



**Painting MA  
Specification 2018–19**

**1. General Information**

<b>Award</b>	<b>Programme Title</b>	<b>Duration</b>	<b>Mode of Study</b>
MA (RCA)	Painting	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>	M
<b>Date of most recent validation</b>	March 2009
<b>Programme Specification Date</b>	2018/19

**2. Philosophy of the Programme**

The Painting Programme approaches the practice of painting as a self-reflexive, critical activity that draws on a wealth of varied historical, material and conceptual accomplishments. These are explored and exploited to provide an expansive and inclusive platform on which to engage with current issues and debates surrounding painting as a contemporary art practice.

Our curriculum and its forms of delivery are designed to develop a student’s professional practice, orientation toward research and critical reflection on their studio work and how they present that work and their practice professionally to others. The curriculum aims to ensure, to the greatest degree possible, that this is a sustainable practice, which can find an audience beyond an institutional frame. The delivery of curricular content takes the form of both individual and group sessions at the level of tutee, tutee group and year group. All seminars involve MA students from both year groups.



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The Painting programme is a world leader in research and practice and is committed to broadening the understanding of our discipline in all its forms. Through the many learning and teaching experiences we offer, students and staff rigorously, critically and supportively engage with the discourse of painting through personal tutorials, group seminars and crits, talks and presentations. These discussions and critiques take place physically in the painting studios, across the School and College, in galleries and other partner institutions, and during visits to major exhibitions both in the UK and abroad.

Our students are here to reflect upon and play out what kind of artists they want to be with the ultimate aim of enabling a sustainable professional practice as engaged practitioners.

Our approach to teaching is premised on an understanding that artists, makers, writers, curators, critics and historians today are neither constrained by their discipline, the medium they use nor by a sense of what content their work should address. Practitioners in the Arts & Humanities are valued for their contribution to culture and the broader economy because they test and reflect upon the way in which we try to engage with our rapidly changing world; exploit the possibilities of new technologies while also engaging with the value of traditional approaches; they enact new philosophical positions as well as reflecting upon how our thinking has led us to where we are. And they often adopt stances informed significantly by the past to antagonise our assumptions about society.

We also conceive of the Arts & Humanities as a range of subjects that are accessible to collaboration with other fields and disciplines; subjects that celebrate the deployment of diverse methods of research and production that are invented, borrowed and even stolen. At the Royal College of Art we enjoy an environment that is supportive of the varied research enquiries that the Arts & Humanities can enable. We support customary methods and processes whilst enabling others that we cannot even anticipate. We are committed to examining and researching both the means by which enquiries in the Arts & Humanities emerge – the rich array of positions, techniques, methods and materials used by practitioners to develop their research – as well as the subjects, ideas and issues that are successfully articulated, with a view to understanding a broader cultural, societal and economic impact.

Teaching in the school is organised around programmes that provide specific material and historical coordinates as points of reference from which students are encouraged to consider the development of their own work. Regardless of their programme of study, students interact across the broad area of the Arts & Humanities and are also encouraged to engage with other areas of the College.



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Research in the School of Arts & Humanities often leads staff and students to less immediately cognate fields of the Arts & Humanities as well as the sciences, and the school works with a range of significant partners such as the V&A and Imperial College to further its ambitions in this regard.

We therefore view all our programmes in the School of Arts & Humanities as useful pedagogical structures, in that they focus specific areas of activity within an ever expanding field. The programmes enable directed study within an environment that is ambitious not to proliferate and perpetuate what we know but to generate new practices and insights.

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

The Painting programme empowers students to explore the conditions and possibilities of painting and its contemporary discourses in a context that embraces speculative approaches and experimentation to both challenge and enliven a traditional medium. As tutors and practitioners, we are committed to foster and support critically engaged and independent artists able to sustain self-reflective and vibrant professional practices beyond an institutional frame.

The programme aims:

- To provide a learning environment which privileges research, experimentation and self-reflexivity in order to advance contemporary practices of painting
- To teach how to plan and produce works of high quality and ambition that are both technically and conceptually well formed
- To develop advanced approaches to painting within the context of contemporary theory and art practices
- To establish a dialogue between theory and practice and to foster approaches that interrogate and recast received ideas and positions regarding what painting might be in the 21st century
- To enrich the student experience by facilitating an involvement with the postgraduate culture of the School of Arts and Humanities and the technical facilities across the college in order to evolve an expansive notion of painting



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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 his or her practice and discipline.
A2.	CONTEXT: Critically articulate and debate the intellectual and technical processes involved in the production of his or her work and that of others.
A3.	RESEARCH: Demonstrate an advanced understanding of the principles and methods of research and apply them effectively to his or her own practice.
A4.	COMMUNICATION: Demonstrate an advanced understanding of the historical and theoretical context of painting and how it relates to his or her work.

Able to:	<b>B. Practice</b>
B1.	PRODUCTION: Produce work at an advanced level that integrates thought, creativity and technique.
B2.	EXPERIMENTATION: Experiment in his or her use of materials, techniques 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: Display a mastery of the execution, exhibition and promotion of his or her work.
C2.	COLLABORATION: Demonstrate the self-motivation, self-criticism and self-discipline required to sustain his or her development beyond graduation.



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C3.	IDENTITY: Confidently and effectively deliver artists talks to specialist and non-specialist audiences alike.
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**5. Programme Structure and Curriculum**

**First Year**

During the first year of the programme students undertake three units of study: Unit 1a, Unit 1b and CHS. These Units are each worth 40 credits and assessed through a combination of continuous and summative assessment methods.

To support their progress in Units 1a and 1b students are assigned a personal tutor with whom they discuss their work in tutorials five times per academic year. Students will also be guaranteed tutorials from other members of the programme team each term, and will have the opportunity to request tutorials from other staff on the school and a broader range of visiting tutors.

Although working primarily on their own practice, there are also through-out the year group critiques, seminars, lectures, workshops and tutorials with other members of the Programme team and more widely with staff and students from throughout the broader school. Students 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. The 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 public context, it includes the question of spectatorship and professional practice. This enables the student to reflect upon the efficacy of the visual forms and concepts with which they have been working.

Each Unit is assessed in full at its conclusion as per the following:

<p><b>Unit 1A:</b> 40 Credits</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Self assessment then progress feedback from programme unit assessment meeting (staff double marking)</li> </ul>	<p><b>Unit 1B:</b> 40 Credits</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Self assessment (Continuous assessment) and Exam feedback (Final Examination)</li> </ul>	<p><b>CHS:</b> 40 Credits</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Delivered to the 7 Studios-based SoAH MAs, as before.</li> </ul>
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<p>meeting) (continuous assessment)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Assessment: December</li> <li>• Learning Outcomes: A1. A2. A4. B2. B3. C1. C2.</li> </ul>	<p>from 1B exam panel.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Assessment: May.</li> <li>• Learning Outcomes: A1. A2. A4. B2. B3. C1. C2.</li> </ul>	
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**Critical & Historical Studies**

The RCA provides a unique environment for postgraduate art and design students to reflect upon 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.

In the autumn and spring terms there are a series of College-wide seminars and lectures. The autumn term 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 spring term series will be more broad-based and cross-disciplinary in nature.

**Second Year**

During the second year of the programme students undertake three units of study: Unit 2A (40 credits), Unit 2B (60 Credits) and SoAH School Unit (20 Credits). These Units are assessed through a combination of continuous and summative assessment methods.

In their second year a relevant personal tutor (a tutor assigned and other than that in the first year) to support the development of their practice. Students produce a self-initiated



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body of work, which is evaluated and discussed in group critiques and tutorials throughout the year.

In the third term the work students exhibit in the graduating show is part of the examination of their final unit 2B - the Independent Research Project. It consists of a major presentation undertaken in the second year of the programme. Their art practice should now demonstrate that they are able to make, develop and realise work at an advanced level. Student's work should now have a clear direction and resolution, demonstrating a level of conceptual and technical competence appropriate to their own aims and objectives for the work. Student's practice is expected to be self-initiated and thoroughly researched. The student will be asked to articulate this process of producing work in the *viva voce Examination*.

Alongside their participation in Programme based Unites, students will also participate in the SoAH School unit, which, through study groups, lectures, symposia, crits and tutorials will support students in discussing and evolving their work against a broader frame of reference.

Each Unit is assessed in full at its conclusion as per the following table:

<p><b>Unit 2A:</b> 40 Credits</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Self assessment then progress feedback from programme unit assessment meeting (staff double marking meeting) (continuous assessment)</li> <li>• Assessment: December</li> <li>• Learning Outcomes: A1. A2. A4. B1. B2. B3. C1. C2.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Unit 2B:</b> 60 Credits</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Self assessment (continuous assessment) and Exam feedback (Final Examination) from 2B/School Unit Joint Panel.</li> <li>• Assessment: June.</li> <li>• Learning Outcomes: A2. A3. A4. B1. B2. B3. C1. C2. C3.</li> </ul>	<p><b>SoAH School Unit:</b> 20 Credits</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Assessed Portfolio at 2B/School Unit Joint Panel. (Final Examination).</li> <li>• Assessment: May</li> <li>• School Exam Board then reviews marks from all units and recommends pass or fail.</li> </ul>
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		<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Learning Outcomes: B2. C2. C3.</li><li>• This is delivered to all 10 SoAH MA programmes.</li></ul>
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**6. Learning and Teaching Methods**

<b>Individual Tutorials</b>
<p>Students are allocated a personal tutor and will meet five times per academic year. There are opportunities to arrange tutorials with other members of the school wider college academic staff. Tutorials may also include a small group of students discussing work in progress with a tutor or visiting artist.</p> <p>Students will also have a tutorial in the second year as part of your integrated school-wide group.</p> <p>At the end of each unit, students will write a self-assessment form, which is a critical account of their practice, its development and reception in tutorials and critiques. This enables the student to articulate and clarify in writing what their work attempts to achieve and the direction it takes. At the end of each unit of study the Student's personal Tutor writes an evaluative feedback report in response both to the students' self-assessment and to the considered and moderated assessment of their work.</p>
<b>Seminars</b>
<p>Group seminars take place throughout the first and second terms of the programme. The group seminar collectively appraises and evaluates the reception and processes of student work.</p>



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**Questions of Painting Seminars** – These seminars are delivered by a visiting artist, theorist or critic and based on issues raised by their research, production or position in relation to the contemporary discourses of painting.

**Professional practice** - Building on an Artist's Statement developed across year one, second-year students give a presentation of their work in the form of an Artist's Talk. These serve as preparation for taking up optional teaching placements, which comprises a non-paid teaching visit to an educational institution.

**Workshops**

Our students come from a wide range of undergraduate programmes, with very different expertise. In the autumn and spring terms students are encouraged to attend workshops primarily for first year students. These address technical aspects of the resources available within the Royal College of Art.

**Professional Practice**

We address Professional Practice throughout the two years of the programme in conjunction with other offerings at school level.

**Artist's Statement, Artist's Talk, Teaching Placements**

Students are supported to produce an artist's statement during your first year. This will help inform the structure and content of their artist's talk delivered in the second year. These activities lead to the students teaching placement, each student is offered to take up a teaching placement. These may comprise one or two-day non-paid teaching visits to an undergraduate course where the student usually delivers an artist's talk and gives individual tutorials. Other opportunities include placements in schools and education programmes within public art institutions and galleries.

**7. Assessment**



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<b>General</b>
Regulations for assessment and progression can be found in the College Regulations.
<b>Continuous Assessment</b>
<p>Continuous assessment enables the student's performance and progress to be understood and accounted for through a wide variety of academic contact points, recognising that students are able to perform in different ways and through different means and aspects of the curriculum while still achieving the requisite performance standards. This assessment is validated through a structure that ensures that student performance is evaluated from a range of perspectives and by a range of different tutors who are able to triangulate their experience of the student and enable parity of assessment across the cohort.</p> <p>All Studio based Units (1A, 1B, 2A &amp; 2B) are assessed wholly or in part through a process of continuous assessment. This relies on staff who have had experience of the student coming together at the end of the unit in a Unit Assessment Meeting, chaired by the Head of Programme or a Senior Tutor, to review the student's self evaluation and to share their experience of the student in relation to the relevant learning outcomes.</p>
<b>Final Examination</b>
<p>Final Examination examines the students' ability to synthesise their learning and to express it in a formal exam context, either through their performance in a live event, such as the viva voce examinations (previously interim and final exams) at the conclusion of Units 1B and 2B, or through the submission of a formal assessed element such as a dissertation or portfolio at the conclusion of the SoAH School Unit and CHS.</p> <p><b>Unit 1B</b> The Final Examination for Unit 1B is held at the beginning of the third term as a Viva Voce. A Unit Assessment Meeting chaired by the Head of Programme or a Senior Tutor reviews the work produced by the student on the Unit. Students will be asked to demonstrate that</p>



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their practice is evolving and that they are able to position your work within the context of contemporary art practice and theory, as per the relevant Learning Outcomes. The students' self evaluation report will be read and considered in relation to their performance in the viva and the Unit Assessment Meeting will recommend one of the following outcomes to the School Exam Board for further reference to ABCD: Pass, Referral, Fail.

A pass entitles students to be awarded the credits pertaining to the relevant unit. If the board concludes that their work is not developed enough, they will be referred and will be asked to submit new work by a set date. A fail indicates that work and studentship do not meet the required criteria for the continuation of your studies.

**Unit 2 B**

The Final Examination for Unit 2B is held at the beginning of the third term as a Viva Voce. A Unit Assessment Meeting chaired by the Head of Programme or a Senior Tutor reviews the work produced by the student on the Unit. Students will be asked to demonstrate that their practice is evolving and that they are able to position their work within the context of contemporary art practice and theory, as per the relevant Learning Outcomes. The students' self evaluation report will be read and considered in relation to their performance in the viva and the Unit Assessment Meeting will recommend one of the following outcomes to the School Exam Board for further reference to ABCD: Pass, Referral, Fail.

A pass entitles students to be awarded the credits pertaining to the relevant unit. If the Unit Assessment Meeting concludes that their work is not developed enough, they will be referred and be asked to submit new work by a set date. A fail indicates that work and studentship do not meet the required criteria for the continuation of studies.

**SoAH School Unit**

Students will be required to produce a pre-formatted digital professional practice portfolio, documenting selected work and practice, and articulating it in relation to some of the key concerns raised in the unit. This should encompass a 1500-2000 word statement, to include:

- a record of participation in school crits (500 words per crit), with images of work presented, reflection on conversations that took place and key references.



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- an additional 500-1000 words on contextualised practice in economic and social context, referencing work in MA school group and what's next series.

This will be submitted to the joint assessment panel for the Joint Unit 2B / School Unit Exam, taking place toward the end of academic year.

**CHS**

Students will receive individual tutorials to support the development of a dissertation which is submitted at the end of their first year, and which will be the element on which this unit is assessed. The dissertation should be between 6,000 – 10,000 words in length.



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**8. Admissions**

**Cross-College Requirements**

Refer to the College Prospectus for details of cross-College entrance and portfolio requirements for the MA Entrance Examination.

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 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**

Applications are assessed through Part 1 and Part 2 of the Entrance Examinations by a panel of tutors and students as well as the Head of Programme and the Senior Tutor.

For Part 1 the panel views the initial portfolio of images to select and invite candidates for Part 2, which is the interview, where applicants are invited to bring physical works, supportive material, and film/video works.

Following the interviews the panel makes their selection for the following year's cohort, including a reserve list. Applicants are selected on the strength of their portfolio, their interview, the potential of their work and the nature of their work, to ensure a dynamic range of tendencies and agendas in any one year group.

The applications procedure is presented in full during Open Days, outlining how the applications are seen and assessed.

- The application procedure focuses on searching out those candidates that are highly motivated, independent and demonstrate they have the critical skills necessary to develop and further their existing ideas. In short, those artists that – given the opportunity to join the Painting programme – would utilise their time with us to the full, and have the generosity to support their fellow students.
- Candidates apply from all kinds of backgrounds, but generally having completed a BA degree. In recent years, people have come from fine art, printmaking, painting, sculpture, photo media, conservation, illustration, design, textiles, architecture, art history and interactive arts courses.



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- While many students enter the course after years of independent work, we also accept students directly from undergraduate courses.
- Ultimately we want to attract to the course those artists that want to work in a supportive environment and have the drive and ambition to realise the full potential of their studio practice, in turn energising their peer group.

**Portfolio:**

Portfolio submissions will be accepted in the following format only:

- Ten digital images in .jpg format with the following dimensions: width: no larger than 36cm (1024 pixels). height: no larger than 27cm (768 pixels).
- All images must be of 72 dpi (dots per inch) resolution – please re-size all images appropriately. All image files must be saved as .jpg format.
- No actual paintings, portfolios, photographs, slides, DVDs/videos should be submitted at this stage. For the portfolio submission, only still images of time-based works will be considered. If invited to interview then these works will be viewed.
- Submission of any material in any other format than the requested .jpps will invalidate your application.
- The ten images of your work should include, if possible, a few examples of earlier as well as recent works.
- Each image should have all the relevant information (i.e. date, size, medium, title) on the image list. Please note that we will only accept ten images.
- We do not consider any late applications.

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

- You will be asked to bring up to four works with dimensions not exceeding 2 metres by 2.5 metres, or up to six works if their average size is considerably less.
- In addition, you should bring a portfolio to the interview containing an edited selection of work, which may include drawings in any media, any other work on paper and photographs. Sketchbooks and notebooks may also be included, but should be limited to those that are relevant to recent work.
- If you would like to bring any time-based works please notify us of the format in advance of the interview.
- All work must be taken away after the interview.

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



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writing.



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**9. Quality Indicators**

*Refer to the RCA Quality 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.
- 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.