



**Writing MA  
Specification 2018–19**

**1. General Information**

<b>Award</b>	<b>Programme Title</b>	<b>Duration</b>	<b>Mode of Study</b>
MA (RCA)	Writing	15 months with part time option for final project (unit Writing 6)	Full and part 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>	2014
<b>Programme Specification Date</b>	2018/19

**2. Philosophy of the Programme**

The MA Writing offers students an opportunity to explore new ways of writing writing – critical and creative – about culture at a time when publishing, media and platforms for artists’ writing are undergoing considerable change. The programme has been built on the

idea that writing and criticism are creative practices in their own right, with their own techniques, ethics and technologies. We welcome experimentation and also encourage students to develop their own interests and expertise. By the time a student graduates, he or she will have an extensive portfolio of writing, demonstrating diverse writing skills and focused subject expertise. Taught by leading writers, artists, critics, publishers and editors and working alongside artists and designers in the studio-based courses at the RCA, students graduate with the writing, research and thinking skills, as well as expert knowledge required to pursue successful careers in the arts.

### 3. Educational Aims of the Programme

The MA Writing programme aims to:

- develop skilled and expert writers in art and design equipped to pursue high level careers in the arts;
- establish productive relationships with partners in different fields of the media and the arts;
- successfully integrate art and design discourses and knowledges within a single programme;
- bring to the teaching of writing practices derived from the best aspects of art and design teaching at the RCA (crits, workshops, etc.);
- encourage students to develop subject expertise and related research skills in areas of their own choosing;
- build close working relationships with staff and students of other programmes at the RCA, so that new interdisciplinary thinking and practice can be developed;
- generate and promote high levels of critical and creative reflection on, and interpretation of, art and design.

### 4. Intended Learning Outcomes of the Programme

Able to:	<b>A. Intellectual Engagement</b>
A1.	Develop new ideas, approaches and methods of communication which constitute original ways of writing about, or in relation to, art and design.
A2.	Demonstrate an advanced understanding of the historical, theoretical and contemporary context in which his or her work can be placed.
A3.	Source, select and interpret primary sources and conduct interviews to develop original interpretations and understandings of a subject or a form.

Able to:	<b>B. Technical Skills</b>
B1.	Write and edit a text to a high standard that demonstrates an advanced understanding of the limits and potential of the medium.
B2.	Make informed judgments about the best form in which an idea or research might be articulated.
B3.	Display a mastery of the technical skills required in the authorship, publication and dissemination of an idea and/or research.

Able to:	<b>C. Professional Development</b>
C1.	Initiate and shape projects with a clear and confident understanding of the context of publication and the audience.
C2.	Participate in collaborative projects with a clear understanding of the complementary expertise and skills of others, including commissioning editors, broadcasters and designers.
C3.	Develop a confident sense of their own professional potential based on self-reflection and an informed understanding of the market for his or her work.

## 5. Programme Structure and Curriculum

### Programme Units and Credit Ratings

240 credit masters:

- Unit SOAH: 20 credits
- College-wide Unit: 20 credits
- Unit Writing 1 Critical Contexts 40 credits
- Unit Writing 2 Writing Workshops 1 20 credits
- Unit Writing 3 Writing Workshops 2 40 credits
- Unit Writing 4 External Partner project 20 credits
- Unit Writing 5 Project Design and Research 20 credits
- Unit Writing 6 Final Major Project 60 credits

## 6. Learning and Teaching Methods

### Tutorials

The programme makes extensive use of one-to-one and small group tutorials (typically a meeting between a member of the staff team and three students working on the same project).

You will be required to have a minimum number of one-to-one tutorials with members of the course team for particular projects – namely, the essay which is attached to Unit 1 Critical Contexts and Unit 6 Final Major Project. This is a requirement because these pieces of work will require a good deal of independence on your part. Regular tutorials provide support as your ideas progress. Often draft texts are discussed in tutorials.

### Writing Workshops

Writing workshops are the primary means by which students on the programme receive feedback on their writing. Typically, a writing workshop commences with a *brief* and ends with a *crit* (where writing by all workshop participants is shared, and then read and commented on in a group discussion usually over the course of a full day). In this way, you will develop skills not only as a writer but as an editor and commentator on the work of others. Writing workshops are led by individual members of staff and, occasionally, guest tutors. Writing workshops vary in length (from 1 day to 5 weeks)

### Seminars

Seminars are tutor-led classes in which students are asked to reflect on readings, films and other material that they have read or studied in advance. In the latter part of the

programme, you will be asked to lead at least one seminar for which you will have selected the material which the group will discuss. This experience provides a valuable opportunity to develop and improve communication skills.

### **Lectures**

As conventionally understood.

### **Live projects**

Working collaboratively and usually with an external partner, students develop a public outcome (an event, publication, etc.) through a process of discussion and practical work. Typically, live projects involve working with a collection or archive and require some introduction to this material and necessary research skills from the staff team and/or external partner.

### **Work in progress presentations**

Longer-term and long-form projects like the Final Major Project or the essay which accompanies unit Writing 1 Critical Contexts also involve 'work in progress' presentations by individual students. These events provide important staging points to ensure that your research and ideas are developing well. They also provide valuable opportunities for students to develop and improve skills in verbal presentation.

## 7. Assessment

### General

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

### Unit based assessment

In alignment with the Academic Framework, the programme distinguishes between continuous and summative assessment, both of which take place within the units of study. In alignment with the Academic Framework, the programme distinguishes between continuous and summative assessment, both of which take place within the units of study.

#### Continuous Assessment

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.

#### Final Examination

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.

- *Unit Writing 1 Critical Contexts 40 credits*  
The primary piece of student work for this unit is a 6-8,000 word essay submitted at the start of the summer term. This is marked by two tutors and students receive two written reports.
- *Unit Writing 2 Writing Workshops 1 20 credits*

At the end of the autumn term, students will receive written feedback on their performance in the writing workshops. By this stage, each student will have completed c. 5 texts. Formative feedback will reflect on the overall progress of their work rather than performance in a particular workshop. In this way, students will have the 'right' to 'fail' in a single Writing Workshop. This is to encourage students to embrace experiment.

- *Unit Writing 3 Writing workshops 2 40 credits*

At the end of the spring term, students will take a twenty-minute oral exam on the work they have produced for Unit Writing 3.

- *Unit Writing 4 External Partner project 20 credits*

Completed at the end of the spring term, assessment will take the form of written feedback from the tutor (incorporating the views of any external partners) indicating the achievement of the group and that of the individual student within the group.

- *Unit Writing 5 Project Design and Research 20 credits*

This unit requires students to produce a research proposal and plan, and to complete an initial stage of the research which will form the basis of the Final Major Project – it is assessed on a written proposal and bibliography, and formal presentation in class.

- *Unit Writing 6 Final Major Project* The FMP is a piece of writing (or work in a comparable medium) of 12-20,000 words; assessment of the written component is accompanied by an oral exam. Students will be asked to introduce and defend the project, and invited to discuss its future as a publishable piece of work.

- *Unit SoAH 20 credits*

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

The portfolio is assessed at Unit 2/School Unit Joint Panel. (summative assessment). (20 Credits)

- School Exam Board then reviews marks from all units and recommends pass or fail.

- Learning Outcomes: B2. C2. C3.
- This is delivered to all 10 SoAH MA programmes.

**SoAH College-20 Unit** -- This unit is delivered as a college-wide unit. Assessed Portfolio with HoP panel feedback (summative assessment). (20 Credits)

- Learning Outcomes: A1. B1. B2.

To graduate, the student must accumulate 240 credits and pass each assessment.

## 8. Admissions

### Cross-College Requirements

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

### Programme-Specific Requirements

At the time of application, all applicants are required to submit a clear statement outlining his or her reasons for applying and expectations for their own development while on the programme. Applicants are encouraged to provide samples of writing. In addition, applicants are asked to prepare a short text, usually an exhibition review, prior to interview. This provides material for discussion in the interview as well as evidence of the applicant's abilities and interests.

## 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 School and Programme 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.