UNIVERSITY FOR THE CREATIVE ARTS

PROGRAMME SPECIFICATION FOR:

MA FINE ART

PROGRAMME SPECIFICATION 2018/19

This Programme Specification is designed for prospective students, current students, academic staff and potential employers. It provides a concise summary of the main features of the programme and the intended learning outcomes that a typical student might reasonably be expected to achieve and demonstrate if he/she takes full advantage of the learning opportunities that are provided. More detailed information on the teaching, learning and assessment methods, learning outcomes and content of each unit can be found in the Unit Descriptors.

Section A – Material Course Information

Validating Body	University for the Creative Arts[1]
Teaching Body	Open College of the Arts
Final Award Title and Type	MA
Course Title	Fine Art

Course Location and Length	Campus: OCA		Length: 3 years – Part-time
Mode of Study	Full-time		Part-time	✓

Period of Validation	2016/17 to 2020/21
Name of Professional, Statutory or Regulatory Body	Not Applicable
Type of Accreditation	Not Applicable
Accreditation due for renewal	Not Applicable

Entry criteria and requirements[2]

Normally, students will be accepted on to the course with either:

A good degree in the visual arts. Candidates with an acceptable academic background and / or professional experience (including APL and APEL) will also be considered.

OR

A portfolio of art and design work and written statement. This will be an acceptable means of gaining entry to the course for those applicants who may have relevant employment experience and skills but little or no experience of higher education.

All candidates are required to attend a portfolio interview (or interview via Skype or telephone with online review of work) and entry to the course will be at the discretion of the Course Leader or nominee. In certain circumstances a student may be required to complete a Level 6 Art Unit (60 credits) before joining the MA programme.

In addition:
All applicants should complete the OCA Master's application form, identifying their specialism and specific area of interest and past experience, together with a strong personal statement.

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[1] Regulated by the Higher Education Funding Council for England
[2] This should be the standard University Criteria unless otherwise approved by the Academic Board and include UCAS entry profile for undergraduate courses.

Minimum English language requirements:

Students for whom English is not their first language require an average IELTS score of 6.0 (TOEFL 550 (213)) or equivalent with a minimum achievement of 5.5 for all components.

IT Competence

Prospective MA students are required to complete a self assessment IT test compiled by OCA and sign a statement to demonstrate that they understand the level of IT ability that is required of them. The level required is described as follows:

This programme is conducted centrally online. It is therefore essential that you are adept at communicating and using online tools. Are you a fluent IT User and familiar with using the web, and web-based tools such as Skype and /or Google Hangout, blog interfaces etc with confidence, as well as uploading and downloading documents, images and video files.

Overall methods of assessment[3]	Written exams:	Practical exams:	Coursework:
Course	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%
Overall Learning & Teaching hours[4]	Scheduled:	Independent:	Placement:
Course	10.3%	89.7%	0.0%
	186 hours	1614 hours	0 hours
General level of staff delivering the course[5]	The OCA's current policy is to recruit tutors who have at least an MA level professional practice in a relevant discipline or field and HE level teaching experience. All tutors are encouraged to work towards professional Recognition by the Higher Education Academy. This is a requirement for Programme Leaders and Unit Leaders. All tutors are expected to be professionally active, and engaged with contemporary developments in their field.		
Language of Study	English		
Subject/Qualification Benchmark Statement: QAA Master's Degree Characteristics			
Framework for Higher Education Qualifications (FHEQ)			

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[3] As generated by the most popular unit descriptors and calculated for the overall course stage data.

[4] As generated by the most popular unit descriptors and calculated for the overall course stage data.

[5] Include general information about the experience or status of the staff involved in delivering the course, for example Professor, Course Leader, Senior Lecturer

The course structure

The structure of all OCA undergraduate awards awarded by the University complies with the Academic Regulatory Framework. The Academic Regulatory Framework includes information about the:

- Rules for progression between the stages of a course;
- Consequences of failure for reassessment and exit awards;
- Calculation and classification of awards;

Unit codes and titles	Level	Credit value	Elective/ Core	Most popular student choice of optional elective units or elective options in core units?
Course				
MA7VEQ Visual Enquiry (OFAR7006)	7	60	Core	NA
MA7STP Testing Practice (OFAR7009)	7	60	Core	NA
MA7RAE Resolution and Exhibition (OFAR7010)	7	60	Core	NA

Section B - Course Overview

- Delivered by online distance learning, this MA is the only MA in Fine Art of its kind, certainly in Europe and almost certainly in the world. It offers a unique opportunity for students who would not be able to attend a course on campus to develop high level skills in the field of fine art. Whilst studying from home, students have access to high level training, material, support and feedback from subject experts.
- Because of the nature of the course and OCA's charitable remit, the MA encourages widening participation students. The course specifically seeks to attract people for whom the study of an MA may have been, up to now, an unrealisable goal, because of either financial, geographical, health reasons or other personal circumstances.
- OCA recognises the need for critical thinking and understanding of relevant concepts, and the course encourages highly experimental fine art projects through which students are encouraged to take risks and explore new possibilities. The MA in Fine Art aims, therefore, to firmly situate itself in relation to contemporary discourses in the creative domain.
- The course is studied over 3 years enabling those in work to realistically undertake postgraduate study.
- Students follow structured and individual programmes of study, based on

personal projects, underpinned by study workshops, online seminars and other learning events and developmental projects. Students can work in media relevant to their ideas and mode of expression.

- The course welcomes applications from students from a wide range of visual arts backgrounds who wish to extend and redefine the theoretical and practical base of their understanding of fine art at an advanced level, receiving guidance and critical feedback from subject experts.
- Through the geographically diverse locations within a cohort, students are able to share knowledge of international cultural contexts and opportunities; there is a history of OCA's MA students arranging a touring exhibition across countries of student residence.

Section C - Course Aims

A1   To provide a flexible but structured interdisciplinary context in which students can rigorously pursue their research, and whose outcomes are embodied within the production of a specific and original body of work.

A2   To encourage the development of students' own critical reflection as the basis for developing as independent learners capable of advancing their own skills, knowledge and professional and research practice.

A3   To provide students with the means for establishing and understanding the place of their own work within the context of relevant and contemporary academic and professional situations and debates.

A4   To encourage the development of research strategies that reflect the contemporary context in theoretical discourse and creative practice and form the basis for informed speculation about future directions.

A5   To provide a balance, appropriate to the demands of individual projects, of t aught elements, individual research and collective debate.

A6   To encourage the development of experimental and innovative approaches to Fine Art through a rigorous investigation of contemporary practices and modes of representation.

A7   To develop a professional understanding of the terrain of art practice through the students' own studio work.

A8   To develop and demonstrate self-sufficiency and a clear vision and strategy to enable sustained professional practice beyond the course.

Section D - Course Outcomes

Upon successful completion of the course students are able to:

Knowledge

LO1 research, analyse and apply a high level of practical skill and technical knowledge appropriate to work as independent artists
LO2 work in a creative environment in which they can broaden and contextualise their artistic practice

Understanding

LO3 develop further their innovative, creative and critical thinking abilities, their ability to experiment, imagine and invent, and apply these to artistic and professional life
LO4 apply skills in gathering and communicating ideas using visual, written, and oral means in order to promote their own professional practice

Application

LO5 apply a professional standard of work, which shows intellectual maturity, curatorial decision-making and professional levels of documentation in the presentation of exploratory and preparatory works; and the artistic skills necessary to make, disseminate and publically present own artwork
LO6 exercise independent judgement, self reliance and ability to and work as part of a team
LO7 produce work which is innovative, creative and rigorous in its exploration of concepts.

Students will do this by:

- developing their ability to make imaginative, purposeful and fluid interrelationships between practical and research components;
- developing their knowledge of exploratory practice within an individual and peer interrogative framework;
- providing a critical, theoretical and historical framework, by which they can critically evaluate and challenge their independent arts practice;
- benefiting from the specialist teaching of active artists, researchers and professionals in the creative industries.

Section E - Learning, Teaching and Assessment

It is our aim to develop in MA students a high level of competence in practical, visual, oral and written expression.

Each unit states a range of intended learning and teaching methods used for its delivery; these are commensurate with the requirements of M level work as set out

in the QAA National Qualifications Framework and include:

− Small group work (online)
− Seminars (online)
− Workshops/studio practice
− Keynote lectures (delivered via video on the web)
− Significant independent exploration / studio practice
− E-learning (through the use of websites, email, academic journals and online databases, Personal Development Planning) - at OCA also fora, peer discussion and critiques

Learning and teaching methods are kept under review to ensure that as wide a range of methods as possible is being used in order to enhance opportunities for students learning.

Orientation

The course starts with an online introductory workshop, which is an induction into the course.   Students will meet with OCA management and academic staff and their cohort of students, to foster an immediate sense of community and support. Sessions will include an introduction to the course structure and curriculum rationale, study and research skills, hands on practice in accessing the OCA website with support from OCA IT staff, and an introduction to the first unit of the course. This orientation is essential for students who have been out of study for a long period of time, as well as those who have little experience of higher education. Key elements of the sessions can be recorded and made available for those who cannot attend in person or for later reference.

PDP

PDP (personal development planning) is an intrinsic element of the approach to student learning on this course. Through each of three years of the MA course students have the opportunity to engage in activities that will assist them in identifying their skills and knowledge, reflecting on their achievement and relating this to their career aspirations and analysis of how they can sustain their practice in a way that is personally appropriate. Key elements of this are the early establishment of a personal practice plan that is re-visited throughout the course as well as development of the MA Project Proposal in terms of goal setting, the ongoing use of the MA Journal as a vehicle for critical reflection and the final stage focus on publication and dissemination alongside a future career strategy including identifying career opportunities.

Learning Management

The OCA has its own dedicated website for the delivery of its undergraduate and postgraduate courses. The discreet MA site, houses documents relating to the MA course, such as timetables, learning materials, handbook, study guides, relevant forms, links to online resources, etc; discussion boards for synchronous and asynchronous online seminars/critiques, peer group interaction, Q & A, etc.; audio and video lectures and presentations by leading practitioners in fine art and course tutors; student portfolios, exhibition areas, etc.

Independent learning

At postgraduate level, the student is expected to identify, develop and manage their own MA projects and further develop the skills needed for autonomy of exploration. Through a proactive relationship with their tutors, students will lead their project work and be supported by tutors through consultative and advisory tutorial guidance.

The ability of students to carry out independent research and to manage and appraise the development of their project is a defining attribute of the postgraduate course. The progressive move from staff-directed frameworks to enable the student to interrogate and reflect on their work to autonomous learning is an integral part of the course structure. Teaching and learning practices encourage students to develop the abilities of student-centered or independent learning as thoroughly as possible.

Online learning
On-line teaching and learning support is the principal means of content delivery, but peer support and tutor advice, mentoring and guidance can be given via telephone, video links, and forum exchange. Students can participate in OCA's programme of arranged exhibition visits throughout the year, although this is supplementary to the curriculum.

Online resources, including access to UCA's electronic resources, and communication will facilitate students' learning. Interaction online with fellow students, tutors and OCA staff will foster a sense of community, and synchronous interaction via Google Hangout or other technologies will to some extent replicate the experience of studying together in a group, with the benefits that provides. Students living in different time zones will be able to access certain material such as recorded lectures and asynchronous exchanges at their convenience. Real time tutorials and other synchronous methods of teaching on a one to one basis will be scheduled at times when overseas students would reasonably be expected to be able to log in. At interview stage, overseas students are advised that some cohort sessions are scheduled at times that may be unsocial.

Communications
Email will be the main vehicle for regular one-to-one communication between tutor and student, and student and OCA. Google Hangouts will be utilised for one to one's between the student and the tutor when appropriate, for example when talking about a specific piece of work. This interface is also used for whole cohort sessions such as group critiques or seminars.

Delivery
The course is principally delivered online. Certain materials, such as the learning materials, are downloadable from the discrete MA site, but can also be made available in hard copy on request.

Exchange
Due to the nature of the course (i.e. there is no college for students to attend), there are no exchange agreements with other institutions.

Placement

Due to the nature of the course, (i.e. students studying all over the UK and beyond) there is no offer of a defined period of work placement or a specific work placement unit. However, students may negotiate short periods of absence in order to gain experience in a particular area or travel for the purposes of their research.

Employability & employer engagement
The course will provide lectures and workshops by leading practitioners in fine art and the creative industry to be delivered online during the course of the year. Video interviews with artists will give a flavour of potential paths for the MA students, students will be offered individual tutorials with visiting lecturers who are practising artists, curators or other industry professionals. The integration of professional practice aims to give students appropriate tools for seeking work in the field when they graduate, and the tenor of the course overall is on students learning to present themselves and their work professionally throughout the programme. Students are encouraged to seek exhibition opportunities throughout the duration of the programme and to develop a realistic career plan from their first year of study with a career exit strategy in year three. It is recognised that for some students, sustaining their practice may not include a planned career trajectory and these students are supported to find and recognise support structures and contexts that will enable them to sustain their practice beyond postgraduate study.

Students with Special Needs and learning disabilities
The OCA recognises that a high volume of students within the genre of Fine Art experience a range of learning disabilities. With this in mind, the course provides study and writing skills support within the curriculum for students with dyslexia and other support needs. In particular, because the course is expected to attract people who may have been out of formal education for many years there may be issues regarding academic study, self esteem etc. The introductory workshop will help identify individuals with special needs and referral for needs assessment is encouraged. Adjustments are made for students with disabilities at assessment.

Induction and skills training
It is crucial that students on the course have good web literacy as using online fora, video conferencing and online shared editing tools are a vital part of the course. Each student will be required to successfully complete an IT literacy and competency questionnaire/test prior to starting the course so that if necessary, recommendations for further study can be made. Referrals for skills training will be provided by OCA for those that have special needs.

Assessment Strategies
Assessment has a key role to play as part of a series of strategies that support critical and reflective practice. Assessment points provide clear stages of major review and reference for students and opportunities for guidance on both the quality of work in relation to masters level benchmarks and specific insights into the considerations of individual research projects. It therefore provides an invaluable learning tool that enables students to evaluate their performance and progress in both general and specific terms.

Final unit assessments also ensure that those passing the individual units and achieving the final masters award have achieved standards commensurate with the

nationally defined expectations for academic awards at this level.

The assessment strategy for the MA course is concerned with development in two areas, understanding of bodies of knowledge and the application of a range of advanced skills in the deployment of this knowledge. These bodies of knowledge can be categorised briefly as follows; contexts and concepts (critical, historical, cultural and professional), methodological (research/exploratory methods and processes) and technical. The applied skills that need to be demonstrated by a Masters student are analytical and interpretative process, creative/innovation skills, technical/practical and communication skills, and finally, independence.

The knowledge focus of individual units varies, the three units of the course take the student from more structured and supported learning into independent research and exploration. The development of applied skills is progressive throughout the course structure and so these are evident in all units to a greater or lesser degree. In all cases, knowledge and applied skills, the specific requirements for assessment are articulated in the unit assessment criteria.

The relationship between learning outcomes, assessment criteria and marking descriptors at the end of each year of the course ensures a focus on method and process as appropriate to the overall learning outcomes. Learning outcomes for each unit are stated as integrated outcomes combining both knowledge and the deployment of skills. The assessment criteria for each unit are always set out in accordance with the structure outlined above; as such they break down the demonstration of learning into a series of separate elements.

It should be noted that other forms of assessment will be offered to those students with special needs. Each student's needs will be considered on an individual basis and the requirements for assessment will take their needs into account, as far as is possible.

Costs of additional materials/resources

Transport of Work
For unit MA1 and MA2, students pay for their work to be sent to OCA, and OCA pay for it (where applicable) to be returned. In the case of MA3, students are responsible for costs and arrangements for delivery and return of their work.

Current (inland) postage at the cheapest rate is £11 (up to 5kg) and if a courier is required it is about £40 for a similar weight. Costs will vary according to the size and nature of the student work, and how much can actually be done electronically. Rates for overseas students will be higher.

Additional Costs
The approximate additional materials/resources costs for MA Fine Art are:
MA1: From £150 - £400 depending on students choice of materials and media
MA2: From £150 - £500 depending on students choice of materials and media
MA3: From £250 depending on students choice of materials and media

Students are encouraged to attend the UK exhibition venue to install their work for

the final exhibition and assessment at the culmination of MA3. They are made aware of this when they are made an offer of a place on the course. This may incur travel and courier fees. If this attendance is not possible for reasons of cost (or other legitimate reasons), particularly for overseas students, other methods are put in place to ensure the students' work is appropriately displayed.

Support for Students and their Learning

Students will all receive the following

- MA Fine Art Course Handbook
- OCA/UCA Postgraduate Masters Programme Handbook
- Orientation Sessions or guides, which include IT seminars/tours (this is the critical part of the programme as far as student support is concerned). The induction workshop and early course tutorials are aimed to identify and support students with particular needs, taking account of the expected profile of the target audience i.e. a large proportion of mid life students who may lack study skills and IT skills, and lack confidence about study at this level.
- Unit specification/outline for each unit
- The three mandatory units provide solid grounding in the theory of the subject and research and study skills
- Guidance to develop a personal practice plan with exit strategy compiled in year three
- A set of OCA study Guides, including a guide to Harvard Referencing, Using IT, and Academic Writing Study Guide, a Study Skills Guide for example. These are available, they are standard OCA guides
- Core course tutor team available should a student need specific support that is curriculum or study related. In addition, students are able to access student support services at OCA at any time where specialist staff can help with non curriculum support issues.

Library use
OCA students can access the physical library resources of UCA. OCA will provide on line library and journal access to the international academic library service available via Questia. https://www.questia.com/Index.jsp Endeavours have been made to ensure the books required for each module are commonly available via Amazon and are not excessive in price. This is to avoid significant additional financial cost to the students. Students also have free access to the Bridgeman Education Art Library which is a wide ranging art images resource http://private.bridgemaneducation.com/default.asp. Access to a-n artists' network is recommended, http://www.a-n.co.uk/ (with considerable free resources before a student has to personally subscribe) as is use of the VADs art database http://www.vads.ac.uk/

Contact with tutor
There is a notional 90 hours of group tuition (predominantly online) and a minimum of 6 hours of individual tuition per student (including email exchange, feedback on assignments, face to face contact) throughout the course.

OCA tutors, unlike many tutors at conventional art colleges, are not on full-time

contracts. Clear guidelines will be devised to manage students' expectations.

Section F - Enhancing the Quality of Learning and Teaching

The course is subject to the University's rigorous quality assurance procedures, which involve subject specialist and internal peer review of the course at periodic intervals, normally of 5 years. This process ensures that the course engages with the applicable national Subject Benchmarks and references the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications.

All courses are monitored on an annual basis where consideration is given to:

- External Examiner's Reports
- Key statistics including data on retention and achievement
- Results of the Student Satisfaction Surveys
- Feedback from Student Course Representatives