

OCA Enterprise and Creative Practices Policy 2026

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1. Policy Summary

- 1.1. This policy sets out the ways in which enterprise competencies are supported at the OCA through enterprise activities, work-based learning, the Enterprise Hub, careers advice, and by enabling students to sustain a creative practice.

2. Scope

2.1. What does this policy cover?

- The policy applies to all OCA students on undergraduate and postgraduate degrees, or other provision where there are defined enterprise or creative practice elements. The policy information and guidance for academic and/or other staff who support and enable work-based learning, or are engaged in other enterprise or creative practice activities for students.

3. General Principles

- 3.1. OCA recognises that the creative sector enriches society and provides value to the economy. By offering meaningful learning experiences that enable students to engage with enterprise activities, students can actively contribute to society, the creative sector, achieve their career aspirations, and sustain their creative practices longer term.
- 3.2. Enterprise and creative practice activities provide a framework to support the development of resourcefulness, entrepreneurial skills, capacity to establish new and innovative enterprises, and generic skills essential for successful creative practitioners. These generic skills can include personal innovation, risk-taking, independent enquiry, communication, negotiation, creating and sustaining interpersonal relationships, management, presentation, organisational, self-management, critical engagement, team working, social, and research skills.
- 3.3. Distance learning students are located across the UK and internationally, and may have differing resources and access to external opportunities. In order to provide meaningful and consistent outcomes for all students, OCA encourages students to interpret any enterprise and creative practice concepts and activities in ways that are relevant, practical, and achievable to their particular locations and resources. There is an emphasis on self-directed learning, to provide

the flexibility for students to adapt their activities to their circumstances, and to meet the required learning outcomes. A key benefit of distance learning is in allowing self-sustaining ways of developing a creative practice to build over time. Through this model students can gradually establish studio spaces, build resources, and networks throughout their studies.

- 3.4. OCA is a non-profit educational charity, whose purpose is to widen participation in arts education through open flexible distance and online learning. As such, OCA recognises that the student body holds a broad range of creative practice, employment and enterprise aspirations. Many students already have established careers, may see their studies as a change in career direction, as a first step into their chosen creative practice, or are intrinsically motivated to engage with their chosen creative field. OCA will provide resources and opportunities to support a range of aspirations, and the flexibility for students to tailor these to meet their individual goals and needs through a range of work-based learning activities
- 3.5. OCA defines work-based learning (WBL) as activities and/or experiences that contribute to the development of a student's understanding of the professional contexts, competencies, practices, expectations and opportunities related to their chosen area of creative practice. WBL activities may include:
- Simulated tutor-led projects that model realistic expectations, constraints, and outcomes appropriate to the creative discipline, and at a level consistent with the expected learning outcomes.
 - Client led projects with actual expectations, constraints, and outcomes, that allow students to develop appropriate competencies within a pre-defined professional and/or simulated context.
 - Live student competitions, open calls, or other general opportunities that are appropriate to the creative discipline and at a level consistent with the expected learning outcomes.
 - Self-directed student activities that can demonstrate engagement with appropriate enterprise competencies.
- 3.6. WBL (including the policies, processes, procedures and related information) does not include opportunities for - or periods of - Work experience, internship and paid/voluntary work placement.

- 3.7. OCA are mindful of the diverse range of learning motivations, contexts, locations and external commitments of our students. In response to these factors, WBL is promoted and supported as enhancement to core studies. Whilst every effort will be made to ensure equality of access and parity of experience, there will be instances where individual students may need to discuss alternative approaches to developing professional knowledge, skills and competencies. In these cases, programme level discussions will identify work-based research opportunities that aim to provide an equivalent experience.
- 3.8. The level of engagement with enterprise and creative practice activities will depend on the stage of study, and the specific aims of the unit being undertaken. At Stage One students will be introduced to aspects of enterprise and creative practices through related content and activities, with some opportunity for self-directed project work that could include aspects of work-related learning. At Stage Two students will apply their knowledge, skills, and understanding by undertaking self-directed work-based learning activities, competition briefs, and/or client-led briefs. At Stage Three study there is a greater emphasis and expectation of work-related learning within units, and for students to foster an increasingly autonomous and professional approach to their creative practice. Students at Stage Three will be expected to be engaged in some appropriate enterprise or creative practice activity, or equivalent. The concept of self-directed learning is introduced and scaffolded at Stage One, with clear guidance on what is expected, and what latitude students have to interpret activities. Students will be supported in undertaking work-based learning through formative feedback as part of their units, and with guidance and additional support through the Enterprise Hub and course content.

4. Enterprise Competencies

- 4.1. OCA sees creative practice, careers, employability and enterprise skills as a set of capabilities that raise student aspirations, and enhance their contribution to society. These capabilities are set out as a set of enterprise behaviours, attributes, and competencies that can be applied to practical situations and undertakings.
- **Enterprise behaviours** can include – identifying and creating self-directed opportunities, communicating and listening, being able to change and adapt, taking responsibility and showing initiative, connecting and working with others, personal effectiveness and being reflective, and managing risk taking.

- **Enterprise attributes** can include being – receptive and adaptive to change proactive, curious, engaged, self-reliant, adaptable, determined, and resilient.
- **Enterprise competencies** can include – creative problem solving, identifying opportunities, strategic thinking, negotiation, communicating, influencing, leadership and financial, business and digital literacy.

5. Work-based learning activities

- 5.1. Where appropriate, OCA courses will include prompts to undertake work-based learning activities to help students develop their enterprise competencies. These mandatory activities aim to offer accessible and flexible opportunities for students to work within the professional expectations of their creative discipline.
- 5.2. Work-based learning activities will encourage students to identify and engage with meaningful and practical opportunities relevant to them and their OCA studies. As such, these activities will vary, but may include running exhibitions or events, publishing or broadcasting work, undertaking commissions or offering creative services, undertaking conversations with practitioners, studio or site visits, or other activities appropriate to their discipline, curriculum requirements, and their level of study.
- 5.3. Where appropriate, OCA will work with external organisations, employers, creative practitioners, and/or professional bodies to develop relevant and rewarding work-based learning activities for students. These may be presented to students as self-directed activities, competition briefs, client-led briefs, and/or other external opportunities. The appropriateness of these activities will be judged by taking into account their practical, educational, ethical, sustainable, and financial implications.
- 5.4. Learning materials will clearly set out the expectation of all work-based learning, as defined through the curriculum, and developed through the Learning Design Framework. These materials will provide a framework for students to define, establish, and undertake activities at a variety of scales, ambitions, and locations that are relevant and meaningful to sustaining their individual creative practices. Activities will provide accessible alternatives, and allow flexibility for students to adapt activities to meet their needs and resources. Work-based learning

materials and activities will be informed by external expertise, current professional practices, and student feedback. Where accessibility issues do arise for individual students, OCA will consider appropriate reasonable adjustments, as set out in the [Student Accessibility Policy](#), and review whether this should lead to further anticipatory changes.

- 5.5. Where work-based learning activities are an element of core study, the health and safety and ethical aspects of the activity will be set out in the learning materials. These will provide an overview of how to approach the activity safely, setting out any likely risks and how they can be mitigated against. The learning materials will set out the expectations of the activity, including any additional requirements to gain permission or consent. Where appropriate, course content will support students in undertaking any necessary risk assessments, and prompt consideration of any ethical dimensions of the undertaking.
- 5.6. Students will be responsible for identifying, establishing, and managing any self-directed work-based learning. It is the responsibility of the student to undertake risk assessments and ethical considerations as required, including gaining any other forms of permission or consent. Guidance and support for undertaking risk assessments are available on the Enterprise Hub. Students should use the Ethics process to consider any external aspects to their projects, to identify risks, and offer appropriate mitigations. These ethical considerations are a way to ensure activities can be undertaken safely for students and others, and with care and honesty. Students will be required to outline any planned work-based learning activities in advance. Feedback will be provided on the appropriateness of planned activities, prior to their commencement through the academic support associated with the core teaching of the unit.
- 5.7. If self-directed activities, require engagement with external organisations, such as galleries, companies, or other institutions, students must abide by the policies procedures and guidelines as outlined by the provider of the activity. In the UK the primary responsibility for the management of the health and safety of the student, when they are engaged with any external work-based learning activities, lies with the external organisation or institution where the activity takes place. Legal liabilities however do vary from country to country and risk assessments of any external work related learning being undertaken outside of the UK should identify specific liabilities

that may affect the parties' ability to fulfil their roles and responsibilities as set out in this Policy.

- 5.8. Work-based learning activities will be assessed in line with OCA's Assessment Policy. Learning logs and reflective presentation elements will provide opportunities for learners to evidence and reflect upon the enterprise competencies gained. Students should only use the secure online journal, OCA Spaces, for learning log and assessment purposes, in order to avoid putting any commercially sensitive information in the public realm.

6. The Enterprise Hub (eHub)

- 6.1. The Enterprise Hub is an OCA Learn resource available to undergraduate and postgraduate level students. It provides guidance and support for students undertaking work-based learning, and to help them move forward with career or other goals. The resources are designed to help develop enterprise competencies and to frame the attributes and behaviours students may need to apply.
- 6.2. The eHub aims to prioritise the lived experience of creative practitioners, academic staff, and students through guidance, case studies, and opportunities informed by external expertise. The eHub features:
- **People in practice** – a range of interviews from current practitioners, including student narratives published through [WeAreOCA](#), OCA's blog.
 - **Exhibitions & publications** – practical guidance on getting work into the world
 - **Networks, audiences and collaborations** – provides guidance and links to connect with others and explores ways of collaborating effectively
 - **Opportunities** – links to funding, residencies and other relevant opportunities
 - **Online promotion** – helps to consider an online presence
 - **Writing CVs, Bios, and Manifestos** – guidance on writing about you and your work
 - **Business plans** – guidance on developing a business plan

- **Ethical considerations** – to support with any external projects or research

- 6.3. The eHub is a resource that references a range of employment and freelance practices across the Creative Industries. It does not provide definitive information, but focuses on the lived experiences of creative practitioners. The eHub will signpost recognised organisations across the Creative Industries who are better placed to provide information around any employment, legal, or statutory requirements related to enterprise activities.
- 6.4. Students will be signposted to the eHub through course materials and OCA Learn. Students at HE Level 5, 6, and 7 will be automatically enrolled onto the eHub, to support a general expectation of work-based learning at these levels. Students at other levels will be given the opportunity to auto-enrol to support any self-directed activity, or where there are defined work-based learning activities as part of their course.
- 6.5. Levels of active engagement with the eHub will vary, depending on the types of activities set as part of their core study, and the degree to which students want to extend their enterprise and creative practice outcomes. The expectations of such engagement will be set out in Unit Descriptors and interpreted through course activities. Any activities with an enterprise element will be designed to offer a level of flexibility, so students can adapt the activity and outcomes to their needs, resources, location, and any other variables.
- 6.6. The eHub is overseen by the Learning & Teaching Committee, and managed by an Enterprise Working Group, with input from students, academic and other staff. Responses to student enquiries and/or support needs, will be dealt with by appropriate academic teams. The eHub will be reviewed annually to ensure currency, relevance, and a reasonable representation of creative disciplines, in consultation with academic staff, students, and external expertise.
- 6.7. If students wish to comment on the eHub they can do so via enterprise@oca.ac.uk or through their Programme Leader.

7. Careers Advice

- 7.1. Careers advice aims to visualise, nurture, and facilitate individual creative practices, in light of creative sector, employment, or practice-related expectations. Careers advice will be provided through a mix of

individual tutor support, discipline specific learning materials and/or activities, and Enterprise Hub resources.

- 7.2. OCA staff are not trained as Career Advisors, rather they are practitioners with lived experience in various areas of the creative industries.

8. Sustaining a practice

- 8.1. OCA is committed to enabling students to establish and sustain their creative practices during, and beyond, their studies. Students are encouraged to make use of OCA platforms to promote and celebrate creative practice activities and outcomes. After graduation, students are encouraged to keep in touch with OCA and academic teams, and may be invited to talk about their creative practice through the continued use of WeAreOCA blog, social media, or at a Department Level as a visiting speaker.

9. Glossary of terms

- 9.1. **Creative Industries** - The UK [Government Department for Culture, Media, and Sport](#) (DCMS) has defined the creative industries as “those industries which have their origin in individual creativity, skill and talent and which have a potential for wealth and job creation through the generation and exploitation of intellectual property.” DCMS has grouped the creative industries into the following sub-sectors: advertising and marketing; architecture; crafts; design and designer fashion; film, TV, radio and photography; museums, galleries and libraries; music, performing and visual arts; publishing; and IT, software and computer services (includes video games). The term Creative Sector is often used interchangeably with the Creative Industries
- 9.2. **Cultural sector** - [UNESCO](#), the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation defines the cultural sector as “... a broad range of activities and industries that focus on the creation, preservation, and dissemination of cultural expressions. This includes fields such as the arts, heritage, media, and education, contributing to the enrichment of society.”

10. If you need support

- 10.1. Who to contact for support – enterprise@oca.ac.uk

11. Linked and other policies and legislation

- 11.1. When undertaking any work-based learning activities students are subject to [OCA Student Code of Conduct policy](#), which sets out the standards of behaviour expected of all members of OCA.

12. Changes since previous policy

- 12.1. Format changes and inclusion of contents page.
- 12.2. Clarifications to general principles in section 3.
- 12.3. Revisions to the definition of work-based learning in sections 3 and its application across section 5.
- 12.4. Clarifications and additional narrative to Enterprise Hub, section 6.
- 12.5. Clarification to Careers Advice, section 7.
- 12.6. Inclusion of a definition of Creative Industry, section 9.
- 12.7. Inclusion of a definition of Cultural Sector, section 9.
- 12.8. Inclusion of enterprise contact details, section 10.t
- 12.9. Link to OCA Student Code of Conduct Policy.

13. Policies superseded by this document

- 13.1. None.