



**Specification**

**1. General Information**

<b>Award</b>	<b>Programme Title</b>	<b>Duration</b>	<b>Mode of Study</b>
MA (RCA)	Photography	2 Years	Full-time

<b>Awarding Institution</b>	Royal College of Art
<b>Teaching Institution</b>	Royal College of Art
<b>Professional Accreditation</b>	N/A
<b>Qualifications Framework Level</b>	7
<b>Date of most recent validation</b>	January 2010
<b>Programme Specification Date</b>	August 2017

**2. Philosophy of the Programme**

Photography plays a crucial role in contemporary art. The Photography programme at the RCA aims to provide a critical and educational environment in which students can develop as artists with photography at the core of their practice. We have a fluid approach to image making. Whether still or moving, analogue or digital, the photographic image is for us a visual form that aims to be thoughtful as well as playful: an allegorical and thoroughly visual form.

The programme understands photography as a discourse that encompasses multiple practices. This disregard for a fixed essence is photography's strength: no aesthetic purity but a range of rhetorical forms used for the creation of fact, fiction and fantasy. Equally the boundary between the still and the moving image is now fluid and porous, enabling new forms of image making to be created.

An informed practice of photography acknowledges the heterogeneous traditions of fine art and visual culture. It engages with practices of reading and writing about the image. On our course, theory and practice inform each other and this dialogue characterises committed study at postgraduate level.



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The Photography programme is within the School of Art and Humanities. Photography relates specifically to practices and theories of contemporary art, rather than to media and communication studies as in most colleges.

**3. Educational Aims of the Programme**

The MA Photography programme aims:

- to provide a learning environment which privileges experimentation and self-reflexivity in order to advance the practice and understanding of photography within contemporary art.
- to teach how to plan and produce works that are challenging and innovative technically and conceptually.
- to place photography within the context of contemporary art practices and theories.
- to establish a dialogue between theory and practice and to produce a practice which negotiates received theories.
- to enrich the students' experience by facilitating interdisciplinarity with the postgraduate culture of the School Art and Humanities.



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**4. Intended Learning Outcomes of the Programme**

Able to:	<b>A. Intellectual Engagement</b>
A1.	INNOVATION: Develop innovative ideas that challenge the understanding of their practice and discipline
A2.	CONTEXT: Demonstrate an advanced understanding of historical and contemporary debate and how it relates to their practice
A3.	RESEARCH: Demonstrate an advanced understanding of the principles and methods of research and apply them effectively to their own practice
A4.	COMMUNICATION: Effectively articulate and debate the intellectual and technical processes involved in the production of their work

Able to:	<b>B. Technical Skills</b>
B1.	PRODUCTION: Produce work at an advanced level that integrates thought, creativity and technique
B2.	EXPERIMENTATION: Experiment in their use of materials, processes and environments in order to translate ideas into practice
B3.	SKILLS: Display a mastery of the technical skills required in the creation, display and documentation of their work

Able to:	<b>C. Professionalism</b>
C1.	INDEPENDENCE: Take responsibility for directing their studies through setting goals and managing time and resources effectively
C2.	COLLABORATION: Participate as an active, thoughtful and responsible member of a community
C3.	IDENTITY: Define their professional identity through self-reflection and an understanding of the creative economy



## **5. Programme Structure and Curriculum**

### **First Year**

You are assigned a personal tutor with whom you discuss your work in tutorials twice a term. Your tutor writes a critical report on your progress each term in response to a written statement of your own.

Although you are working primarily on your own practice, there are also through out the year group critiques, seminars, lectures, workshops and tutorials with other members of the course team. You will produce work for studio critiques that take place in term one and two.

At the beginning of the spring term, first year students contribute to the Work in Progress Show in the College Galleries. your work is not expected to be resolved at this stage. It is an opportunity to take risks, trying new materials and ideas. As this is in a gallery context, it includes the question of spectatorship. This enables you to reflect upon the efficacy of the visual forms and concepts with which you have been working.

You take an interim examination in the summer term, which you must pass in order to continue into the second year.

### **Critical & Historical Studies**

The RCA provides a unique environment for postgraduate art and design students to reflect upon and develop their own practice, and to engage with students from their own and other disciplines. The role of Critical & Historical Studies (CHS) is to support the studio programmes in enabling these critical engagements to take place. The courses offered by CHS to first year studio-based MA students propose an intellectual framework within which they can begin to establish a coherent relationship between theory and practice.

There are a series of College-wide seminars and lectures. The first series will relate to your particular discipline (though it is possible to elect to join a series being offered to students on other programmes) whereas the second series will be more broad-based and cross-disciplinary in nature.

A CHS tutor will give you individual tutorials to support the development of a dissertation which is submitted following a dedicated writing period. The dissertation should be between 6,000 – 10,000 words in length – this is a major piece of work and you will be not be able to submit for the Final Examination until you have passed this assessment.



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<b>Second Year</b>
<p>In the second year, you select your personal tutor who appraises your work twice a term. You produce a self-initiated body of work, which is evaluated and discussed in group critiques and tutorials during the year.</p> <p>In the third term the work you exhibit in the graduating show is part of your MA Examination. It consists of a major project undertaken in the second year of the programme. Your art practice should now demonstrate that you are able to make, develop and realise work at Masters level. Your work should now have a clear direction and resolution, demonstrating a level of conceptual and technical competence appropriate to your own aims and objectives. Your practice is expected to be self-initiated and thoroughly researched. You will be asked to articulate this process of producing work in the <i>viva voce</i>.</p>

**6. Learning and Teaching Methods**

<b>General</b>
Teaching consists of individual and group tutorials, theory seminars, group critiques and lectures by leading artists and theorists.
<b>Tutorials</b>
<p>You are allocated a personal tutor and will meet twice each term. There are opportunities to arrange tutorials with other members of the programme team. Tutorials may also include a small group of students discussing work in progress with a tutor or visiting artist.</p> <p>At the end of the autumn and spring term, you write a work statement (200/300 words), which is a critical account of your practice, its development and reception in tutorials and critiques. This enables you to articulate and clarify in writing what your work attempts to achieve and the direction it takes. At the end of each term your personal Tutor writes an evaluative response to your work statement.</p>
<b>Critiques</b>
Group critiques take place throughout the programme and may also involve guest tutors. The group critique collectively appraises and evaluates the reception and processes of your work.
<b>Workshops</b>



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Most of you come from a wide range of undergraduate programmes, with very different expertise. In the autumn and spring terms the programme provides workshops primarily for first-year students. These address technical aspects of photographic practices and the moving image. These may include tuition in: black and white and colour printing; studio lighting; large format cameras; digital imaging; sound and video editing, as well as workshops offered by the other programmes in the School.

**Research Colloquia**

In the autumn and spring term, a series of lectures, addressing the discourses of the photographic image' gathers presentations by artists, writers and cultural theorists on specific themes and issues related to research in photographic practice and theory.

**7. Assessment**

**General**

Regulations for assessment and progression can be found in the College Regulations, sections 2.7 – 2.10.

**Interim Examination**

The Interim Examination is held at the beginning of your third term. An examination board chaired by the Head of Programme reviews the work you have produced on the course so far. You will be asked to demonstrate that you productively engage with all elements of the course and that your practice is evolving. You should also be able to position your work within the context of contemporary art practice and theory. The year's tutorial reports will be considered and you will be asked to discuss future projects. You are required to provide a written statement which presents the conceptual, thematic and formal concerns of your work (200 to 300 words). The Board writes an Interim Examination Report with the following outcomes: pass; referral; fail. A pass entitles you to enter year 2 of the course. If the board concludes that your work is not developed enough, you will be referred. You will be asked to submit new work by a set date. A fail indicates that work and studentship do not meet the required criteria to continue your studies.

**Final Examination**

The Final Examination takes place in the summer term. You are required to provide a written statement that presents the conceptual, thematic and formal concerns of your work (300- 500 words). The work to be examined must be a major project and be



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complete. Part of your work is appraised in the graduating show. At the *viva voce*, you present your project critically to an examination board.

The Examination Board usually consists of the Head of Programme, Personal Tutors, and the Internal Moderator.

The purpose of the examination is to ascertain that you have achieved work at MA level. This means that your practice should now have a distinct direction and resolution. You should now be able to position your work convincingly within current art practices

**8. Admissions**

**Cross-College Requirements**

- Entry is based on a high standard of final-year undergraduate work (as reflected in portfolio or degree classification), or on advanced work of an equivalent level. Your work must also demonstrate a maturity and readiness to undertake postgraduate studies.
- You 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 course 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 course of upper secondary education. Other qualifications may be approved, providing that the 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.
- Upon entry to any of the College's programmes you should be able to demonstrate:
  1. The potential to benefit from and contribute to the programme of study or research for which you are applying.
  2. Prior knowledge and experience indicating the potential to achieve the independence necessary for postgraduate study in a specialist discipline.
  3. Enthusiasm and aptitude to confront the issues to be addressed in preparation for a future professional career.
- Applicants should normally be aged over 21 years by 1 September of the proposed year of admission.

Candidates for all MA courses are assessed on their existing qualities as demonstrated in their work and in their interview, as well as on their potential to benefit from the



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programme and to achieve MA standards overall. The assessment will consider: creativity, imagination and innovation evident in the work; ability to articulate the intentions of the work; intellectual engagement in relevant areas; appropriate technical skills; overall interview performance, including oral use of English.

**Programme-Specific Requirements**

You are generally expected to have a good BA degree from a photography or fine art course. You should be able to demonstrate an original and critical approach to photography as well as an ability to engage with current theories of art and culture that inform your practice.

**Portfolio:**

- Your portfolio must be well edited and include a coherent selection of recently completed work, which should not exceed 20 pieces. At this stage all visual work must be submitted as a PDF file. Moving image work should not exceed 5 minutes.

**If you are selected for an interview:**

- You will be interviewed by a minimum of 2 members of the academic staff and a student representative.
- You will bring a portfolio of work to the interview. Size should not exceed 50 x 60cm.
- You will also bring with you a copy of your BA dissertation.

Candidates who do not 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.

**9. Quality Indicators**

*Refer to the Academic Development Handbook for more details of the College's quality and standards procedures.*

- All academic programmes at the Royal College of Art are revalidated on a six-yearly cycle. Revalidations involve external subject experts and internal panel members appointed by the College's Academic Standards Committee (ASC).
- Programmes are required to submit an annual Review, the primary purpose of which is to evaluate the experience of students enrolled on both its MA and MPhil / PhD courses.



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- External Examiners are appointed for a maximum of three years to ensure that:
  - the academic standard for each award is set and maintained at an appropriate level and that student performance is properly judged against this;
  - the standards of awards are comparable with those of other UK higher education institutions;
  - the process of assessment and examination is fair and has been fairly conducted.
- An Internal Moderator is appointed by the Senate on the recommendation of ASC to ensure that there are appropriate mechanisms in place for the objective assessment of student work and to ensure comparability of examination practices between programmes within the College.
- Students have the opportunity to provide feedback through regular programme-level meetings (at least one each year considers the delivery of the MA programme and the External Examiner report); and through an annual College-wide MA student survey. A Student Representative Council brings forward issues from Course Forums and programme-level meetings to the President and Vice-President of the Students' Union who then, where appropriate, present these issues at College committees or to the Senior Management of the College.