



1. General Information

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

Awarding Institution	Royal College of Art
Teaching Institution	Royal College of Art
Professional Accreditation	N/A
Qualifications Framework Level	7
Date of most recent validation	May 2017
Programme Specification Date	2018/19

2. Philosophy of the Programme

IED is about transforming information into experiences, through the pathways of Sound Design, Moving Image Design, and Experimental Design. In practice, information can be quantitative data or narrative content, and experiences can take the form of multisensory installations, interventions, performances, moving image, sound, objects or systems. In terms of research, we often work in the opposite direction, transforming experience into information. We do not do 'information design' or 'user experience design' but operate as a broad platform in between art, design, science and technology, with information and experience as pillars.

Our approach is anti-disciplinary, as our students and staff come from all areas of art and design, plus computer science, engineering, the social and physical sciences, and the humanities. We draw on artistic strategies, design methods, scientific theory and a journalistic approach. Students are given freedom so as to adopt an independent attitude toward design and the broader social context. Through constant re-examination, questioning, critique, imagination, we ask who, what, where, when, how and especially why.

Information and experience provide a core theoretical grounding. If information is



cognitive, digital and rational, experience is physical, sensorial and intuitive. Design, then, for us means transformation, calculation, connection, and the power to command attention. Design for us is making, not thinking.

Information and experience are also approaches to research. To balance the mere gathering of information, students are encouraged to engage in direct experience of tools, materials and phenomena, both in the studio and out in the world. Through experience and experiment we learn about ourselves and society, and we engage in practice cycles of experience, reflection, abstraction and action. This process balances verbal and nonverbal, input and output.

3. Educational Aims of the Programme

Overall, the programme aims to develop students' powers of analysis and critical judgement, to inform technological and/or aesthetic innovations. Underpinning this is a well-developed philosophical understanding of relevant subject areas, student work and its context. Students should be able to articulate their ideas and intentions, communicating them, with cultural sensitivity, to a wide audience.

Specifically, the programme aims to:

- Be the leading programme of its kind in the world in terms of practice and research;
- Produce confident practitioners with expert understanding of contemporary art & design practice relevant to the needs of society, with a holistic understanding of the social and environmental implications of their actions;
- Create new academic relationships with others doing similar work, research and study;
- Maintain an atmosphere within which students feel free to experiment, and to question existing practice, but to do so from the position of being well-informed;
- Help students develop an understanding of research and its relation to practice, and to make judgments that are critically informed both aesthetically and professionally;
- Encourage students to develop the social skills which are increasingly necessary in designing informational experiences; and
- Prepare students technically for professional life by ensuring that they are fully acquainted with the processes of generation, reproduction and distribution; and to retain a balance between new and traditional media and processes.



4. Intended Learning Outcomes of the Programme

Able to:	A. Intellectual Engagement
A1.	Identify principles and methodologies that enhance how to meet contemporary information experience design challenges
A2.	Demonstrate a clear understanding of how to create meaning across an experience through channels, movements and degrees of engagement
A3.	Translate abstract issues into tangible design proposals, grounding projects with real-world social, cultural, technological, and economic issues
A4.	Engage in intellectual and creative research in order to develop self-awareness, and to contextualise your work

Able to:	B. Technical Skills
B1.	Engage with relevant tools and materials from functional, aesthetic, commercial and critical perspectives
B2.	Employ the necessary skills for communicating and testing ideas through appropriate media
B3.	Identify and exploit the aesthetic and functional possibilities of different tools and materials

Able to:	C. Professional Development
C1.	Develop an individual design approach that relates to the context within which you wish to practice
C2.	Develop imaginative and meaningful ways of involving people in the design process
C3.	Present work clearly and engagingly, in ways that are appropriate to the audience
C4.	Demonstrate an ability to work as part of a team in different roles and contexts
C5.	Synthesise your intellectual understanding with technical skills, so that you are articulate - both visually and verbally - in presenting this understanding
C6.	Contribute new developments, confidently and imaginatively, in information experience design



5. Programme Structure and Curriculum

Programme Overview

Year One

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.

Year Two

Through the Experiential Research unit, Year 2 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 show 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 Y2s specialise, and there are occasional commercial or other projects offered. Practical workshops remain open to Y2 students, and a Professional Practice series also supports pathway-specific aims.

Critical and 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

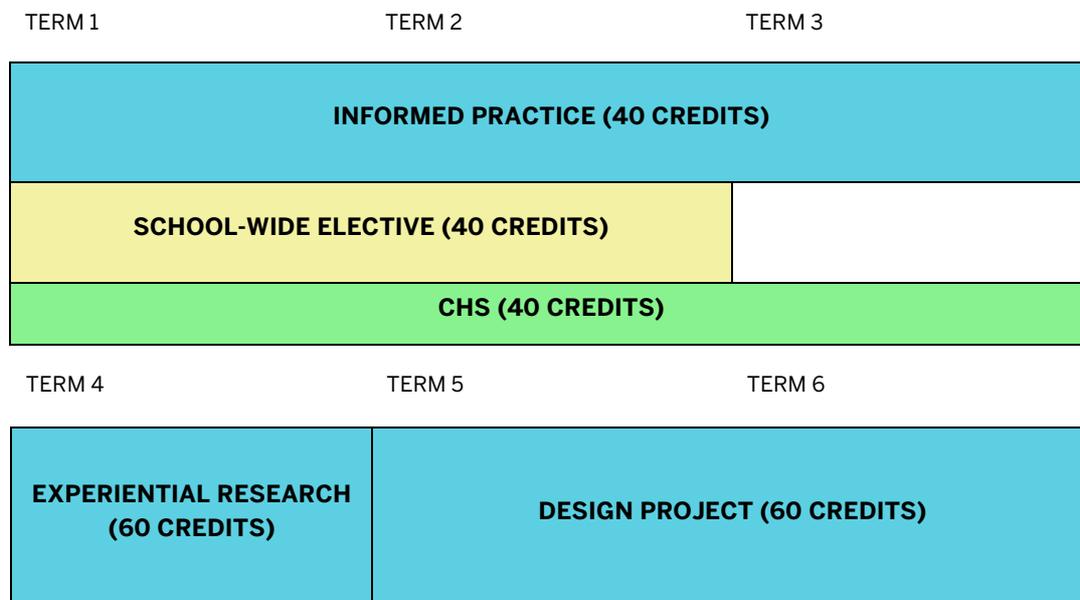


between 6,000 – 10,000 words in length – this is a major piece of work and you will be not be able to submit for the Final Examination until you have passed this assessment.

Programme Units and Credit Ratings

- School Elective, 40 credits
- Informed Practice, 40 credits
- Critical and Historical Studies (CHS), 40 credits
- Experiential Research, 60 credits
- Design Project, 60 credits

Programme Curriculum Map



6. Learning and Teaching Methods

Tutorials

Students should expect to have an average of two in-depth tutorials each term, in which discussion will encompass all the student’s current work and development. Tutorials are an opportunity to talk at length with the Personal Tutor, in private if necessary. Tutorials offer the opportunity for students to talk about the work being done or planned, and for their tutor to offer advice and critique.

Several themes underlie most tutorials and will be returned to again and again, regardless of the nature of the work. The first relates to the intention of the work as a piece of



communication – it is one of the tutor’s concerns that the student’s professional future is considered; they will relate the student’s work to their own professional experience, and will criticise and advise based on that experience.

The student’s relationship with the tutor is based on discussion and collaboration rather than authority. The tutor doesn’t expect the student to follow their advice slavishly, or even expect the student to agree with their criticism.

Personal work plays a valuable part in developing professional work, so students are encouraged to maintain this, and this work will be a part of tutorial discussions. The individual vision of each student, and the intensity with which they can be focused on a given problem without becoming over-indulgent, is very important – it is an essential ingredient, in our view, of work as a way of life rather than simply as an occupation.

Whilst a student might decide not to follow specific aspects of their tutor’s advice, the tutor will expect continuing progress from the student, regarding the quantity and quality of the work produced. One thing we don’t accept is lack of commitment.

Projects

Assignments develop students’ awareness of current issues, expressive capacity, social responsibility, and conceptual thinking. Students develop their own approach, in small groups or individually.

Projects in all three IED pathways are strongly focused on production and experimentation with craftsmanship, multiple senses and modes of communication, materials and techniques. We take a systems approach to topics, zooming in and out of phenomena to develop close and distant readings. We also maintain strong links with multiple fields and cultures

There is typically a brief introductory project at the start of Year 1, followed by electives, each of which includes one or more project briefs. Alongside that and additionally in the third term are occasional additional projects, commissions or competitions, typically in collaboration with other programmes and/or external collaborators.

Year 2 is dominated by the research, design and construction of a final major project which serves as a key point of assessment followed by exhibition in the Final Show.

Elective Projects

These projects are designed to focus on particular issues or themes, and – by limiting the number of students working on a specific project – to enable a deeper level of debate and critique. These elective projects are also likely to make use of the programme’s industrial/professional and academic contacts; a project may be built around an actual



commission, or designed with a specific end use, such as an exhibition or publication.

Year 2 Crits

The curriculum for the second year also includes crits with IED states that provide students with an opportunity to develop their final major projects. The crits are designed to encourage students to demonstrate initiative and ambition, and provide critical feedback intended to propel students' forward progress. These take place in small groups once per week, and students are expected to bring work and show a progression from week to week, from research in the Autumn term, to prototyping for the Work in Progress show, to practical completion for the Final Exam and Final Show.

Workshops

In addition to the workshop spaces maintained by the College's technical services, timetabled workshops are run weekly by IED specialist tutors, open to all first and second year students.

These have previously included beginner to advanced topics in programming and electronics, graphic design, sound recording, editing, synthesis and sampling, drawing and sketching, film and video scripting, storyboarding, shooting and editing, means of display such as projection and projection mapping.

Alongside this, we regularly run workshops on research methods including journalistic methods, using technology to gather data, visual and multimodal research.

7. Assessment

General

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

Your progress through the course is reviewed informally through tutorials on a continuous basis. All MA students in the College have two formal examinations, Interim and Final.

Interim Examination

The Interim Examination is a formal examination of each student's work that evaluates progress part way through his or her studies. Each student will be asked to present and discuss work completed-to-date. Following completion of this examination, the Head of Programme drafts a brief report on the development of each students' work, attendance record, and application to their subject including any other relevant observations. This report goes 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, their report



contributes to the overall assessment.

If at Interim Examination a student's work is considered to be a borderline fail, a programme of work (referral) may be set for further examination to enable progression. For more information, please see the RCA Regulations.

Final Examination

The Final Examination is the culmination of a MA degree. Each student's work is assessed by a panel of academics, and a sample of a cohort's work is reviewed by an External Examiner. If your Personal Tutor is not present at the Final Examination, 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; and
- b) A School Examination Board, chaired by the Dean of School, will be held to recommend results to the Academic Board for Concessions & Discipline for ratification.

If at Final Examination a student's work is considered to be a borderline fail, 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

- 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 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

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 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.
- 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.