and are open to students across the School. Alongside this, students undertake projects situated within the programme or pathway specialist. Visual Communication has offered a mix of six electives in the past year.

In the third term, students focus on completing their dissertations. The Bright Labyrinth lecture series informs the practice investigations of the first year.

The second year is a self-directed year, with teaching delivered primarily via personal tutorials or group tutorials, accessed by students based on individual need. Prior to the Work-in-Progress Show in January, students choose to take one of a series of project frameworks which enables them to situate their practice within a pathway. Further to the WIP, students (in discussion with their personal tutors), submit a plan for an independent research project. There are activities such as Critical Forum, Special Interest Groups and student-led groups (some of which are subject-specific) run events and workshops and are a popular way of final year students contributing to the curriculum.

Additionally, there are skills- and thinking-based workshops offered that are cross-year. These are situated in each pathway: Graphic Design (type design and letterpress workshops); Illustration (narrative and booking workshops); and Experimental Communication (digital aesthetics and processing workshops). Students work within technical areas across the College.

MA Entrance Requirements

Applicants will normally have a BA, or an equivalent overseas qualification or sufficient work experience to demonstrate the appropriate intellectual, creative and personal qualities to engage with the demands of the programme.

Our students come from a wide range of backgrounds. While the majority still come directly from first-degree programmes in graphic design, illustration, moving image and multimedia, students have also joined the course from backgrounds as diverse as fine art, journalism, literature, architecture, product and textiles.

For more information on portfolio requirements and interviews, visit: rca.ac.uk/visual-communication

For cross-College entrance requirements, visit: rca.ac.uk/ma-entrance-requirements

Student Story


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The RCA offers diversity in practices, people and cultures. The multitude sharpens your mind in the process of defining your own practice. There are so many opportunities and the expectations of you are really high, from tutors and fellow students; I pushed myself in ways that I wouldn’t have done in another context.

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Alumni

Åbäke
Brave New Alps
Daniel Eatock
FUEL
Graphic Thought Facility
James Goggin
James Jarvis
JULIA
Le Gun
Tom Gauld
Sara Fanelli
Troika
Jonathan Barnbrook
Phil Baines
Morag Myerscough
Why Not Associates

School of Communication

MA VISUAL COMMUNICATION

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