



Programme Specification

1. General Information

Programme title:	Animation
Award:	Masters
Qualification Framework level:	Level 7
School/Department or equivalent:	School of Communication
Campus location(s):	White City
Total UK credits:	180
Date valid from/to:	2022-23

2. Programme Philosophy

The MA Animation programme at the Royal College of Art has a world-class reputation for artistic, director-led creative practice and innovative risk-taking and our students also explore the increasingly porous borders between animation, virtual reality, augmented reality, or new media art. The programme maintains an ethos and environment of experimentation and creativity built on a foundation of social and cultural interrogation and contextual and critical thinking.

We are committed to a critical potency of animation that can challenge and offer alternatives to the industry's dominant digital realism and inherent ideologies. We offer you a singular approach to a community of learning and teaching for developing your creativity and skills to negotiate rapid cultural and technological change. Within a continuum of mimetic narrative and playful abstraction, you will find your own meaningful fit or stance as an artist within an array of techniques, concepts and canons to position you to contribute to a greater collective intellectual and creative capital.

The programme is dynamically responsive to how animation is now central to contemporary debates in visual culture. Animation is a pervasive interdisciplinary moving image form that extends across a global landscape of technologies, cultures and media and human/nonhuman relationships. We engage in animation's gaining proximity to contemporary discourses on aesthetics, socio-politics, consumption and techno-cultural progression in the arts, sciences, health, and commerce. As a programme situated in the School of Communication, we are committed to our students' development in and expansion of this new visual communication paradigm into these and other fields, and to their potential to influence intellectual, artistic, political, and cultural agendas, that in turn can transform our daily lives. As screen access increases globally, and with this the animation that can be watched on them, so too do opportunities to create meaningful works in social contexts to affect change, improve knowledge,

redistribute power and build communities and participatory cultures.

Structured around practice-as-research, experimentation and constructive critique, the curriculum has a discursive approach and a particular emphasis on developing creative time-based content informed by collaboration, questioning, exchange and process exploration. Supported on your journey by a world-class programme team and state of the art facilities, you are enabled to explore enduring historical relations with the material-based media of painting, drawing, illustration, and sculpture – the ‘stuff’ of animation practice – that are enhanced by digital tools and deep learning processes as well as refinements in sound, display practices and film language. We engage with many screen-based and related forms you may want to explore, from installations, projection mapping, VR and AR, extra-cinematic animation and theatre environments, to sci-tech visualisation tools, the spatial politics of citizen science games or apps. You will grasp the opportunities arising from animation’s increasing pervasiveness and hone your influence on how your audiences see and understand the worlds and experiences you create. Together with your peers and students from other programmes, you will experience a collaborative professional environment and community of practice that is equitable, encouraging, convivial, challenging and confidence-building.

You will be challenged and encouraged to engage in innovative practice-oriented research sensitive to understanding and articulation of the nuances of cultures, ethics, diversity, identities, traditions, environments and futures. Our students engage in interdisciplinary contexts of drama, literature, philosophy, fine and applied arts, film and media theory, art history, STEM disciplines and architecture. You will deepen your understanding of animation to develop your own critical approach to your practice, and challenge yourself intellectually with new ideas to broaden and influence social, political and cultural perspectives through creative engagement. MA Animation is pedagogically conceived and strategically positioned to foster our students’ aspirations and creative transformations as ethically minded thinkers and professionally astute creative artists, filmmakers and problem solvers. You will join a community engaged in dialogues with and new perspectives on the persuasive potential of animation in the digital humanities and STEAM disciplines.

The programme has three terms with a combination of programme, School and College units that seek to enable you to build a clear sense of communication methods, practices and contexts in relation to your own work.

In **Term 1**, you will undertake a programme unit of **Animation Forms, Methods & Contexts** which enhances your knowledge and disciplinary and interdisciplinary expertise in key critical contexts and a range of practices and research methods and approaches within animation moving image practices.

Across **Terms 1 and 2**, you will participate in the **College-Wide** unit. This unit aims to support students to meet the challenges of a complex, uncertain and changing world by bringing them together to work collaboratively on a series of themed projects informed by expertise within and beyond the College. These projects will challenge you to use your intellect and imagination to address key cultural, social, environmental and economic challenges. In doing so, you will develop

and reflect on the abilities required to translate knowledge into action, and help demonstrate the contribution that the creative arts can make to our understanding and experience of the world.

In **Term 2**, the **Making Worlds with Others** School-wide unit will allow you to work alongside students within and across the School. These are balanced with a programme-specific unit, **Critical Non/Fiction and Experimental /Expanded Practices** which is designed to enable you to build on the learning and explorations from Term 1 to situate and refine your practice with appropriate professional, intellectual, technological and creative contexts. Normally during Term 2, you will develop a project proposal and Production Plan that articulates your ambitions for an independent research project.

In **Term 3** you will apply what you have learned in your engagement in the production of your **Independent Research Project** which will be completed as a self-determined body of work negotiated in collaboration with academic and technical staff.

3. Educational Aims and Outcomes of the Programme

Programme aims

The MA Animation Programme aims to:

- Offer you the Programme's dynamic approach to research, learning and teaching for developing creativity, skills and strategies to negotiate rapid cultural and technological change.
- Create an ethos and environment of experimentation and creative practice built on a foundation of community, collaboration, social and cultural interrogation, and contextual and critical thinking.
- Support your agency in developing fundamental research, interpersonal and presentation skills and expanded discipline expertise.
- Facilitate your engagement in dealing imaginatively and sensitively with contemporary social, environmental, political and/or cultural issues using different technologies, innovative practice and creative media.
- Encourage you to experiment to challenge the boundaries of traditional animation and moving image in your practice in process, aesthetic expression and variation on (non)narrative forms.
- Enable you to engage with aesthetic and conceptual research contexts, societies, ethics, cultures, identities, traditions and human/non-human relationships with your peers and in relation to your work.
- Enhance your creative and transformative journeys to be ethically minded thinkers and creative artists, filmmakers and problem solvers.
- Support you to situate your work, define your ambitions and identify challenges to prepare you for professional practice after graduation.

What will I be expected to achieve?

Upon successful completion of the programme, you will be expected to meet the requirements of both the College-wide Learning Outcomes and your programme-specific Learning Outcomes.

College-Wide Learning Outcomes

Upon successful completion of this programme, you will be able to:

- Interrogate and articulate the intentions of your work in relation to the critical and conceptual context of your field(s) of study;
- Independently plan and produce work that is informed by developments at the forefront of your field(s) of study;
- Evaluate and critique the principles and methods of research in your field(s) of study, and apply these principles to your creative, professional and/or scholarly practice;
- Demonstrate originality in how you translate knowledge into practice;
- Communicate your creative, professional and/or scholarly practice to a non-specialist audience;
- Critically reflect on the likely public impact of your creative, professional and/or scholarly practice, and on your responsibilities as a practitioner;
- Define your professional ambitions and identify the challenges involved in meeting them.

Programme-Specific Learning Outcomes

Upon successful completion of this programme, you will be able to:

- Examine, document and apply research-focused approaches and methods in order to translate ideas and primary research into individual or collaborative moving image practice;
- Demonstrate originality, creativity and experimentation in the use of materials, processes, technologies and environments;
- Interrogate, integrate and adapt primary and secondary research on aesthetic, historical and critical perspectives to articulate the intentions of your work and production of your creative practice in visual and verbal presentations;
- Develop, design, document and execute a detailed and feasible production plan to professional standards for your independent research project;
- Engage in and contribute to the support and enabling of others in critical discussions and feedback with your peers and staff, and where relevant show thoughtful participation and/or leadership in collaboration and working with others;
- Evidence and assess how you select, evaluate and critique research contexts, societies, cultures, ethics, identities, traditions and human/non-human relationships as appropriate with your peers in relation to your independent research project;
- Focus and apply your deep learning skills, technical competencies, systematic production methods and self-directed planning to produce original work at an advanced level that integrates criticality, creativity and technique.

4. What will I learn?

Curriculum Map

Programme Structure

Term 1	Term 2	Term 3
Animation Forms, Methods and Contexts (45 credits)	Making Worlds with Others (15 credits)	Independent Research Project (60 credits)
	Critical Non/Fiction and Experimental/Expanded Practices (30 credits)	
AcrossRCA (30 credits)		

Unit Title	Term	Credit Value	Core or Elective?
Animation Forms, Methods and Contexts	1	45	Core
AcrossRCA (College-Wide Unit)	1 & 2	30	Core
Making Worlds with Others (School-Wide Unit)	2	15	Elective
Critical Non/Fiction and Experimental/Expanded Practices	2	30	Core
Independent Research Project	3	60	Core

Unit 1 starts with creative community-building activities followed by practice-as-research **exploratory workshops as 'serious play'** to develop skills refinement and knowledge development through collaborative and individual projects. Your sound and image skills are expanded on through technical Inductions, Workshops and meetings with technical staff. You are expected to engage in collaboration, experimentation and conceptual thinking, and to develop sensitivity to the subjects represented. In tandem with the workshops, **Articulation Lectures** provide encounters with aesthetic, historical, contemporary and formal contexts of interdisciplinary animation theory and practices. In the **Critical Explorations Group** seminars you will consider, investigate and discuss a range of approaches to image, sound and text-based

materials across animation and its many related creative and intellectual fields to explore rationales, criteria and creative methodologies. You will document and evidence these in your Virtual Studio Desk.

Across terms 1 and 2, you will participate in **AcrossRCA**. This unit aims to support students to meet the challenges of a complex, uncertain and changing world by bringing them together to work collaboratively on a series of themed projects informed by expertise within and beyond the College. These projects will challenge you to use your intellect and imagination to address key cultural, social, environmental and economic challenges. In doing so, you will develop and reflect on the abilities required to translate knowledge into action, and help demonstrate the contribution that the creative arts can make to our understanding and experience of the world.

In **unit 4**, over Term 2 you begin working on intellectual development and refinement for your Independent Research Project supported by academic and technical staff. The **Critical Intensives** is a series of interdisciplinary groups notionally named: **Non/Fiction and Experimental/Expanded**, in which you generate, present and share project-specific research methods for and approaches to your negotiated independent research project agreed with your tutors. This also involves selecting, evaluating and critiquing research contexts, societies, cultures, identities, traditions and human/non-human relationships as appropriate with your peers. The term is research-intensive, and includes developing a detailed production plan. Group and individual tutorials and a critique provide opportunities to receive feedback, as well as an assessed Project Proposal and Production Plan. You will further refine your skills in technical services workshops and self-arranged meetings with technical staff to develop your Technical Plan.

Unit 5 is when you create and complete your **Independent Research Project (IRP)**. You are expected to work independently whilst setting your own aims, objectives, contexts and deadlines. The IRP is a programme of self-directed independent study that is supported by subject-based group and personal tutorials and technical tutorials, studio dialogue and student-led events. During the term, you are expected to realise these ambitions in a sustained and reflective process of 'thinking through making' and develop a body of work evidencing your rationale and priorities as a critical, creative practitioner. Your final body of work should evidence a considered process of selecting, testing and making use of appropriate materials and technical processes sound and image for screen-based and/or expanded moving image practice. This work will then be contextually curated and prepared for presentation in a public-facing event at the end of Term 3.

5. How will I learn?

In the first two terms of the programme, you will engage in a range of tutor-led curricula and group and individual projects to underpin and stimulate the evolution of your intellectual, technical and professional creative journey. The programme encourages a practice-as-research focused, learner-centred approach, and you participate with your cohort in collectively determining enhancements and specific areas of focus that are responsive to emergent areas of practice and knowledge. The third term has an emphasis on self-directed study where you apply your knowledge and technical skills and refinements to complete your final project.

Technical Services

The College's Technical Services provides instruction in and access to working across a diverse range of materials-based and digital media in state-of-the-art facilities on three campuses. In the first Term, **Orientation** sessions offer students an overview of technical services and how to access them. **Inductions** are activities with studio technicians that enable students to use technical facilities safely and, when appropriate, without supervision. In Terms 1 and 2, you can access College-wide **Technical Skills Workshops** that are available across a range of analogue and contemporary digital creative practices. These may be scheduled via academic staff for group support on specific projects, a self-selected workshop focussing on a particular process or skill, or student initiated. **Negotiated Technical Learning** offers one-to-one or small group instruction arranged by appointment to support a specific piece of work.

Briefings

Briefings are sessions that present key information to students on the programme, project briefs or assessments.

Workshops

Programme **Workshops** are provided in various forms. Core workshops offer an intensive collaborative learning experience focused on a particular subject, creative approach, methodology or technique. Typically, in the first term, a series of stimulating project-based workshops help you sharpen your skills and knowledge development in time-based image and sound, conceptual development and experimental practice. They help you challenge the boundaries of traditional animation and moving image in your practice by taking risks in your own process, aesthetic expression, and variation on (non-)narrative forms, and representation.

Seminars and Lectures

The **Articulation Lectures** are a series on historical and contemporary discourses and subjects as well as interdisciplinary approaches to expanded critical contexts and history, theory, ethics and aesthetics of animation and related fields. These are enhanced by reading lists, include film screenings and will be complimented by student-led discussions. **Specialist Seminars** provide expertise on a range of practice, production skills and contextual themes in which staff artists and professionals present their work and give insights into their critical positions, techniques, and creative processes. A series of **Professional Practice** sessions supports you and prepares you for transition into life after graduation.

Groups

You will engage in student-informed **Groups** in which you engage in constructive reflection and discussion with tutors and peers on your own and others' work. They work with a student-led teaching strategy to develop a greater capacity for critical, constrictive, and independent thought. In Term 1 **Critical Explorations Groups** are contextually themed, often in tandem with the Articulation Lectures, and building on these in Term 2, **Critical Intensives Groups** are specific to developing your chosen area of practice. A key feature in Term 2 is initial group discussion to arrive at agreed terms of engagement: this plays a significant role for students in creating a platform that is empowering and community-building. It allows you to analyse and develop your approaches to and responsibilities in your practice in relation to each other, to other disciplines, and to cultural and representational issues and structures.

Production Research Methods Groups take the form of production meetings which support

students with methods, skills and tools to develop production planning for their IRP. These also support students plan production in the coming months in terms of time management and organisation, and to help them in their future professional creative life.

Tutorials

Personal Tutorials are scheduled with your Personal Tutor, who offer advice and engage in discussion with you to foster, support and challenge your development and ensure you are on track with your aims and ambitions in your programme. It is important that you are prepared for your tutorials and take a proactive role. It is good practice to make a list of points before each tutorial for a critical self-reflection of progress and any challenges or issues you are facing.

Group Tutorials are timetabled at key points throughout the year, encouraging discussion and peer review in a small group setting.

Specialist Tutorials with creative practitioners are one-to-one or group tutorials with a range of animation tutors and specialist professionals.

Critiques

Formative critiques and peer feedback enhance your development of fundamental research, interpersonal and presentation skills and expanded discipline expertise. **Tutor Critiques** facilitate tutor feedback for your projects in development. **Peer Critiques** are self-organised by cohorts and offer an informal setting in which students can present research and work-in-progress to peers for support and discussion. You are expected to take an active role in providing feedback to your fellow students in both of these.

Virtual Studio Desk

In the flexibility of blended learning, you work with online platforms to create your own bespoke digital **Virtual Studio Desk** to document, collate and curate your primary and secondary research processes and to present your work. It is shared with tutors and your peers to facilitate exchange and feedback on your work in progress, and it is assessed.

Offsite Study: Field Trip

Organised **Field Trips** may be led or organised by tutors which enable you to engage with diverse methodologies, or works of other artists and with elements of professional practice.

Presentations

Presentations are verbally commented presentations of visual and sound-based work that demonstrate fulfilment of Unit/programme learning outcomes.

Independent study

You are expected to engage in all three terms in significant **independent research study** and practical work that may be collaborative or individual, supported by academic staff and staff and resources available to you from the Information, Library and Technical Services Department.

Feedback

Formative feedback will take place through presentations, tutor critiques and tutorials. This allows you to critically reflect on your work in progress with your tutors and peers, and to decide on areas for

improvement or further study. This will enable your performance and progress to be understood and accounted for through a wide variety of academic contact points, recognising that you are able to perform in different ways and through different means and aspects of the curriculum while still achieving the requisite performance standards.

In Person, Online, Blended and Flipped Learning

The programme works with a variety of in-person and online teaching, research and learning and community-building methods. This student-oriented, active learning and formative feedback supports conceptual development through a combination of taught sessions, individual study and group and peer working. Specific elements of the curriculum may be delivered online and may include seminars, presentations, tutorials and meetings. *In sessions working with flipped learning, materials are provided in advance to facilitate deep and focused discussion with tutors.*

Professional Practice

Throughout your studies you will have opportunities to develop your production and professional practice skills. At the end of your studies, you will be supported in the curation and public presentation of your Independent Research Project. To enhance your professional life upon graduation, studio visits, meetings, discussions and feedback sessions may be arranged with industry professionals, heads of studios, and producers.

6. Assessment and feedback

Regulations

Regulations for assessment and progression can be found [here](#). Please note that College regulations are subject to annual updates and amendments.

Unit assessment

The programme embraces a holistic set of approaches to assessment of the unit learning outcomes that includes your self-reflective self-assessment, and formative, continuous and summative assessment with peers and tutors. This both ensures the quality and standards of your award, and considers the different learning journeys of each student. You need to successfully pass the units in the first two terms to progress to the final term.

In Term 1, **unit 1 Animation Forms, Methods and Contexts** is assessed in part through a process of continuous assessment as you progress in your exploration and experimentation in curricular projects during the term. A unit assessment will review your self-evaluation and a set of creative practice elements you choose to present that demonstrate the unit learning outcomes. This typically includes workshop results, Critical Explorations, and Virtual Studio Desk.

In Term 2, **unit 4** is assessed in part through a process of continuous assessment of the **Critical Intensives** and a further point of assessment during the term, of the Independent Research Project Proposal Presentation and your Virtual Studio Desk.

During Term 3, the **unit 5 Independent Research Project** is assessed. You will submit a Statement of Outcome in advance, in which you reflect on your work and its contextual, critical and creative development. You should discuss your plans for assessment with your Personal Tutor and prepare a presentation supported with visual, text and moving image/sound elements of your final project. In the final assessment, presentation of the IRP and a discursive oral examination evaluates your performance against the unit 5 learning outcomes.

More information regarding individual assessments will be included in the unit descriptors, and will be available to you at the beginning of the academic year.

7. What award can I get?

To be awarded an RCA MA degree you need to gain 180 credits at level 7 of the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications (FHEQ). This will involve successfully completing all units.

If you fail a unit at the first attempt, you will be offered an opportunity to resit the unit. If you are successful at resit you will be awarded the credits for that unit. If you are unsuccessful, you cannot progress further in your programme.

Exit awards:

If you have gained at least 120 credits at level 7 of the FHEQ, you may be eligible for the exit award of Postgraduate Diploma. An exit award is a final award from the College and cannot be rescinded.

For more detailed information about the College's assessment, progression and awards policies see the Regulations.

8. Admissions

Cross-College requirements

Academic Entry Requirements

Candidates 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 programme 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 programme of upper secondary education.

Other qualifications may be approved, providing that the College's 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.

Portfolio

All applicants are required to submit a portfolio as part of the application process. A portfolio is a showcase of an applicant's work as an artist or designer and can be made up of images, videos or writing examples. The portfolio helps us to better understand the applicant and allows them to show evidence of their ability and motivation to undertake a given programme.

Each programme is looking for different things in a portfolio; each Head of Programme provides specific advice on portfolio requirements in the online application system. We advise prospective students to consider these requirements carefully before submitting their application.

Applicant Qualities

Generally, we are looking for applicants to demonstrate their:

- creativity, imagination and innovation;
- ability to articulate the intentions of the work;
- intellectual engagement in areas relevant to the work;
- technical skills appropriate to the work;
- potential to benefit from the programme and achieve MA standards overall.

English Language

Applicants who are not a national of a majority English-speaking country will need to demonstrate their English language proficiency. The College accepts a range of English language qualifications. The full list can be seen at <https://www.rca.ac.uk/studying-at-the-rca/apply/entrance-requirements/english-language-requirements/>

Applicants are exempt from this requirement if they have received a 2.1 degree or above from a

university in a majority English-speaking nation within the last two years.

If a student would need a Tier 4 visa to study at the RCA, they will also need to meet the Home Office's minimum requirements for entry clearance.

Admission Process

Applications must be made directly to the College through our online application portal:

<https://www.rca.ac.uk/studying-at-the-rca/apply/application-process/ma-application-process/>

Upon completion of that first stage of the application process, candidates will be invited to submit a portfolio of their work, a 300-word statement of intent and a video communicating clearly their motivations, personal interests and why they are pursuing a Masters degree at the Royal College of Art. These materials are reviewed by members of the programme team who will communicate an academic decision to the College Registry, who manage the process of offer-making in line with the College's recruitment targets. In some cases, where the programme team is not able to make an admission decision based solely upon the work submitted by the applicant, we may invite the candidate to undertake an interview with us.

Applications are considered chronologically by date and time of final portfolio submission. Whilst a programme still has vacancies, successful candidates will be made an offer of a place. Once a programme becomes full, subsequent successful applicants will be placed on a waiting list, and may be made a firm offer should a place become available for them.

Programme-specific requirements

Specific advice on programme portfolio requirements is provided by the Head of Programme in the online application system. Please consult the College website for further information on programme-specific admission and portfolio requirements:

<https://www.rca.ac.uk/study/programme-finder/animation-ma/#requirements>