



Open  
College  
of the Arts



**UNIVERSITY FOR THE CREATIVE ARTS**

**PROGRAMME SPECIFICATION FOR:**

**BA (HONS) GARDEN DESIGN**

**PROGRAMME SPECIFICATION [ACADEMIC YEAR 2021/22]**

*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 <sup>1</sup>		
Teaching Body	OCA - Open College of Arts		
Final Award Title and Type	BA (Hons)		
Course Title	Garden Design		
Course Location and Length	Campus: OCA / Open and Flexible Learning	Length: Maximum time allowed to complete the programme is 12 years	
Mode of Study	Full-time		Part-time ✓
Period of Validation	2019/20 to 2023/24		
Name of Professional, Statutory or Regulatory Body	n/a		
Type of Accreditation	n/a		
Accreditation due for renewal	n/a		
<b>Entry criteria and requirements<sup>2</sup></b>			
<p>Stage 1 courses are open access, so no prior qualifications are required. In order to progress to Stage 2, students must have gained 120 credits at Stage 1, through study or by Accreditation of Prior Learning.</p> <p>. In addition to prior qualifications and learning accreditation, OCA specifies three general requirements for students to be admitted to its degree programmes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• English language competency;</li> <li>• access to a desktop computer or laptop with internet access;</li> <li>• the ability to easily manage a range of basic functions through ICT (information and communications technology)</li> </ul> <p>Full details on each of these requirements can be found in the OCA Student Regulations in the section Admission Requirements</p> <p>Students will be required, as part of a programme of study, to develop further IT skills in specific applications. Therefore, it is recommended that students also have access to Photoshop and InDesign, which are available at pay-monthly reduced rates with student ID. Free alternatives to these are available. Computer-aided design software, such as VectorWorks, AutoCAD and Sketchup, is freely available to students. It will be possible to complete the course making minimal use of computer-aided design, but it is highly recommended to use these programmes which make the design process easier and more efficient. In order to operate design software</p>			

<sup>1</sup> Regulated by the Office for Students

<sup>2</sup> This should be the standard University Criteria unless otherwise approved by the Academic Board and include UCAS entry profile for undergraduate courses.

effectively, it is necessary to have a computer (mac or Windows) with an i5 or i7 processor with 8GB of RAM memory and a graphics card capable of displaying resolutions at 1366×768 or higher. Programmes will run most smoothly if you have an i7 dual or quad processor running 16GB of RAM memory and graphics card capable of displaying resolutions of 1920×1080 or higher. Follow links for specific hardware recommendations for [Photoshop](#) and [AutoCAD](#).

Students must also be aware of network etiquette and security considerations when using email and the internet. There is a section in OCA's Student Regulations about online etiquette. In addition there is a Data Protection and Confidentiality Policy appended to the Student Regulations. OCA takes these issues seriously. Data protection rules forms part of OCA's Conditions of Enrolment. In addition to the information located in our student documentation OCA is developing short videos to explain netiquette and online security.

An unaccredited OCA Foundation Certificate is available for students who need to develop their technical and visual awareness skills before embarking on degree study.

\*This requirement may be waived, on rare occasions, by the Head of Learner Support if negotiated prior to the start of the course. Typically, exemptions are only given to students with specific disabilities or to those studying in prison.

#### *Specific requirements*

In addition to meeting the admission requirements for all courses, students should ensure they understand the nature of the challenges and requirements of the course they are enrolling on, as outlined on the OCA website.

#### *Disabled students*

Applications from students with disabilities are considered using the same criteria and principles as all other applicants. All students with a disability are encouraged to indicate this on their application form in order that advice can be offered on the facilities and services available. Prospective students with a disability are encouraged to discuss their requirements with the Head of Learner Support.

#### *Maximum period of registration*

The maximum period of registration for the course is 12 years.

*UCAS entry profile: n/a*

Overall methods of assessment <sup>3</sup>	Written exams:	Practical exams:	Coursework:
Stage 1	0.0%	0.0%	100%
Stage 2	0.0%	0.0%	100%
Stage 3	0.0%	0.0%	100%

<sup>3</sup> As generated by the unit descriptors and calculated for the overall course stage data.

Overall Learning & Teaching hours <sup>4</sup>	Scheduled:	Independent:	Placement:
Stage 1	17.5%	82.5%	0.0%
	210 hours	990 hours	0 hours
Stage 2	15.0%	85.0%	0.0%
	180 hours	1020 hours	0 hours
Stage 3	12.5%	87.5%	0.0%
	150 hours	1050 hours	0 hours
General level of staff delivering the course <sup>5</sup>	OCA requires Tutors and Programme Leaders (PLs) to have knowledge of their subject area, proven communication skills, experience of delivering learning and teaching, and a first degree or postgraduate or equivalent, and/or substantial professional experience to support their roles. Tutors and PLs are encouraged to obtain professional recognition by the Higher Education Academy at an appropriate level. All Tutors engage with an induction process, an annual 'Tutor Team Meeting' and 1-2-1s, and are provided with guidance on Formative Feedback, Group Work, and Summative Assessment		
Language of Study	English		
Subject/Qualification Benchmark Statement: QAA Subject Benchmarks in Landscape Architecture and Art & Design			
Framework for Higher Education Qualifications (FHEQ)			

### The course structure

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

### Appendix 1 – Table of Units for students registering on the BA (Hons) Garden Design from the academic year 2021/22 onwards

Unit codes and titles	Level	Credit value	Elective/ Core	Most popular student choice of optional elective units or	Order of units

<sup>4</sup> As generated by the unit descriptors and calculated for the overall course stage data. Expressed as a percentage of total learning hours per stage.

<sup>5</sup> Include general information about the experience or status of the staff involved in delivering the course, for example Professor, Course Leader, Senior Lecturer.

				<b>elective options in core units?</b>	
<b>Year/Stage 1</b>					
GD4PAP – Garden Design 1.1: Garden Design Past and Present (OGAD4156)	4	40	Core	n/a	1
GD4FCV – Garden Design 1.2: Finding Your Creative Voice (OGAD4157)	4	40	Core	n/a	2
GD4BDL – Garden Design 1.3: Bringing Your Design to Life – From Concept to Presentation (OGAD4158)	4	40	Core	n/a	3
<b>Year/Stage 2</b>					
GD5SBG – Garden Design 2.1: Sustainable and Biodiverse Gardens (OGAD5149)	5	40	Core	n/a	4
GD5GHS– Garden Design 2.2: Gardens for a Healthy, Happy Society (OGAD5150)	5	40	Core	n/a	5
GD5LSG – Garden Design 2.3: Large-scale Gardens and Engaging with Other Disciplines (OGAD5151)	5	40	Core	n/a	6
<b>Year/Stage 3</b>					
GD6CRR – Garden Design 3.1: Critical Research (OGAD6157)	6	40	Core	n/a	7

GD6FMP – Garden Design 3.2: Major Project (OGAD6158)	6	40	Core	n/a	8
GD6SYP – Garden Design 3.3: Sustaining Your Practice (OGAD6159)	6	40	Core	n/a	9

**Appendix 2 – Table of Units for students registering on the BA (Hons)  
Garden Design from the academic year 2020/21 onwards**

<b>Unit codes and titles</b>	<b>Level</b>	<b>Credit value</b>	<b>Elective/ Core</b>	<b>Most popular student choice of optional elective units or elective options in core units?</b>
<b>Year/Stage 1</b>				
GD4PAP – Garden Design 1: Garden Design Past and Present (OGAD4153)	1 (HE 4)	40	Core	n/a
GD4FCV – Garden Design 1: Finding Your Creative Voice (OGAD4154)	1 (HE 4)	40	Core	n/a
GD4BDL – Garden Design 1: Bringing Your Design to Life – From Concept to Presentation (OGAD4155)	1 (HE 4)	40	Core	n/a
<b>Year/Stage 2</b>				
GD5SBG – Garden Design 2: Sustainable and Biodiverse Gardens (OGAD5146)	2 (HE 5)	40	Core	n/a
GD5GHS– Garden Design 2: Gardens for a Healthy, Happy	2 (HE 5)	40	Core	n/a

Society (OGAD5147)				
GD5LSG – Garden Design 2: Large-scale Gardens and Engaging with Other Disciplines (OGAD5148)	2 (HE 5)	40	Core	n/a
<b>Year/Stage 3</b>				
GD6CRR – Garden Design 3: Critical Research (OGAD6154)	3 (HE 6)	40	Core	n/a
GD6FMP – Garden Design 3: Final Major Project (OGAD6155)	3 (HE 6)	40	Core	n/a
GD6SYP – Garden Design 3: Sustaining Your Practice (OGAD6156)	3 (HE 6)	40	Core	n/a

### Section B - Course Overview

The BA (Hons) Garden Design is an undergraduate degree that builds upon previous study (such as A levels, diploma or foundation courses) and work experience to provide a wide range of transferable academic and professional skills, as well as thorough knowledge and understanding of the subject of garden design. This includes learning the principles and theories of spatial design, while developing the creative and practical skills necessary to pursue a successful career as a designer. It encourages students to propose new and innovative designs and allow the freedom to develop their own individual design identities, using techniques in both digital software & hand rendering/physical creation.

This unique course utilises digital technology to offer both time flexibility through the distance model and opportunities for teamwork and peer learning using chat rooms, collaborative tools and field trips and site projects. It presents exciting opportunities to explore and challenge the boundaries of existing methods of communication using traditional and emerging technologies. The course caters to a wide range of students, as there is a lot of flexibility in how you develop your skills throughout the programme. There are opportunities throughout Stages 2 and 3 to focus on a range of different options, such as professional skills, competency with design software, garden history and conservation, garden photography or sculpture. Therefore, the programme offers opportunities and challenges for students who are primarily focused on starting a career as a professional designer and those who wish to study from a personal or academic interest in the topic.

The programme has a modern perspective and incorporates up-to-date research within the field. It introduces students to the study of design within a societal context, considering garden history, design philosophies, and current interests around sustainability, ecosystems services and appropriate design, i.e. considering a wide range of user groups. This will help students to develop awareness of our relationship to gardens, in order to create significant and meaningful investigations. The programme is designed to be of interest to both those who want to obtain the

skills for a career in garden design, and for those whose primary aim is to learn more about the subject from an academic perspective.

In the beginning, Stage 1 units focus on delivering a broad base of knowledge in the field. These units lead students through the design process to enable them to engage with and complete each element of a garden design project: the first introduces the key concepts and history of garden design, the second develops the student's individual voice as a designer, and the third covers how to complete a garden design project to a professional standard. Threaded throughout these units is an introduction to planting design and garden botany.

Students will also be introduced to academic processes such as research and use of secondary sources. They will develop their abilities through a series of creative exercises, evaluation, reflection and synthesis of ideas, practical output and contextual studies.

Students will learn by 'doing' and collect practical and problem-solving skills through research, model-making, drawing, self-reflection, and experimentation with materials. Students will be encouraged to develop their own visual identity and start to forge their own design pathway based on their interests. Upon completing Stage 1, students will have developed theoretical and hands on skills covering all stages required to develop a design from receiving a brief and the initial survey through to tendering for work and the render of a completed design, including construction plan, planting plan and purchase information, all presented as a professional portfolio.

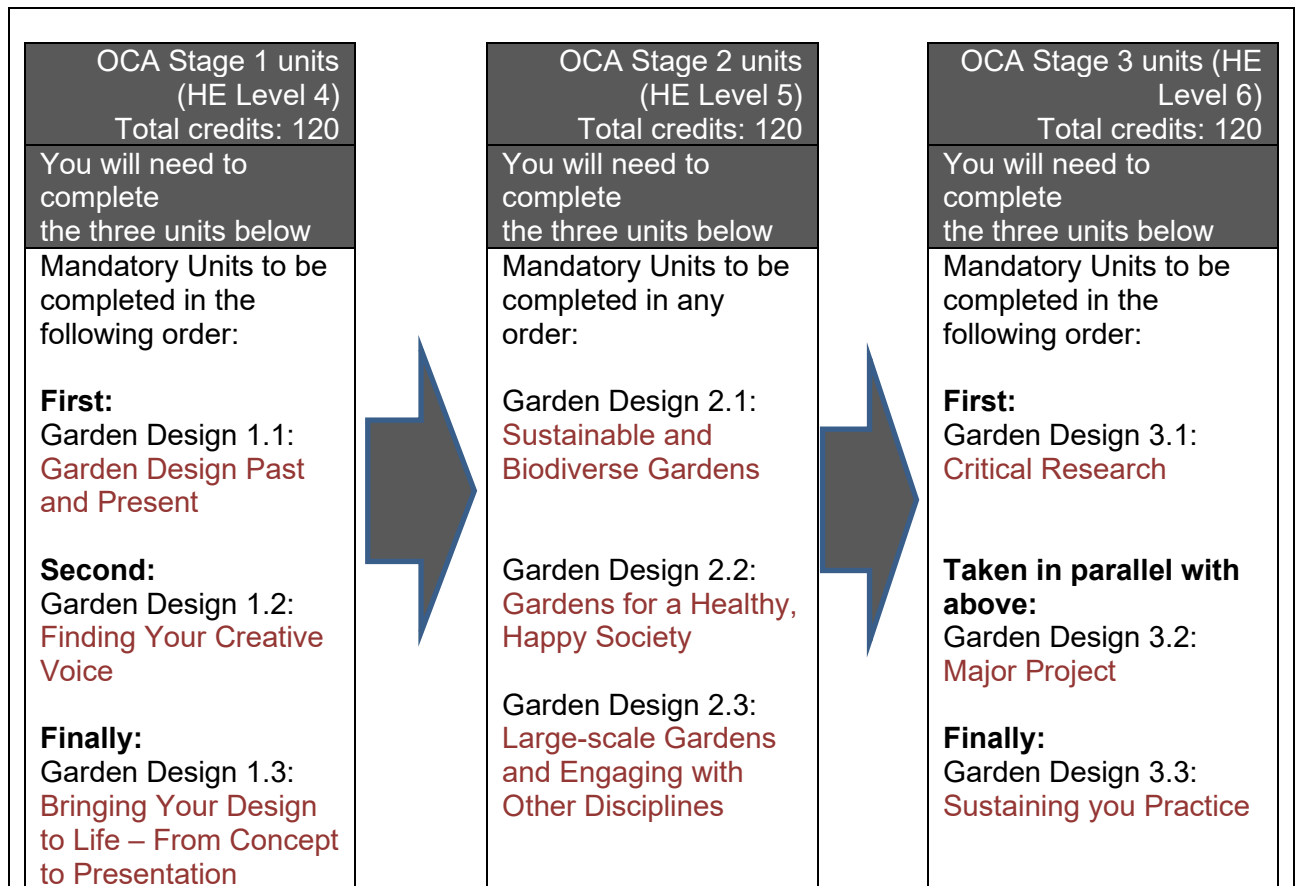
Progressing onto Stage 2, the units 'Sustainable and Biodiverse Gardens', 'Gardens for a Healthy, Happy Society' and 'Design Past and Present' will introduce more specialist topics within garden design and provide a chance to carry out deeper research into issues relevant to sustainability and the wider society, chosen by the student. The units will provide students with the opportunity to apply intermediate-level skills, develop self-direction and project management through a negotiated brief. Students who have already begun to work as professional garden designers will find the content a valuable way to keep up-to-date and deepen their understanding of key practical and theoretical issues while working in practice. Larger-scale sites will also be introduced, giving students the opportunity to design at different spatial resolutions.

Within each of the three Stage 2 units, students will have choice over which skills and knowledge they want to develop further and will choose from a range of skills-building options. Specialist topics of enquiry are also chosen, meaning that every student's final output for each unit will be determined by their personal research and interests. For example, within 'Gardens for a Healthy, Happy Society', students may choose to design for a specific user group, resulting in final designs based around diverse themes such as play equipment or mindfulness principles.

Finally, Stage 3 is a mostly self-navigated programme and consists of three units, which are connected through intention, research and output. This final stage of the programme is designed to give students the opportunity to focus on a specific interest in garden design, building on a chosen specialisation from earlier units. This gives an opportunity to evidence advanced level design skills, the ability to apply a mature level of criticality and demonstrate professionalism in a garden design specialism. The final unit 'Sustaining your Practice' develops professional and business skills, and the student engages with the world in a professional design capacity, becoming a confident independent practitioner. The final Stage will have an emphasis on creativity, professionalism and evaluation.

## **The Student Journey**





### Section C - Course Aims

- A1. To widen access to education in garden design through open and flexible learning.
- A2. To provide a stimulating programme based on high quality study program and tutor support.
- A3. To develop students' creative capacities and their ability to synthesise, reflect, respond, apply and simulate findings.
- A4. To ensure that students develop a high-level ability in 2D & 3D skills, both analogue and digital media to successfully communicate designs that are professionally and academically recognised.
- A5. To develop students' critical understanding of the theoretical and conceptual issues central to the practice of garden design and the social, historical and cultural context in which it is practiced.
- A6. To foster high-level ethical and professional standards and an awareness of the responsibilities and developments surrounding garden design.
- A7. To develop self-directed learners capable of applying academic and practical skills in a chosen area of garden design appropriate to employment, further study or life-long learning.
- A8. To provide an environment in which the student has the chance to develop their view of the world and their interaction with it both visually and intellectually.

### Section D - Course Outcomes

Upon successful completion of the course students are able to:

#### Knowledge & Understanding

- LO1. Demonstrate proficiency in a comprehensive range of 2D and 3D design and technical skills (digital and analogue).
- LO2. Have detailed knowledge of spatial design strategies and the ability to critique, reflect and contextualise the strategies of application.
- LO3. Demonstrate an awareness of the wider social and cultural contexts that influence and shape garden design and how we use space.
- LO4. Critically and objectively evaluate own work (and the work of others).

#### Application

- LO5. Demonstrate a breadth of inventiveness, ideas generation and techniques in the creation of garden designs, exploring and realising a range of different cultural, social and environmental issues.
- LO6. Produce convincing and challenging garden designs that communicate your intention, demonstrating a high level of visual and technical accomplishment whilst adhering to garden design conventions.
- LO7. Use abstract concepts to inform the design process and integrate them using critical research and contextualisation to realise garden designs.
- LO8. Articulate own personal voice and evidence a developed and purposeful visual identity.
- LO9. Engage in appropriate professional practices such as marketing, self-presentation and negotiation skills.
- LO10. Operate in professional contexts that are relevant to your practice, requiring the application of specific interpersonal, professional and business skills within an ethical framework.

### **Section E - Learning, Teaching and Assessment**

#### Learning and Teaching Strategy

The Open College of the Arts (OCA) strategic vision is “to be at the forefront of student-led creative arts education through open, enhanced, & supported distance learning, for an evolving society”. OCA is a non-profit educational charity, whose purpose is to widen participation in arts education through open flexible distance and online learning.

OCA uses a learning design process to consider the content, activities, and support needed to deliver course aims. This flexible approach recognises and supports a diverse range of student experiences, ambitions, and needs. In line with OCA’s core values, it also considers how to encourage more open, empowering, engaging, social, sustainable and evolving approaches to learning, teaching, and assessment.

As distance learners, students will need to work independently and to develop appropriate research and study skills. An induction programme and ‘Getting Started’ introductions are in place to support students to do this, and to help establish relationships with peers and tutors. Ongoing study skills support is available through #weareoca, OCA’s blog content, and other cross-curriculum study skills resources.

OCA's virtual learning environment, OCA Learn, provides a platform for content, activities, and support for each unit. A dedicated Degree Space is in place to foster course wide dialogue and peer support through forum activities and shared resources. OCA has a responsibility to ensure all learning environments, content, and communication are as accessible as possible for individuals who have sensory, cognitive, neurological, physical, or other disabilities, and to provide an inclusive learning environment that acknowledges the diversity of our students' experiences. OCA's Student Engagement Strategy places a key focus on accessibility, with provision for designing learning materials with enhanced operability for mobile devices, which conform to all appropriate accessibility standards.

Course content is delivered through a range of learning materials, including written, video, and interactive media. These materials provide introductions and framing of subject related content, technical guidance, case studies, and other appropriate information. Materials are primarily accessed through OCA Learn, as well as #weareoca, which provides opportunities for current tutor and student-led content and debate.

Accompanying activities, such as exercises, research tasks, and assignments, encourage students to work independently and flexibly by selecting, testing, and interpreting relevant research, and applying understanding of critical thinking and creativity. Through these activities, students will begin to identify, develop and manage their own projects and document their progress through a learning log, or similar format. Learning logs are provided through OCA Spaces.

Students are expected to have a basic grasp of any software required for their course and to learn more complex usage as necessary as they progress. OCA provides students with G Drive online storage which includes word processing, presentation, drawing, and mind mapping tools. While OCA does not provide a help desk service to students for software, learning activities provide structured context for software learning at staged points throughout the course, and forums provide opportunities for peer support.

Learning is supported by tutors who provide timely, well-grounded and constructive formative feedback that aims to stretch and challenge learners at staged points within the unit. In parallel, tutor and student-led learning takes place through online group work. Group work offers opportunities to discuss and shape ideas, and share and support approaches to learning within video, webinar, study events, and/or forum activities and support. Critically reflecting on work through self-evaluation provides a valuable way for students to observe and learn from peers, to develop increasingly professional personal and graduate skills, and to develop a deepening recognition of subject boundaries. Students are encouraged to do this through their learning log, reflective assessment presentations, and by reflecting on formative feedback.

Student Services provide study planning and pastoral support for any student who requests it. This is available personally via telephone, online, or within student forums, or more generally through additional resources, signposted through OCA Learn and/or #weareoca.

Students will engage with a range of academic literature throughout the course, supported through library access and seminars. Essential and recommended

reading lists have been selected for their academic currency, and from authors and practitioners across a range of viewpoints, ethnicities, identities, and cultures. All reading lists can be accessed through the digital library services and eBooks. Additional online texts and journals are also available via UCA's online library. Students are supported through OCA's Link Librarian via OCA Learn and #weareoca content and debate.

As students progress, their research will become more self-directed. Independent research and projects will be undertaken alongside a consideration of any ethical issues. Guidance, resources, and support for any external and/or collaborative projects are available through the Enterprise Hub and in discussion with tutors.

In addition to OCA's core support, OCA's Student Association (OCASA) provides opportunities for students to physically engage with cross-curriculum Study Events, asynchronous Virtual Study Events, or to become involved in wider student discussions or other events.

### Assessment Strategy

OCA's assessment strategy is based on an assessment for learning model which emphasises assessment *for* learning rather than assessment *of* learning. Therefore, assessment is seen as an integrated and meaningful part of the learning journey. Assessment outcomes encourage learners to critically reflect on their progress and to articulate ideas and outcomes effectively through appropriate presentation formats.

Assessment criteria focus on the extent to which knowledge of relevant concepts, practices, theories, and contexts are demonstrated, the level of understanding demonstrated through the testing and application of knowledge, and the degree to which knowledge and understanding are demonstrated through the application of technical, communication, personal, transferable, and graduate skills. To help articulate these, assessment criteria are presented at each level through a set of range statements.

Summative assessment can take place online or at a physical assessment event. Students will submit work in line with course assessment guidelines, and will be assessed through group marking overseen by the Programme Leader. Quality assurance is provided through moderation of marks, internal verification of the assessment process, parity checks to ensure grades are consistent across OCA, plagiarism checks, and scrutiny by External Examiners. Students will be provided with summative marks and feedback at the end of each unit.

### Costs of additional materials/resources

#### Software and digital equipment

As part of some units, students are required to use specialist applications. Students are responsible for sourcing and, where necessary, purchasing any additional software specified. Where possible, open or freeware equivalents will be discussed alongside industry standard options. Students are eligible for any student discounts on computer equipment and software.

#### Materials and resources

Students are responsible for sourcing and purchasing the materials, resources, and any additional equipment used in the production of their work. These costs will differ from student to student, depending on each student's area of focus.

#### Transportation of work

Students are responsible for any postage costs of work to/from tutors or OCA for formative feedback and/or assessment. OCA will charge students for any excess postage payable on work submitted for formal assessment which exceeds the maximum permitted weight. Alternatively, students can submit work digitally for free.

#### Learner Support Scheme

In line with OCA's Access and Participation Plan, the College continues to invest in schemes to improve engagement into creative arts from those from low socio-economic backgrounds through a bursary fund.

For further details on your specific course costs, please visit [www.oca.ac.uk](http://www.oca.ac.uk).

## Section F - Employability

OCA recognises that its current student body holds a broad range of employment and enterprise aspirations. Many students have established careers, see their studies as a change in direction, and for an increasing number of younger students, as a first step into a creative career. As distance learners, OCA students are located across the UK and internationally and consequently have differing levels of resources and opportunity. In order to provide meaningful and consistent educational experiences and outcomes for all of these students, OCA encourages students to interpret the concept of 'enterprise' in ways that are personally relevant to their particular aspirations, social contexts, and locations.

As a charity, OCA supports a curriculum that has a positive impact upon people's lives and society as a whole, and encourages engagement with enterprise that has a clear societal impact. This means undertaking external projects that can have a wider social benefit, and developing practices that are socially aware and environmentally sustainable.

To encourage this, learning materials and activities provides a framework for students to begin to define, establish and sustain their practices at a variety of scales and ambitions, and encourage students to think about freelance, employment, social enterprises, or entrepreneurship outcomes. A focus on research and ethics helps to frame these activities within wider social contexts. Students are also encouraged to undertake collaborative projects with other students, and to work on competition briefs or other external opportunities.

A key benefit of distance learning is in allowing self-sustaining ways of developing a creative practice to build over time, and by balancing study/work/life commitments. Students can establish studio spaces and build resources throughout their studies, to feel prepared and equipped at the end of their course.

Therefore, enterprise related themes are embedded through the course to encourage this sustainable approach.

An Enterprise Hub will provide a central online resource to support self-directed student activities. The Hub will provide guidance and resources on key enterprise themes, such as establishing and undertaking external projects/work-related learning, working collaboratively, establishing business or enterprise opportunities such as external exhibitions, business plans, or social enterprises, and connecting to appropriate professional networks.

OCA will use the Enterprise Hub to help establish relationships with other organisations, businesses, and funding opportunities. These in turn will provide the potential for business incubators, mentoring options, internship opportunities and enable access to seed-funding for students.

## **Section G - 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 Representative