

**Creative Arts 3**

# **Research**



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Cover image: Emma Powell, *To make a point*, broadcast for wlyb point exhibition, 2013

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# Introduction

*What is research? Research is about looking for something in a focussed and systematic way.*

(Lupton in Noble & Bestley, 2011:7)

In the final level of your Creative Arts degree studies, you'll be following this *Creative Arts 3: Research* course alongside your practical creative investigation in *Creative Arts 3: Body of Work*.

*Creative Arts 3: Research* builds on the foundation of the research and study skills you've already acquired through completing *Creative Arts 1: Creative Arts Today* and the reflective learning you've engaged in up to this point in your subject specialism courses. You now have the opportunity to undertake a self-initiated research project that unifies the two distinct subject areas that you've been developing throughout your studies with OCA.

For creative arts students, understanding your unique area of creative expression is key to unlocking your potential for communicating your creative practice to the outside world. In this course you'll undertake research and study that will enable you to gain comprehensive knowledge of your chosen creative arts field. In consultation with a tutor/supervisor, chosen specifically to best respond to your unique practice, you'll build a theoretical framework to contextualise your creative arts practice and the portfolio you'll develop in *Creative Arts 3: Body of Work*. The course will develop the research, writing and critical skills, presentation skills and critical and contextual awareness necessary for OCA Level 3 (HE Level 6) academic practice.

## Course learning outcomes

On successful completion of this course you'll be able to:

- undertake research and study demonstrating comprehensive knowledge of your combined areas of specialisation and build a theoretical framework for your creative practice
- synthesise and articulate your critical, contextual and conceptual knowledge and understanding into a coherent critique of advanced academic standard
- apply your own criteria of judgement, review, criticise and take responsibility for your own work with minimum guidance
- construct a written argument and practical investigation that informs and is informed by your personal creative arts language.

Bear these learning outcomes in mind as you progress with your writing. Ask your tutor for advice if you're unclear about how to evidence them in your work.

## Assessment requirements

The course assignments will ask you to submit work for tutor feedback. Your assignment submissions should build towards evidencing the learning outcomes listed above. The key pieces that the assessors will grade at the end of the course are your project proposal (around 1,000 words, worth 10% of the assessment for this course) and your essay (around 5,000 words, worth 90%). You should support these final written pieces with evidence of your research, investigation, analysis and organisation of the project and process. You'll see from the following assessment criteria what you will need to demonstrate in your complete submission.

The assessment criteria are key to the assessment process for this course. You should take note of these criteria and consider how the body of work that you produce throughout this course will help you to attain these. Note that these criteria are different from the criteria used to assess your practical creative arts work.

On completion of each assignment, and before you send your assignment to your tutor, test yourself against the criteria – in other words, do a self-assessment, and see how you think you would do. Note down your findings for each assignment you've completed in your learning log, detailing all your perceived strengths and weaknesses, taking into account the criteria every step of the way. This will be helpful for your tutor to see, as well as helping you to prepare for assessment.

## Assessment criteria points

The four assessment criteria are evenly weighted; each accounts for 25% of your final grade.

1. **Demonstration of subject-based knowledge and understanding** – Broad and comparative understanding of subject content, knowledge of the appropriate historical, intellectual, cultural or institutional contexts.
2. **Demonstration of research skills** – Information retrieval and organisation; use of IT to assist research; ability to evaluate IT sources; the ability to design and carry out a research project, locate and evaluate evidence from a wide range of primary and secondary sources (visual, oral, aural or textual).
3. **Demonstration of critical and evaluation skills** – Engagement with concepts, values and debates; evidence of analysis, reflection, critical thinking, synthesis, interpretation in relation to relevant issues and enquiries.
4. **Communication** – The ability to communicate ideas and knowledge in written and spoken form, including presentation skills.

## Creative arts at Level 3

The structure and relationship between the three Level 3 creative arts courses is different from Levels 1 and 2.

The courses you'll study at Level 3 are:

*Creative Arts 3: Body of Work* (40 credits)

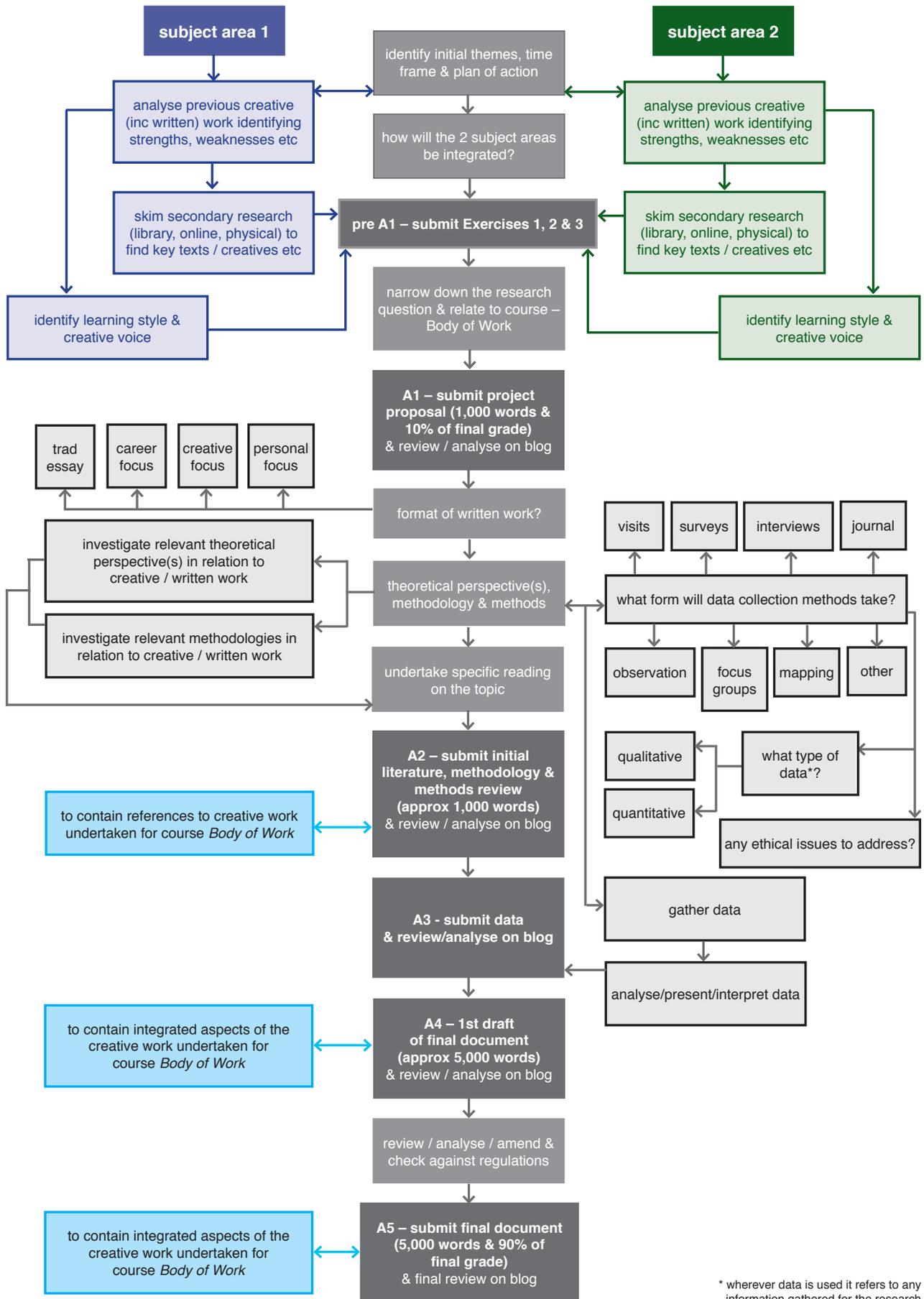
*Creative Arts 3: Research* (40 credits)

*Creative Arts 3: Sustaining Your Practice* (40 credits)

You should work on the *Body of Work* and *Research* courses concurrently, to allow the predominantly creative work demanded by *Body of Work* to inform the predominantly research-based and written work of the *Research* course, and vice versa. The third and final course of the Creative Arts degree, *Creative Arts 3: Sustaining Your Practice*, will be directly informed by the work you generate during these first two courses.

Look carefully at the visual summary of the course presented on the next page. You should also read through the entire course guide before you start work so that you know what to expect.

Creative Arts Visual Research Course – Summary



\* wherever data is used it refers to any information gathered for the research

In this course you will produce:

- a 5,000-word essay (90% of your grade), with a supporting body of creative work
- a 1,000-word project proposal, submitted as part of Assignment One (10% of your grade).

You'll have two tutors – one for each course. Tutors will only provide formal feedback on their own course but, in the light of the close relationship between the two courses, it may be helpful to keep both tutors updated on your progress with the Level 3 programme as a whole. Send your written work for this course to your *Body of Work* tutor as well as your *Research* tutor, so that he/she is aware of the focus and progress of your research. You'll continue working with one of these tutors when you progress to *Sustaining Your Practice*.

You'll determine your own area of research based on the two creative subject areas that you've already studied. You may already have a clear research interest and an idea of what you'd like to explore in this course. Or you may not have thought about it yet. Either way, this course will help you build upon your previous creative and written projects by integrating aspects of your two creative subject areas to produce a coherent, creative and personal end result.

It's up to you to decide the content and direction of your work as long as it stems from your two creative subject areas and links to your theme of significant topical importance generated in *Body of Work*. Provided that you discuss your ideas with your tutor beforehand, you're free to present your final written outcome in any creative, but appropriate, manner. It might be a traditional essay, a piece of creative writing or a career-, creative process- or personally-focused report. The choice is yours. You might also wish to present your creative outcomes from *Body of Work* and the investigatory writing from this course as part of an integrated piece of creative work such as an installation, a musical score, a website, a children's book or a graphic novel. This is fine so long as you also present the text, with links to the imagery, as a printed document that meets OCA's basic academic regulations.

## Preparing for initial tutor meeting

As with your other Level 3 courses it is essential that you work closely with your tutor and demonstrate a professional approach to your independent learning. You'll be expected to set and meet deadlines and targets and to plan your workload realistically alongside any other commitments. As soon as you start this course it is important that you set up a dialogue with your tutor.

In the first instance email them to:

- find out how they would like you to submit your work
- set a submission date for Exercises 1–3.

They might request your work to be emailed, put on your blog or physically posted – or a mix of all three. It is essential that you know before you start what their requirements are.

You'll submit Exercises 1–3 before completing Assignment One. This is so that your tutor can check that you're heading in the right direction. Once your tutor has looked at the work you've produced for these exercises, they will give you brief feedback via Skype, Google Chat or phone.

Before you start the course, we suggest you take a look at this useful guide to research for creative arts students. You'll find this useful throughout this course: [Link 1](#). You'll find a list of links at the end of this course guide. They are listed separately like this for ease of updating.

### **Expectations at Level 3 (HE Level 6)**

The course is designed to take around 400 hours to complete. At this level of study, though, you may find that you have to go over and above the suggested time to achieve the outcomes you're aiming for. The amount of time you spend may also depend on your confidence as a writer, so do seek help and guidance when you need it from your tutor.

Progressing from Level 2 to Level 3 will be a challenge and you'll be expected to raise the level of the work you produce and demonstrate professionalism in what you do. We expect you to demonstrate a thoroughness and in-depth knowledge and ability and be able to apply this new learning at an advanced level. With the support of your tutor, you'll be setting your own research proposal so you'll define your own direction, processes and the analysis that you intend to produce over the duration of the course. At this level, though, there's a particular emphasis on building and taking ownership of your own work as well as the choice of working methods.

You'll be responsible for managing your own deadlines. Your tutor will be working with a range of students from different levels so it's important that you stick to agreed hand-in dates for work. Your tutor can't guarantee to get feedback to you within two weeks if your work is late. If you think you're likely to miss an agreed deadline, let your tutor know as soon as possible so that you can negotiate a new hand-in date; don't leave it to the last minute to let your tutor know there's a problem.

### **Referencing**

As you'll know from previous OCA courses, you must reference all the material you've used in your written work using the Harvard referencing system, including images and online sources. You'll find a study guide to academic referencing on the student website.

Your referencing should be clear and consistent throughout your writing. If you have any questions, ask your tutor at the outset. As you write your notes, be particularly careful to separate your own thinking and writing from material gleaned from other sources, which you'll need to reference. Write down the full reference to your sources as you go along; this is much easier than trying to chase long-forgotten references later!

You should now be ready to start work on Part One.



# Introduction

*Once you start writing, stuff will come to you all the time. You'll see things, hear things, think of things, and read things that strike you as being potentially useful...*

(Hallinan, 2006–14: Part 2:2).

Are you the sort of person who is eager to begin a new project or do you come up with as many displacement activities as possible to delay your start? We all have different ways of tackling a new project and dealing with any of the difficulties that we might face along the way.

Part One will help you to get started and to narrow down your research question in relation to your creative work (for *Body of Work*) and the written work required for this course. You'll then summarise these findings to produce Assignment One, your initial project proposal. As mentioned in the introduction, you should submit Exercises 1–3 to your tutor as soon as you've finished them so you can get some brief feedback to check that you're heading in the right direction.

## Exercise 1 Initial ideas

This first exercise is about identifying your area of interest and your research question in relation to your two subject areas. It will help you to identify your personal creative voice and your strengths and weaknesses in relation to the creative and written work you've already undertaken at OCA Levels 1 and 2.

### 1.1 Identify your initial ideas

Start by writing down any initial ideas you have for this course. Have you already identified creative links between your two subject areas? If so, what are they? If not, then start thinking about the possible links during this exercise.

If you don't have any starting points, answer the following questions:

- Is there a specific aspect of the creative arts that you're interested in?
- Are there any particular artists, designers, illustrators, musicians, performers, writers, art or design movements that you're inspired by?

### 1.2 Analyse your previous projects

Look at your six strongest pieces of work from Levels 1 and 2 and analyse them for potential starting points and your creative voice. Choose three from each subject area; at least one should be a piece of writing.

Identify what you could do to extend each project and itemise areas of potential interest from each one.

Now look at each project and each subject area and think carefully about your personal creative voice. You might already have a clear idea about what your personal creative voice is, or you might not.

Use the following questions as starting points and record your answers:

- Do you have a different personal creative voice in each of your subject areas or is it the same?
- What makes your work different from other people's?
- How do you produce your work?
- Do you have a specific style?
- Do you predominantly use certain media?
- Do you tend to tackle certain topics?
- What are the most interesting aspects that you can take from each subject area?
- How can you integrate these aspects?

You can continue this part of the exercise with a few additional questions of your own.

### **1.3 Identify your strengths and weaknesses**

To help you make a start, take a look at Emma Powell's ideas for mapping, mind-mapping and concept mapping on pinterst:

[Link 2](#)

[Link 3](#)

[Link 4](#)

In this part of the exercise, you'll analyse your strengths and weaknesses using three different techniques:

- SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats)
- mind-mapping
- concept mapping.

## SWOT

Take your three pieces of work from one of your subject areas and analyse them, and your general working methods, using a SWOT diagram system. This can be hand-drawn or digital – whichever you prefer.

Repeat this with the three projects from your second subject area. Can you identify points of commonality across the diagrams?

In a SWOT diagram you identify your Strengths and potential Opportunities on one side of the diagram and your Weaknesses and potential Threats on the other side. You'll notice that by doing this all the positives are on the left and all the negatives are on the right. Some of your weaknesses and threats might relate specifically back to your strengths and opportunities. In this instance the strengths and opportunities can be seen as antidotes to the weaknesses and threats.

### strengths

- I am hardworking
- I try to hit deadlines
- I love printmaking
- I am visually experimental
- I am interested in ethics / sustainability

### weaknesses

- I take on too much
- I can get stressed
- I can get carried away with this
- I don't leave enough time at the end
- This might affect the quality of materials

### opportunities

- I know some practitioners
- I would like to exhibit my work
- I would like to undertake interviews

### threats

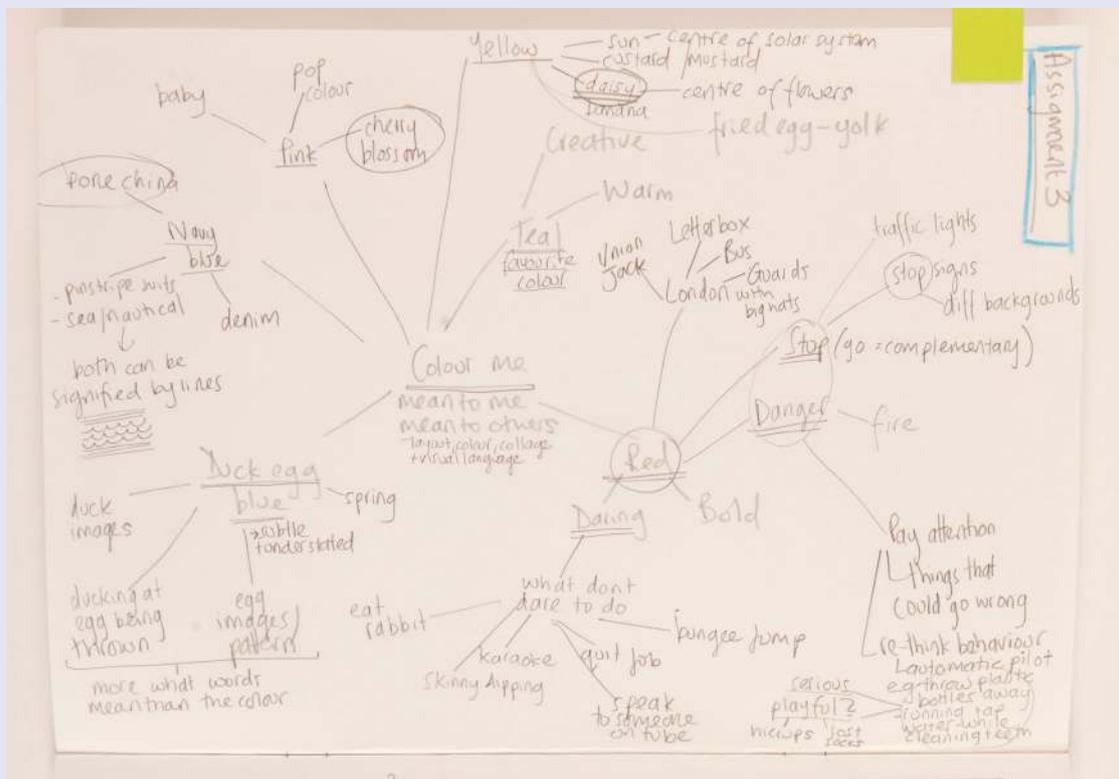
- Self doubt – they might not be interested
- Self doubt – is my work good enough?
- Do I have enough time and money?

## Mind-mapping

You might already be familiar with mind-mapping from earlier courses. In a mind map, you generally have a starting theme or question in the centre of the diagram and a number of options leading out from this. These then continue to branch outwards to the edges of the paper. The idea is to generate as many different diverse threads as possible, all stemming from the initial starting point.

Create a series of mind maps using any relevant pieces of information you gathered about your interests in Exercise 1. Extend these starting points in as many different directions as possible. A successful mind map should lead you to lateral areas ripe for investigation rather than predictable and literal solutions.

Your mind maps might cover aspects from each subject area separately or you might be ready to start amalgamating them.



OCA student Jane Dugdale, Mind map

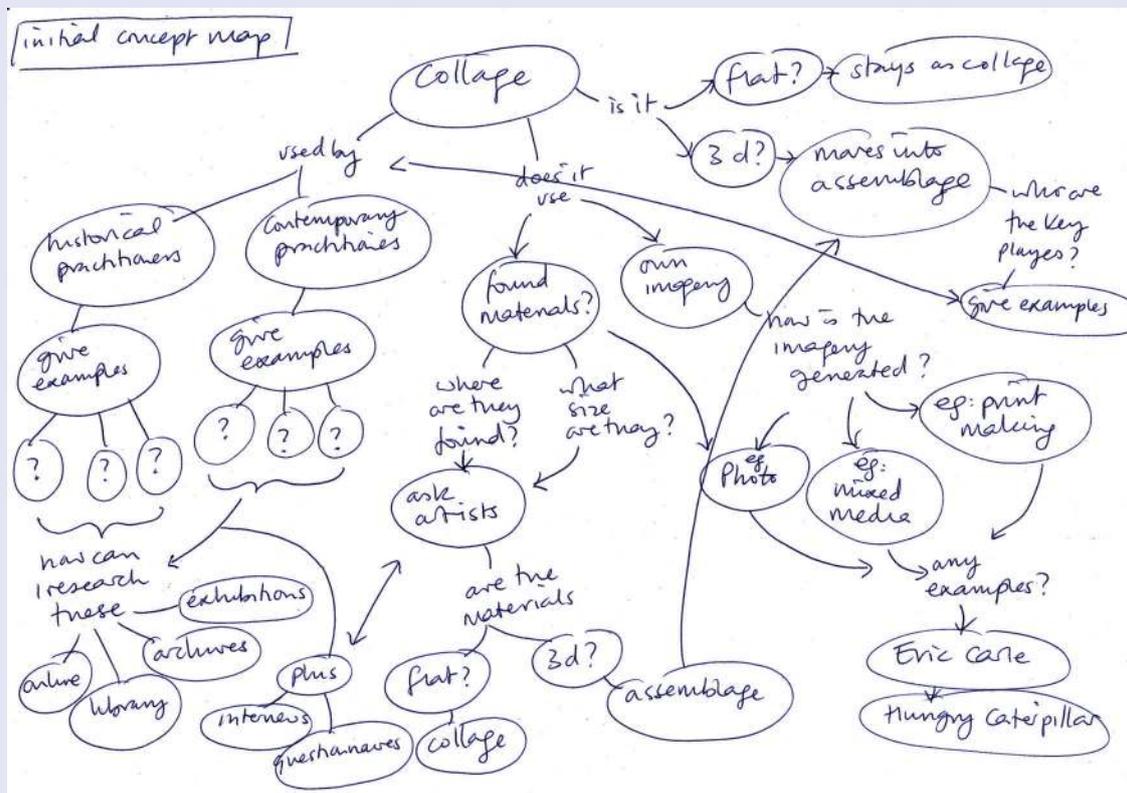
## Concept mapping

A concept map differs in its structure from a mind map. It generally starts at the top and spills downwards, exploring how different areas are connected to each other, or not. Each avenue explored in the concept map should explore a specific link or relationship. More general concepts will be closer to the top and more specific ones will be nearer the bottom.

A successful concept map doesn't just explore concepts and links in a downwards and linear fashion; it also creates links across the diagram. These are often more fruitful and may produce unexpected areas that you can creatively explore in your work.

Create one, or more, concept maps to explore a concept (or series of concepts) from your mind-mapping exercise. This should be a concept that integrates your two subject areas and that you think may be an interesting starting point for your research question.

Here is an initial concept map on the broad theme of collage.



### 1.4 Identify a specific area of interest

Look at all your avenues of exploration from the previous activities and the work you've started to generate in *Body of Work*. You should have created a rich range of potential starting points. Select those you think have the greatest potential. Explain, in just a few words, why you've made this selection.

## Exercise 2 Getting started

The good news is that if you've completed Exercise 1, you have already started!

### 2.1 Getting organised

Now that you've started to generate some work you need to think about how you're going to organise everything. This is essential so that you can refer back to any of your notes or visuals if you need to use them in your final document.

You'll need to consider how to organise your written information and creative research. This might include notes from books, exhibitions, talks or recitals, and quotes. Your organisation might take the form of a series of folders, sketchbooks, journals or boxes. Whatever you choose, use a system that will work for you. Emma Powell used the box in the photo below to start organising all the books she needed to start writing this course. This soon overflowed and she moved on to a series of cardboard box files instead!



Twyla Tharp, an American choreographer, mentions the importance of boxes in her interesting book *The Creative Habit* (2006:79-88):

*Before you can think out of the box, you have to start with a box...The box is the raw index of your preparation. It is the repository of your creative potential, but it is not that potential realized*

This is an important distinction to make as the box is just an initial holding pen for all your potential starting points and ongoing developments. These will help guide you to the final outcome. Tharp also sees the box as providing evidence – ‘proof that you have prepared well’ (ibid:90).

Tharp covers all sorts of other aspects about the creative process and has many tips and exercises to get your creative juices flowing. She also explores distractions and fears and how to deal with them. It is well worth hunting a copy down if you are able to; for copyright reasons, we are unable to include sections from it on the OCA website.

The author Timothy Hallinan also gathers potentially relevant items along the way:  
*You DO NOT want to lose any of this material. I set up what I call “the bucket” when I start to write a book. Actually, it’s two buckets: a cardboard box and a folder on my computer. Anything I can clip out, or anything that came to me while I was driving, let’s say, and I made a note of, goes into the box. Anything I think of while I’m working goes into the computer folder. You have no idea whether this material will eventually be useful, but it’s much better to have it at hand.*

(Hallinan, 2006–14: Part 2:2).

He also suggests the following:

*Carry a notebook all the time. When you get an idea, write it down. Next time you sit down to write, look at those notes, figure out how to use them, or mark them for later use and drop them into the bucket – the box, or notebook, or computer file — whatever the catchall is for your book.*

(ibid: Part 5:3).

## 2.2 Map out a time schedule

Find yourself a calendar or diary and start to map out your initial time schedule. Your computer should have a calendar app if you’d rather work with a digital version. Pencil in your assignment hand-in points and your final deadline. Factor in extra time for inevitable last-minute delays such as unexpected printing issues or illness. At this early stage this will be a guideline only; you’ll probably need to adjust it as you work through the course.

## 2.3 Identify your learning style and writing habits

*Creativity is a habit, and the best creativity is a result of good work habits.*

(Tharp, 2003:7).

Start by answering the following questions:

- How do you kick-start the process of writing?
- Do you have any strategies for writer's block?
- When you're writing an essay, what is your method and/or where do you start first?

You can see a range of previously filled-in questionnaires (by students and practitioners) on the OCA website.

There are two for you to take a look at now on the next pages.

Please can you help me with some research I am doing for a document for the OCA? Your answers may appear in the Visual Communications Student Handbook and/or on the OCA blog. By submitting this document you agreeing to the use of your information in this way. Thank you for your help.

If I have sent this to you digitally please can you handwrite your answers and email me a scan or photo.

Dr Emma Powell, OCA Visual Communications Tutor Jan 2015  
emmapowell@oca-uk.com

**Name:** Melanie Bush  
(that you are happy to appear in the public domain – could just be initials)

**Profession:** Retired lecturer + Book Artist (sometimes!)

**How do you kick start the process of writing (an essay / research or funding proposal / research document etc)?**

- ~~read existing good examples~~
- read around subject - take notes - select good quotes
- start structure by writing (working) chapter titles (+ diagrams / flow charts)

**Do you have any strategies for writer's block?**

- move to another section
- keep reading

**When you are writing an essay / research or funding proposal / research document what is your method and/or where do you start first?**

- write small bits in various sections
- describe selected quotes to sections to write around
- build up sections
- review as go along to maybe amalgamate sections or change order.
- after building up - then review + edit / cut if necessary

Please can you help me with some research I am doing for a document for the OCA? Your answers may appear in the Visual Communications Student Handbook and/or on the OCA blog. By submitting this document you agreeing to the use of your information in this way. Thank you for your help.

If I have sent this to you digitally please can you handwrite your answers and email me a scan or photo.

Dr Emma Powell, OCA Visual Communications Tutor Jan 2015  
emmapowell@oca-uk.com

**Name:** JWP  
(that you are happy to appear in the public domain – could just be initials)

**Profession:** LECTURER

**How do you kick start the process of writing (an essay / research or funding proposal / research document etc)?**

SEARCHES, JOURNALS,  
MY OWN CACHE OF COLLECTED ARTICLES } READ  
(IN EMAIL) } LOTS  
BOOK CHAPTERS.

**Do you have any strategies for writer's block?**

DEADLINE - I DO IT TO MEET THE TIMESKLE  
AND IF IT'S OPEN-ENDED I  
STRUGGLE TO SPEND TIME TO  
COMPLETE THINGS.

**When you are writing an essay / research or funding proposal / research document what is your method and/or where do you start first?**

- OUTLINE A STRUCTURE
- BREAK DOWN KEY COMPONENTS INTO DISCRETE PARTS
- MAP LINKS / RELATIONSHIPS
- MAP SOURCES TO STRUCTURE / PARTS

Now start to think about your learning style and writing habits. Have you identified certain habits that make starting written work easier? Do you need to adjust them or rethink a new writing habit? Habits can help or hinder us, so spend a bit of time analysing what yours are and whether they are negative or positive.

See [Link 5](#).

If you experience writer's block, take author Neil Gaiman's advice and move on to another part of the project.

*In my experience, writer's block is very real. You'll be writing something and suddenly it stops. The characters stop talking. You've been happily just transcribing everything they've been saying, and suddenly they sit down and shut up. Suddenly, you are in deep trouble. It does happen. It's very real. It's not something (in my experience anyway) that happens on everything at the same time. It's just that sometimes a project needs a little time to think, a little time to breathe. So what I tend to do when that happens is I always have two or three other things that I'm doing at the same time.*

(Gaiman, quoted in White, 1999)

#### 2.4 Start getting creative ideas down

Refer back to your earlier mind maps and concept map(s). Highlight elements that you think have creative potential and are worth exploring further. Use these as starting points to generate some initial creative ideas in your sketchbook. Don't worry about whether they are good ideas at this stage – just get everything down and investigate these starting points in lots of different directions. These ideas should be relevant both to this course and to *Body of Work*.

Concentrate on the bigger picture at this stage; don't let yourself get bogged down in detail.

*For the first month or so of writing a book I try to get the creative side of the mind to get it down there on the page. Later on I get the analytical side to come along and chop the work into decent lengths, edit it and knock it into the right kind of shape. Everyone finds their own way of doing things.*

(Pratchett, quoted in White, 2000)

If your mind works that way, you could create your own creative process diagram, drawing, image or illustration – whatever is relevant to your proposed body of work – showing the different general stages that you expect your project to go through. There are some examples at [Link 6](#).

Danielle Krysa's *Creative Block* (2014) is a really informative book, full of interviews with all sorts of artists. In her interviews she specifically asks the artists for their tips about overcoming creative block and there is also a series of activities to do.

Here are some top tips:

Canadian mixed-media artist Jessica Bell: 'I have to have a lot of space and quiet in my head to think my best thoughts' (p.19).

American sculptor Adam Wallace: 'I just switch to a different thing I like to do when I'm stuck on one thing' (p. 34).

American painter Lisa Golightly: 'I give myself permission to just make for the sake of making without any thought to the outcome...' (p.44).

German photographer Matthias Heiderich: 'For me, a creative block is a sign of overthinking. When my brain feels blocked, I try to distract it by doing something completely different – usually that's riding my bike or swimming' (p. 56).

British illustrator Ashley Percival: 'I love to go out walking to refresh my mind. I also find that visiting art galleries and museums is very interesting and inspiring' (p. 67).

### **Exercise 3 Identify resources**

This exercise is about identifying initial secondary sources – key creatives, key texts, resources, gatekeepers (see 3.5) – across both subject areas.

#### **3.1 Online search**

Start your resources search by accessing information online. This might involve using search engines, booksellers or publishers for general starting points. At this stage you might be researching each subject area separately or you might be ready to start looking at shared resources. Your first port of call should be the OCA student website. Take some time to re-familiarise yourself with the resources available. Note particularly the new online library of scanned texts (see 'Library articles' in the Resources section of the website).

Once you have a wide net of starting points, start to narrow this down to what you think might be the key, more important, resources. Make full reference notes about relevant websites and texts as you go along so that you don't have to go back and try and find resources again later. If you haven't already done so, visit the student website for full information about academic referencing.

#### **3.2 Local library search/access to inter-library loans**

If you can, move on to a library resources search. Start to gather together potential key texts and any other resources.

Your local library may be able to access inter-library loans for you and some libraries have texts online, especially academic journals. You might also be able to register for reader access at your nearest university library. There should also be a national library in your home country where you can access specialist texts if you register as a reader. In the UK this is the British Library – see [Link 7](#).

#### **3.3 Physical search**

Your online search should have identified some relevant exhibitions, practitioners, design groups, artist collaborations, performances, installations, recitals, readings or conferences relevant to your two subject areas. Explore these resources further and select those you think will be key to your research. What is your plan for how you might access these?

#### **3.4 Skim-read initial key texts /resources**

Start to skim-read all the resources you've collected and identify key areas of interest. Don't read in too much depth at this stage; target your specific reading later on when it will be more useful and relevant. The purpose of skim-reading is to get just enough information to decide if the resource is relevant and worth keeping for more in-depth study later.

You'll also need to identify any resource gaps at this stage and think about how you might remedy these.

### **3.5 Research key gatekeepers, organisations and creative practitioners**

The final activity in this exercise is to identify the key gatekeepers, organisations and creative practitioners relevant to your area of research. You might have already started to do this in your previous searches. A gatekeeper is an individual or organisation that can grant you access to relevant people or other resources. If you can find appropriate gatekeepers you'll be able to spread your research further and more efficiently.

Identify relevant gatekeepers, organisations and creative practitioners that might be key to your research and think about how you'll approach them to ask for their help.

### **Send work to your tutor**

Now you have completed Exercises 1–3, compile them into a single document (in Word or as a PDF). You should have agreed a hand-in date with your tutor, so you can now send it to them by whatever means they have requested. Your tutor will then give you some brief feedback via Skype, Google Chat or phone to reassure you that you are on track and ready to carry on with Part One. You'll get your full feedback at the end of Assignment One.

## Reviewing your creative work

You've got two subject specialisms and two Level 3 courses (for now at least) and somehow you need to find a way to bring them all together as a coherent body of work. Think about the creative work you're doing for *Body of Work* first.

1. Look back over the work you've just submitted to your tutor, consider their feedback and implement any changes that would improve the work. Now look at the work you've created so far for *Body of Work* and consider how it can relate to the work you'll create in this course and vice versa. Identify a variety of ways in which the creative and written projects can interlink. Record your thoughts and explore a range of options. Will your creative work drive your written work or will it be the other way round? It doesn't matter which it is, provided you are working to your strengths from each subject area.
2. Now think about resources. Can any of the resources you've identified in Exercise 3 help you with your creative work? Make a plan of action for accessing these resources. Will you need to visit a specific location, collection, exhibition, practitioner, design group, artist collaboration, performance, installation, recital, reading or conference? Can you access a record of these resources online?
3. Now identify what you'd like to achieve from your creative work in *Body of Work* and think how you could use your research project to help you achieve some of these goals.

Write down answers to the following questions:

I want to develop skills in ...

I want to consolidate skills in ...

I want to produce ...

I want to promote my work to ...

I want to refine ...

I want to explore ...

I want to prove that ...

I want to involve ...

I want to integrate ...

Add any other questions you think might be relevant. You might be interested to read how two established practitioners responded to these questions. (You'll find some further examples in the Appendix to this course guide.)



## Case study 1: Emma Powell

In 2009 OCA tutor Emma Powell completed a practice-led PhD in rejectamenta (found objects). This research explores how contemporary creative practitioners, including Emma, select, locate and collate rejectamenta (found objects) in their creative practice. Here are her answers in relation to the questions you've been asked to answer.

- I wanted to develop skills using a wide range of found objects as starting points for a body of visual and written work.
- I wanted to consolidate skills in environmentally-friendly printmaking, book-making and collage.
- I wanted to produce an extensive body of experimental work that presented the use of rejectamenta to an audience.
- I wanted to promote my work to a wider community – not just an academic audience.
- I wanted to refine my working methods.
- I wanted to explore data collection methods.
- I wanted to prove that using rejectamenta can produce aesthetically pleasing outcomes.
- I wanted to involve contemporary practitioners as direct participants in the study.
- I wanted to integrate my visual work with my written investigation



Emma Powell, *Rejectamenta*



## Case study 2: Dr Jackie Batey

Jackie Batey's research deals with 'our uncomfortable relationship with new technologies, confidence tricksters, advertising and anxiety. Relationship between literature and illustration.' Jackie is Course Leader for the MA in Illustration at the University of Portsmouth. Her practice-based PhD (2003) was entitled 'The Safe Cigarette: Visual Strategies of Reassurance in American Advertisements for Cigarettes, 1945–1964' and involved the integration of the written work with a series of artist's books.

View Jackie's full body of PhD work at [Link 8](#).

Here are Jackie's answers to the questions (in email correspondence with the course author 16–18 June 2015):

- I wanted to develop my practice within artist's books. I was also looking to unify my research themes around advertising and its negative effects (through visual humour and satire). I saw a PhD as a way to clearly identify time and space for myself by being able to focus on a sustained period of study that resolved into artwork and writing.
- I wanted to consolidate skills in narrative illustration, parody and book-making. Creating narratives that responded to human anxieties using humour and hyperbole.
- I wanted to produce an extended written piece that 'positioned' my artwork within a context. I wanted to produce a body of work consisting of artist's books. I wanted elements that could feed into teaching and learning.
- I wanted to promote my work to special collections (artist's books), curators, galleries, academics and my peers.
- I wanted to refine my ability to express my inspirations and methodologies textually. I wanted to refine my creative thought processes and visual communication skills.
- I wanted to explore advertising, con artists, the human condition, brain-washing, satire and drawing.
- I wanted to prove humour is our only defence against the world.
- I wanted to involve no-one; this felt like a path I needed to walk alone, although my supervisor was perfect and I still meet him for a chat.
- I wanted to integrate illustration, Photoshop, hand-drawn text, digital drawing, photography, humour and book-binding.

## Narrowing down your research question

Now that you've reviewed your practical creative work, you need to narrow down your research question in relation to the theme of significant topical importance you've identified for *Body of Work*. Once again, you have three tasks to do:

1. Review what you've done on this course so far and identify the main areas of interest that could integrate your two subject areas with the written work and the theme of significant topical importance identified for *Body of Work*. If it helps, print out everything you've done, read through it and highlight interesting elements that grab your attention as you go along. Assemble all these potential starting points in one place.
2. Take each of these starting points in turn and form it into a series of research questions that relate to the theme of significant topical importance identified for *Body of Work*. Once you've generated a selection of research questions, see if you can narrow it down to just one or two.
3. Make a full resources list based on your research question.

If you're not sure how to write a research question, start with your theme of significant topical importance. For example, you might have selected the themes of 'photography and collage'. At the moment these themes are very broad and unfocused and lack a specific direction. Refine them over a series of research questions that become increasingly specific, but still of interest to you.

This might go something like this:

### ***Version 1 – I want to investigate photography and collage***

The first problem with this statement is that there is no question to answer. Secondly, the themes of photography and collage have not been qualified and so are very far-reaching. As the word limit is 5,000 it would be difficult to cover such broad ground in so few words.

### ***Version 2 – How has the history of photography and collage influenced the work of artists?***

This is a good starting point as there is now a question and the themes have been qualified ('history' rather than contemporary practice), but it is still rather broad as there is no time frame. The term 'artists' is also extremely wide. How can you narrow these areas down further? Can you link photography and collage together somehow?

### ***Version 3 – How has the historical photomontage work of Hannah Höch influenced the work of contemporary artists?***

This version is getting somewhere as it has narrowed down the historical research and it has also identified that it is not artists in general that are of interest, only contemporary ones. However, the question could still be more specific and it could also relate to your own practice if that is relevant.

**Version 4 – How has the historical photomontage work of Hannah Höch influenced my own practice and the work of contemporary artists Peter Blake and Richard Hamilton?**

Now the question has identified four specific areas of interest. These are Hannah Höch, you, Peter Blake and Richard Hamilton. This means that you can now target your research in a more focused and time-efficient fashion. This final version of the research question is much more achievable given the word count of 5,000 words.



OCA Illustration student Penny Rowe (collage and ink in sketchbook)

# Assignment one

Before you start Assignment One, please make sure your tutor knows when you plan to submit it.

Submit an initial project proposal (worth 10% of your final grade) summarising your creative direction (to be implemented in *Body of Work*) and its relationship to your proposed research question. Write around 1,000 words.

This should be a summary of your work for Part One, to include:

- your specific research question
- a clear indication of the creative direction you'll implement in *Body of Work* (relating to the theme of significant topical importance) and how this will relate to the research question
- your key texts, resources, key creatives and gatekeepers – and how you will access them
- your time scale and plan of campaign
- a clear indication of your strengths and weaknesses in relation to your previous creative (including written) work and how you'll tackle these if they are a threat to your progress, e.g. time-keeping issues

You should also complete a review and analysis of your progress on your blog and/or learning log.

Once you've completed all the elements for Assignment One, save them as Word documents or as PDF files.

Please don't email large files to your tutor. PDFs are a good format as you can reduce the size of the files. Provided your hand-in date has been pre-booked with your tutor, and you have met the deadline, your tutor will aim to give you your feedback within two weeks.

## Reflection

Check your work against the assessment criteria listed in the introduction to this course guide before you send it to your tutor and make some notes about how well you believe your work meets each criterion.

## Reworking your assignment

Following feedback from your tutor, you may wish to rework some of your assignment. If you do this, make sure you reflect on what you've done and why as this will demonstrate responsiveness and learning to the course assessors.