



Programme Specification

1. General information

Programme title:	Design Products
Award:	MA
Qualification Framework level:	Level 7
School/Department or equivalent:	Design
Campus location(s):	Battersea
Total UK credits:	180
Date valid from/to	2022-23

2. Programme Philosophy

Design Products explores new terrain for designing products aiming to evolve new design disciplines and practices. We question ‘what is a product?’ and the assumption of adding products to uncover critical questioning to inform cutting edge creative practices for designing better futures. Our programme ethos focuses on a range of ideas for exploring these new areas for product design practice. These evolve over time and currently include design subtraction, multi-species design, circularity, questions for action, products delimited, design doing, design justice and decolonising design.

We work in collaboration with industry but also explore new locations and relationships for designing products: the experiences and impacts they generate whether these are design interventions or working with start-ups, governments, or global agencies. We measure the success of our design impacts against the United Nations Sustainability Development Goal’s and the design territory of products within systems.

Learning will develop during the programme through terms 1 and 2 via a series of short projects focussed on experimentation and developing a strong and adaptive personal creative process building a portfolio of projects culminating in the development and delivery of an Independent Research Project in term 3.

3. Educational Aims and Outcomes of the Programme

Programme aims

- Explore a series of key future design agendas to uncover new terrain for Designing Products and practices from people to ecosystems;

- Experiment with positioning new and emerging technologies in advanced design practice;
- Facilitate the exploration of new disciplinary directions;
- Critically question and appraise current approaches to Designing Products and the definition of a product;
- Develop an approach to Design Products which puts the understanding of impact from individual to social, multi-species and global at the heart of design activity.

What will I be expected to achieve?

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

College-Wide Learning Outcomes

You should be able to:

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

Programme-Specific Learning Outcomes

- Locate your practices in relation to leading ideas in the field;
- Argue for how your own design practice is situated within the forefront of the discipline;
- Articulate the range of ethical issues when developing designs for advanced practice;
- Demonstrate ability to experiment with leading edge making practices;
- Understand, adapt, experiment, and deploy (proposals or) new technological solutions to advanced design challenges;
- Experiment, test and prove technologies across a range of appropriate mediums;
- Demonstrate how your designs impact on the United Nations Sustainability Development Goals;
- Independently manage multiple requirements in delivering advanced practice projects;
- Clearly communicate concepts and creative process using a range of media, techniques and presentation formats.

4. What will I learn?

Curriculum Map

Term 1	Term 2		Term 3
Locating Practice (15 credits)	Grand Challenge (15 credits)	School-wide elective (15 credits)	Independent Research Project (60 credits)
Experimental Design (30 credits)		Advanced Practice (15 credits)	
AcrossRCA (30 credits)			

Programme Structure

Unit Title	Term	Credit Value	Core or Elective?
Locating Practice	1	15	Core
Experimental Design	1	30	Core
AcrossRCA (College-wide unit)	1&2	30	Core
Grand Challenge (School-wide unit)	2	15	Core
School-wide elective	2	15	Elective
Advanced Practice	2	15	Core
Independent Research Project	3	60	Core

In the first term we help you locate your own practice at the forefront of the design products landscape (*Locating Practice*). This is supported by enhancing research skills and identifying additional technical and intellectual skills to develop new and improved design methods and approaches connecting research and making. *Experimental Design* allows you to expand the range and ambition of your design practice through various forms of experimentation to uncover new skills, methods and ideas. This unit covers a broad spectrum of experimentation from methods to materials, technology, making, manufacturing, futures, social and participatory.

The second term engages with *Advanced Practice* by deepening your own creative methods through specialist focus via elective programme platform options, based on programme ethos themes and School-wide electives. Programme specialist design input is delivered via platform electives in the *Advanced Practice* unit. You will also collaborate with other School of Design programme disciplines in a team-based School-wide *Grand Challenge* tackling a major emerging strategic design issue. There are also opportunities to take part in commercially sponsored projects in terms 2 and 3 depending on availability.

In the third term you will synthesise learning from terms 1 and 2 by independently developing, managing and delivering a high-resolution Design Products project (*Independent Research*

Project). The emphasis here is showing how you have brought together skills, learning and design practices from across terms 1 and 2 to design and deliver a project that sits at the forefront of the design products landscape and enables the delivery of a design discourse that argues for the new design space within which it sits. The Independent Research Project (IRP) will be delivered through a supervision model, and it is expected that students will spend the majority of their time on personal study and making.

Grand Challenge (School-wide unit)

In term 2 all School of Design students will participate in the Grand Challenge, School-wide unit. The aim of this unit is to connect and challenge all students in the School through the introduction of a 'wicked' design problem that requires a cross disciplinary approach to problem solving involving an external international scientific or industry partner (or both). This unit and lecture series has been hugely successful in connecting and disrupting disciplines, people, philosophies and approaches to design thinking whilst providing our student body with very unique networking opportunities.

AcrossRCA (College-wide unit)

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

Independent Research Project

How the project will work

You will be expected to develop an initial major project proposal and refine this based on learning and experiences throughout terms 1 and 2. The project will then be supported by targeted strategic supervisions from lecturers and support from technical resources.

What the College expectations are

The College expectations are to deliver an opportunity and space for students to experiment in term 3 with the freedom to showcase their learning towards demonstrating mastery through an IRP project and related design discourse in the discipline of design products.

What access/support students require

Occasional supervisory meetings with staff will take place with the aim of strategically focusing the project trajectory and how it aims to deliver new solutions, innovations or discourse in the field. The final work will include a public exhibition demonstrating your ability to identify and define design opportunities, articulate the significance of a design to stakeholders; and to generate innovative solutions.

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5. How will I learn?

You will learn through a range of teaching typologies in each unit including briefing, critique, exhibition, group tutorial, individual tutorial, lectures, seminars, demonstrations, workshops, peer reviews and independent study. Each unit will comprise of one or more projects which will develop learning up to the assessment point.

We will formally assess learning once in each unit with a formative and summative assessment. A critique or demonstration will be used for either the formative or summative assessment with asynchronous assessment methods including explanatory short video, desktop display, portfolio, visual presentation, and demonstration used for the other assessment point. The formative assessment will provide you with feedback on the strengths and weaknesses of their work-to-date and recommend strategies for improving learning to enhance the outcome of the summative assessment.

You will submit work in a range of both digital and physical formats depending on the unit project briefs. Examples of submission formats include writing, videos, 2D drawings, sketches and diagrams to test rigs, proof of principle, demonstrators, simulations, prototypes or models.

6. Assessment and feedback

Regulations

Regulations for assessment and progression can be found [here](#). Please familiarise yourself with these.

Unit assessment

The programme uses a range of assessment methods, including synchronous, such as:

- **Critique** – a group review of work led by one or more academics;
- **Demonstration** – students will perform or demonstrate their design or intervention to prove its qualities in relation to the design brief and learning outcomes.

We will also compliment these with asynchronous assessment methods including:

- **Explanatory short video** - a 3–5-minute video which functions as a stand-alone pitch for the final design proposal;
- **Desktop display** – a display of project material curated to explain the design proposal and learning journey;
- **Portfolio** – a document containing a presented set of unit projects illustrating a series of design proposal and highlighting learning outcomes;
- **Visual presentation** – a stand-alone graphical presentation which can sit alongside a designed product, artifact or intervention that explains the design intent and design discourse;
- **Exhibition** – a public dissemination of the design project used for interactively testing reactions to the proposal.

You can expect a range of formal feedback on your work including:

- **Tutorials** – individual verbal feedback on a project or stage;
- **Group Tutorials** – shared feedback on work using exemplars and learning from the progress of others;
- **Seminars** – thematic investigation of an important Design Products concept where conversation and advice can be applied back to own work;
- **Critiques** - staff will give verbal feedback, question, and critique projects.
- **Demonstrations** - following a demonstration, students will be given succinct feedback on areas to improve and highlights of successful features;
- **Assessment notes** - following assessment project overview notes will be provided to complement verbal and other feedback delivered during the unit to highlight strengths and weaknesses towards meeting the learning objectives;
- **Workshops** – conceptual and applied practical skill sessions where verbal feedback on own learning and adaptation of skills will be given.

Throughout all of the units you will be expected to keep notes of comments and verbal feedback providing an aid to reflective learning. Informal feedback may also occur in peer reviews and on an ad-hoc basis.

7. What award can I get?

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

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

Exit awards:

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

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

8. Admissions

Cross-College requirements

Academic Entry Requirements

Candidates must normally have obtained a good relevant undergraduate degree or an equivalent qualification. The College recognises as an equivalent qualification any degree, diploma, certificate or other evidence of formal qualification awarded by a university or other higher education establishment where the award is made following the successful completion of a programme of at least three years' study, the programme of study being open, as a general rule, only to persons holding a certificate awarded on the successful completion of a full programme of upper secondary education.

Other qualifications may be approved, providing that the College's Academic Board for Concessions and Discipline (ABCD) is satisfied that the applicant has the ability to pursue the programme of study successfully. The ABCD is empowered to make judgements about the extent to which qualifications or experience gained elsewhere may be accepted in partial fulfilment of its requirements.

Portfolio

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

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

Applicant Qualities

Generally, we are looking for applicants to demonstrate their:

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

English Language

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

Applicants are exempt from this requirement if they have received a 2.1 degree or above from a university in a majority English-speaking nation within the last two years.

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

Admission Process

Applications must be made directly to the College through our online application portal: <https://www.rca.ac.uk/studying-at-the-rca/apply/application-process/ma-application-process/>

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

Whilst there are still spaces available, successful candidates will be made an offer of a place. If there is no vacancy for a subsequent successful applicant, the candidate will be placed on a waiting list, and may be made a firm offer should a place become available.

Programme-Specific requirements

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