



1. General Information

Award	Programme Title	Duration	Mode of Study
MA (RCA)	Design Products	2 Years	Full-time

Institution	Royal College of Art
Teaching Awarding Institution	Royal College of Art
Professional Accreditation	N/A
Qualifications Framework Level	7
Credit Value	240 UK credits
Date of most recent validation	October 2010
Programme Specification Date	2018/19



2. Philosophy of the Programme

Design Products develops students to be creative, innovative design thinkers supporting them on the journey to develop their own design identities.

Design Products embraces a pluralistic approach to *design* through a number of *design cultures* through which students develop their design identity and own design culture.

These cultures represent current discourses within the discipline and can be, for example through Making or understanding design for Manufacture, Object Mediated Interactions, understanding design as a catalyst, exploring emergent scenarios through design or, addressing and shaping future discourses. Design Products enables students to conceptualise and validate ideas by canvassing, provoking, challenging, and questioning people, places, technology, things and systems.

Design Products is educating students to be design-thinkers who can address real world challenges through balancing high levels of creativity and technical capability with contextual insight and empathy for people and, understanding and shaping future discourse. Through team and individual projects tutored by practising designers and design researchers and engaging with external partners, students develop their own *design culture* whilst building a portfolio of work that will locate them in their desired professional context. Graduates are creative catalysts and visionaries who go on to lead in design consultancies, join large established companies, and to set up their own design studios and start-ups. Our graduates are:

- designers of the future
- driven by their vision
- capable of tackling and redefining industries
- change makers
- thought leaders

3. Educational Aims of the Programme

The Design Products programme aims to provide an environment for learning where students can develop their abilities in depth. Successful students will be able to demonstrate:

- Independent motivation, willingness and ability to produce high quality design work in response to an intelligent, articulate brief or through creation of their own briefs.
- Comprehensive understanding of the techniques applicable and the technical knowledge and practical skills appropriate to their design approach.



- Knowledge of the historical, social and cultural context of design and conceptual understanding sufficient to enable critical evaluation of design in contemporary context.
- The ability to form an objective view of their work in the context of contemporary practice and critical discourse.

In addition, it is expected that successful students will have transferable skills appropriate to employment or practice:

- The exercise of initiative and personal responsibility
- Decision making in complex and unpredictable situations
- Independent learning ability necessary for continuing professional



4. Intended Learning Outcomes of the Programme

Able to:	A. Intellectual Engagement
A1.	Develop innovative ideas and proposals that challenge your understanding of your practice and discipline in the context of <i>design products</i> .
A2.	Engage in intellectual and creative research in order to develop an awareness of functional, aesthetic, commercial and critical perspectives.
A3.	Identify how your work is positioned within a larger context demonstrating knowledge of current relevant discourses.
A4.	Demonstrate understanding of the social, ethical and economic impact of your design.
A5.	Bring a design perspective to contemporary debate on technology, consumerism, economics, people and society.

Able to:	B. Technical Skills
B1.	Produce work at an advanced level that demonstrates intellectual thought, creativity and technique.
B2.	Develop and evaluate design ideas through appropriate prototyping methods, demonstrating feasibility of concepts through engagement with relevant stakeholders or other appropriate means.
B3.	Identify, exploit and create the aesthetic and functional possibilities of different materials, processes and technologies.
B4.	Demonstrate an understanding of different manufacturing techniques and systems.
B5.	Present your designs using the appropriate visual, organisational and auditory tools.

Able to:	C. Professionalism
C1.	Develop an individual design approach appropriate to the client industry in which you practice.



Able to:	C. Professionalism
C2.	Take responsibility for developing project briefs and managing time and resources effectively.
C3.	Demonstrate the ability to work effectively in a team to assign roles, delegate tasks and communicate the outcomes of a group project.
C4.	Identify when and how to access outside expertise in realising your design ambitions and manage ongoing relationships with collaborators.
C5.	Presenting work engagingly, in ways that are appropriate to your audience.



5. Programme Structure and Curriculum

MA Programme Description

The MA programme provides students who have already acquired knowledge and skills in various areas of design with an academic framework in which to continue to develop their own professional direction. The programme support the students in gaining independence, developing their design identity and to tackle problems with increasingly level of uncertainty and ambiguity as they progress. The course takes a pluralistic view of the students' ideas and interests and encourages experimental, groundbreaking work, encouraging a critical approach and a questioning of accepted practices to address real world problems, develop new innovative and global challenges.

The MA programme builds briefs, projects and opportunities that aid students to encompass their visions as they are student led, underpinned by world leading experts. Students develop their specialisms with input through: tutorials, workshops, lectures, seminars and peer led opportunities. This is underpinned with principles, tools and techniques, that are relevant to the current or future practice of design, for example: design research methods, systems thinking, advanced ideation techniques, visualisation and prototyping in physical and digital environments and; issues of design for sustainability, the circular economy and commercial viability.

The School of Design has created a unique environment for interdisciplinary design led innovation. It attracts students from a highly diverse set of global disciplines, experience and industries. This provides the opportunity to not only reshape their own design practice, but to reshape the discipline of design itself.

The Design Products Programmes consist of six programme specific Units that provide the core learning, these units are complemented by the Cross School Programme addressing a Grand Challenge and a College Wide Module culminating in a dissertation where students are encouraged to research their design interests to inform their further projects. The Cross-School programme fosters collaboration and interdisciplinary skills, providing an opportunity to network and work closely across different disciplines within the school, and work on shorter faster projects.

The progression of the units is designed to increase the level of ambiguity and uncertainty of the projects as we move from the first year 'The Deep End' and 'In Reality' to supporting the students to develop their emerging specialisms ('Dream Team' and 'Express Yourself') in the second year and an increasingly level of independence leading to the final unit, 'Launch pad', the student final self-directed project. Second year students are expected to produce a minimum of two graduation projects, or one large graduation project.

The units are led by a world leading cross disciplinary tutors, visiting tutors, visiting professors, practicing designers, research professionals and experts in their fields and are supported by the thought leadership of the Head of Programme.

The Programme consist of 2 Pathway (*Subject to validation*):

1. Design Products Pathway as described above.

2. Design Futures pathway consisting of 60 tailored units and with the possibility to continue into the independent final project. Students will be challenged to provoke and design discourses for significant future issues, be they technological, social, cultural, values, political, economic or environmental expecting to lead to new interactions, experiences, products and systems. These will run in parallel to (and integrated partially) with Dream team and Express yourself (Year 2), thus enabling students to apply the futures vision across the multitude of DP design cultures.

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. The Design Culture Senior Tutor will be responsible for bridging the CHS programme with studio teaching.

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.

In the spring and summer terms, a CHS tutor will give you individual tutorials to support the development of a dissertation which is submitted at the start of the second year. 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.

6. Learning and Teaching Methods

Projects

Design projects are the core learning element of the MA programme around which tutorials, workshops, crits, group debates, seminars and technical instruction take place. These projects are led by students visions , and thus require highly motivated, engaged students, and as we believe that the changemakers of the future should steer their own path and not be dictated to by industries, but actively redefine them. Projects will vary in length and format in the structure of units. The content will explore a range of issues related to underpinning design approaches and principles of the Programme. Projects may be carried out with commercial and industrial organisations,, offering their time, expertise or financial support. The programme focuses not only on the world of design, but the design of the world, featuring diverse discourse and inspiration. Outputs range from the artisanal to the industrialist, the artefact centric to behaviour change systems. The Design Products programme instils different design approaches to support students in developing their design identities, for example and not limited to:



- **Maker // 'Design Through Making'**, Making and experimentation is central to the discovery of new possibilities, through materials, process, techniques, technologies, cultures or locations. This hands-on approach covers the creation of things encompassing the practices of designer-makers, material technologists and communities.
- **Industrial Designer // 'Design for Manufacture'** seeks to explore mass cultural, aesthetic and utilitarian desires. Manufacturing technologies deliver products at different volumes, but also, dependant on appropriate contexts and materials. This embodies traditional high volume manufacturing models alongside emergent opportunities of mass-customisation, digital fabrication, through to material science.
- **Interactive Designer // 'Object Mediated Interactions'** explores a broad range of interactive objects, from consumer electronics to the "Internet of Things", exhibition design and installations. There is a strong focus on enabling technologies, the experience of interaction and new opportunities for outputs.
- **Change maker // 'Design as Catalyst'**, things are inherently political, from the mass produced goods that fill our shelves to bespoke custom designs and objects created for exhibitions; they express the politics, economics, opinions, aspirations, values, viewpoints and society of those that commission them, design them, manufacture them and use them. Design is an agitator, instigator and agent of change.
- **Visionary // Exploring Emerging Scenarios, Manifesting the ideas and theories of others as well as developing their own, through experimentation, prototyping, possible products and object oriented narratives.** It uses speculation and what-if scenarios to imagine and set forth multi-scalar and multi-temporal design interventions, with a focus on designing for preferred scenarios.

Underpinning all the approaches of the different design practices are a set of design principles, these are integrated in numerous stages of projects, for example:

- **Designing things better //** From the extraction of virgin resources, the processing of materials, the transportation of goods and the inevitable end of a product's useful life there can be significant negative consequences to a wide range of ecosystems. This principle attempts to tackle the challenge of making things better through; design for disassembly, design for repair, design of more meaningful products, the selection or creation of better materials, the creation of systems that keep hold of valuable materials for future generations or points of intervention that respond to mitigation rather than consequence.



- **New notions & actions from new technology //** Questioning and exploring new applications of current technology as well as developing rich and engaging visions of future technological products. This principle embraces the new by pushing beyond the imagined future to one that can be designed. Outcomes can be at all scales from a singular specific context or global application.
- **Networked design //** Whether engaged in communities on a local level or in an international movement, designers within networks are playing an ever-increasing role in the design and development of the made world. This principle explores new links between producer and consumer, opportunities for custom product creation at all scales of manufacture, intelligent and networked objects, the potential for ad hoc networks to create and develop products.
- **The making of things //** This principle is concerned with the information, processes, methods, materials, tools and spaces that can be used to make physical products. Key to this is learning through experimentation, making things to make things, understanding the properties and meaning of materials while pushing the potential of manufacturing processes or the creation of new ways of making.
- **Human culture //** The relationships people have with objects can be very complex as objects can speak to us of culture, status, gender, class, location, ability, capability and personal identity. This theme is focussed on understanding people, their needs, desires and aspirations. As well as the context that products operate in and the significance and value they hold.
- **Design for Enterprise //** Enterprise is about creating value, creating employment and economics. The process of value creation can embody; funded opportunities, pitching, crowdfunding, intellectual property, business creation or experiential value that hold financial gain.

Cross cutting elements within the programme will include:

- **Workshops** (to prototype / represent industrial processes).
- **Interaction prototyping** (physical computing, Arduino, Raspberry Pi, coding, html, electronics, etc.).
- **Design process methods** (structuring a project or challenge & write a brief; to articulate personal design process).
- **Critical thinking methods** (generating a range of design ideas that span multiple scenarios as well as developing an understanding of how others perceive your work).
- **User-engagement methods** (to learn how to work with people to generate & test ideas)



- **Research methods** (understanding the difference between formal and informal research. Tools and techniques of investigation, analysis and synthesis).

Design communication methods (developing an understand how a design is perceived or read as well as learning to use a variety of presentation methods / media).

Lectures

Experts' Talks

The programme runs a series of practice-related lectures and illustrated talks by visiting lecturers and staff members. In recent years the lecturers have included Sam Hecht/Industry Facility, Jim Reeves/Therefore, Joep van Lisehout, Tim Parsons, John Small (Fosters & Partners), Arash & Kelly and Russell Pinch, Sydney Levinson (Rhodes & Rhodes) and Louise-Anne Comeau. Alastair Parvin Wikihouse, Ellen Macarthur foundation, industry organisations including IDEO, Microsoft and many others.

Lectures on other Programmes

Students are encouraged to attend lectures organised by other programmes.

Design in Business

Lectures covering aspects of professional practice and talks by recent graduates about life after College is offered during the second term.

Design Competitions

There are a large number of competitions available to students both within and outside the College and where appropriate these may become the subject of project briefs. Students should discuss and agree with their tutors any such projects before they start and are advised not to take on any additional work that could be considered detrimental to their studies.

Instruction Courses

Basic Electronics and Engineering for Designers

These will provide a basic introduction on how these are integrated into design and support for project work

Computer Software

Introductions to 3D modeling, Rhino, AutoDesk 360 and SolidWorks will be provided.



7. Assessment

General

Regulations for assessment and progression can be found in the College Regulations.



Interim Assessment Review

Each student will be assessed after each unit against the learning outcomes, leading to summative assessments and ensuring that students have the opportunity for feedback moving from one project to the next.

The Interim Assessment Review is a formal review of each student's work that evaluates progress part way through his or her studies, and determines progression to the second year. The interim assessment review is conducted with a board consisting of relevant staff, where students are not present, reviewing the student's summative assessment of the year.

The criteria employed at this review is:

Pass: Criteria for passing the year, is to pass every unit and will be subject to CHS results.

Referral: follow current regulations to be achievable within one term. Failing up to 30 Credits (i.e. a fail or below satisfactory) by end of term3 will result in a referral project.

Borderline Referral/Fail will be at the Interim Assessment Review Boards discretion. In the cases where students fails between 30- 40 credits (i.e. fail or below satisfactory) the interim review board will make a decision of whether this is a fail or can be redeemed with a referral. Relevant evidence such as mitigating circumstance can be considered.

Fail: Students failing 40 credits or more, will result in automatic failing the year.

Project referral project:

If the referral is related to Programme specific units, the project is supported by programme staff at equivalent and appropriate for failed credits and addressing their learning objectives.

If the referral is related to School wide units, the referral project is supported by school wide staff at equivalent and appropriate for failed credits and addressing their learning objectives

The outcomes from this review is submitted to the Academic Board for Concessions & Discipline, with the recommendation that a student does or does not progress. If a student's Personal Tutor is not present at the Interim Examination Review, their report contributes to the overall assessment in border line cases.

Final Examination



The Final Examination is the culmination of a MA degree. It is held in the summer term of students' second year. The Final exam takes place, usually, in mid-June, a few weeks before the Show. The final independent project together with the body of work showing the progression of the student's work exemplifying the learning journey throughout the programme, will be assessed during the exam by a panel of academics. If a student's Personal Tutor is not present at the Exam, their report contributes to the overall assessment.

The Final Examination is in two parts:

- a) A Viva-Voce, which takes place in the final term of a programme of study
- b) A School Examination Board, will be held to recommend results to the Academic Board for Concessions & Discipline for ratification.

If at Final Examination a student's work from the exam or assessed work from earlier units is considered to be a borderline fail (under 30 units, or 30-40 units at exams board discretion), the student may be required to retrieve the work within an academic term, or at a referral examination within 12 months. For more information, please see the RCA Regulations.

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 course 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

For MA Design Products, you should have a good undergraduate degree or equivalent in an area of design, or related background and proficient written and spoken English. Several years of professional experience, either before or after a first degree, is a benefit, and you must be able to demonstrate critical and innovative thinking, a design curiosity and the ability to thrive in student led projects. Applications are welcomed from candidates from related backgrounds, such as engineering, architecture, communication, sports science, medical/health, international development/NGO, economics/business, material science, technology development and User experience or User Interface.



Portfolio:

- This should describe your abilities in design, presentation and innovative thinking. It should include representative samples of; sketching, making, prototyping, model making, user engagement or testing, technical abilities and demonstrate your working process at investigative or exploratory stages of the design process as well as presentation of finished pieces.
- It should also contain samples of any written work, technical studies or additional work carried out in conjunction with the design projects.
- The portfolio should show the range and variety of skills and experience but should emphasise your knowledge of the subject for which you are applying. Please note:
 - Sketchbooks and notebooks should be included (extracts submitted digitally are acceptable at application stage, and if invited for interview, you should bring sketchbooks with you).
 - Physical /actual objects should be represented by photographs and can be brought to interview should you be selected.
 - Working drawings and photographs of finished work should be dated and have attached a brief written explanation.
- Test material, failures (that have been critically reflected on) and working processes that demonstrate a curiosity are valued.
- Video content is welcome, but should be supported by screen shots of the work.
- Please carefully check online submissions to ensure links function.
- All work submitted should be correctly titled and clearly marked with your name.
- Joint project work or collaborative projects must be clearly described as such. You must indicate clearly the exact role that you played in the creation of the work submitted.
- Where it can be shown that you have submitted work which is not your own, as if it was your own, or it transpires that the level of your involvement in joint work has been seriously exaggerated, or where false statements have been made on an application form or other document considered by an admissions board, you may be disqualified.

If you are invited for an interview:

- Any work carried out after the submission of the portfolio or any work in progress can be brought to the interview.
- You should bring sketch books samples of writing, tests trials, prototypes (if easily transportable) to your interview.
 - You are expected to be able to talk confidently and objectively about your own work, and about your personal ambitions for future work at the College



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 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.