



Master of Art History & Visual Culture

Programme Specification

2023-2024

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Introduction

This document describes the **Master of Art History & Visual Culture** awarded by Richmond University, the American International University in London, using the protocols required by *The Framework for Higher Education Qualifications in England, Wales, and Northern Ireland* (QAA, 2008).

The degree is delivered at a US Liberal Arts university with a degree structure in line with comparable MA degrees in the UK. Successful students complete 8 courses amounting to 36 US / 180 UK credits, comprised of coursework (24 US/ 120 UK credits), and either an internship (4 US/ 20 UK credits) and a Professional project (6 US/ 30 UK credits) component or an Extended Professional project (10 US/50 UK credits). Normally, each course carries 4 US/20 UK credits.

Please note: This specification provides a concise summary of the main features of the programme and the learning outcomes that a typical student might reasonably be expected to achieve and demonstrate if s/he takes full advantage of the learning opportunities that are provided.

More detailed information on the learning outcomes, content, and teaching, learning and assessment methods of each course can be found in course specification documents and syllabi.

The accuracy of the information contained in this document is reviewed by the University and may be verified by the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education.

OVERVIEW

Programme/award title(s)	Master of Art History & Visual Culture
Teaching Institution	Richmond, American University London
Awarding Institution	Richmond, American University London
Date of latest validation	8 th March 2023 (for 5 years)
Next revalidation	2027/2028
Credit points for the award	36 US credits 180 UK credits (FHEQ Level 7)
Programme start date	Fall 2023 (as new structure)
Underpinning QAA subject benchmark(s)	QAA Masters Degree Characteristics (February 2020): Art History, Architecture, and Design Subject Benchmark Document (2019)
Professional/statutory recognition	N/A
Language of Study	English
Duration of the programme for each mode of study (P/T, FT,DL)	FT (one year), PT (two years)
Dual accreditation (if applicable)	Middle States Commission on Higher Education (First accredited 1981; renewed 2016. QAA – Higher Education Review (AP) December 2017
Date of production/revision of this specification	May 2023 (see chart at the end of this document for list of revisions)

ABOUT THE PROGRAMME

Richmond University's MA in Art History and Visual Culture programme offers sustained engagement with the visual arts from an intercultural perspective, training students in the professional skills required for career placement in the arts and creative cultural industries. The programme brings art and design historians, theoreticians, professional practitioners and studio artists together to 1) offer a thorough grounding in the interdisciplinary theoretical and methodological issues related to the study of the visual, and 2) equip students with the professional skills and experience to work successfully in a variety of arts and cultural industries.

Programme Goals

- To provide students with a thorough grounding in the interdisciplinary theoretical and methodological issues for the study of art and design history and visual culture;
- To equip students with the key skills, knowledge and experience for careers in the arts and creative cultural industries, and for Doctoral research;
- To train students to apply their accumulated experience, knowledge and skills to their personal lives, developing appreciation of cultural commonality, diversity and difference;
- To maintain academic standards equal to or better than comparable MA degrees offered by UK universities.

PROGRAMME STRUCTURE

Master of Art History & Visual Culture Degree

The programme is a discrete and self-contained programme of 36 US/180 UK credits. As such, the structure does not follow the progressive UK PGDip ► MA structure of some other programmes although a UK PGDip is awarded as an exit award in recognition of students who complete the required 24 US / 120 UK credits of taught course work. It is not possible for students to register for the PGDip.

The programme is delivered over one academic year full-time or two-years part-time from the start of September. Full-time students take six mandatory taught courses of 4 US/20 UK credits each, spread equally over the autumn and spring semesters. Then in the final semester, students may take the internship course of 4 US/20 UK credits and write the research project which is submitted at the end of the summer and is weighted at 8 US/40 UK credits. Students must complete the six mandatory taught courses before progressing to the internship/research project. Part-time students take one or two courses in the autumn and spring semesters, completing the required course work over two years and complete the internship and research project in the final semester of year two. Full-time or part-time students unable to take the internship complete an extended professional research project of 15,000 words for 12 US/60 UK credits instead of the normal project of 10,000 words.

1 US credit is equivalent to 1 contact teaching hour per week during a 15-week semester. As such, each 4-credit course typically involves 60 contact hours each semester. There is a ratio of 1 US to 5 UK credits at FHEQ Level 7.

Details of the University's degree programmes, including approved Programme Specifications are Course Specification Descriptions (CSDs) are held in an official archive by academic year, available at <https://www.richmond.ac.uk/programme-and-course-specifications/>

All students on Masters programmes are expected to be in London for thesis/dissertation supervision and seminars. During this, students wishing to complete an internship outside of the UK must first consult with Student Affairs to discuss any visa implications before accepting an international internship.

Successful students complete 36 US /180 credits at FHEQ Level 7

		US Credits	UK Credits
FHEQ Level 7 (Total)			
FALL SEMESTER			
AVC 7100	Research Methods	4	20
AVC 7102	Art & Its Histories	4	20
AVC 7XXX	World and Global Arts	4	20
SPRING SEMESTER			
AVC 7104	Contemporary Art	4	20
AVC 7105	Visual Cultures	4	20
AVC 7XXX	Professional Practices in the Visual Arts	4	20
SUMMER SEMESTER			
AVC 7902	Internship	4	20
AVC 7500	Thesis	8	40
OR			
AVC 7550	Extended Thesis (students not completing the internship complete an extended thesis of 12/60 credits)	12	60

Postgraduate Certificate (PGC) in Art History & Visual Culture

The Middle States Postgraduate Certificate (PGC) in Art History & Visual Culture is awarded to students registered on the MA who have successfully completed in good academic standing (with a 3.0 GPA/B average) for all courses but: 1) fail to submit the final professional research project (without extenuating circumstances eligible for resubmission), or 2) fail to pass the professional research project. The PGC is therefore conferrable as an exit award in recognition of successful completion of postgraduate coursework, but it is not possible for students to register on the PGC.

Successful students complete 24 US / 120 UK credits at *FHEQ* Level 7

Successful students awarded the PGC are able to demonstrate all learning outcomes for the MA except the professional research project component – see ‘H’ in Section 4 “Programme Outcomes” below, and in the Curriculum Map (Appendix I below).

PROGRAMME OUTCOMES

Programme-level learning outcomes are identified below, based on *SEEC* categories linked to level 7 of the *FHEQ*.

Refer to Appendix II – Curriculum Map for details of how outcomes are deployed across the programme of study.

Upon successful completion of the **MA Art History & Visual Culture degree** successful students will be able to:

- A. A comprehensive and systematic knowledge and understanding of art history and visual culture studies.
- B. A sophisticated visual literacy and critical engagement with texts and art/visual objects.
- C. The ability to conduct successful autonomous research in the field of art history and visual culture at postgraduate level.
- D. The knowledge and skills for application to careers in the arts and creative cultural industries

Subject specific knowledge and understanding (A)

A1. demonstrate a comprehensive and systematic knowledge of theories and methods required for examining art in an international setting, drawing on art and design history, and visual culture studies

A2. critically analyse the inter-disciplinary approaches available for approaching art across cultures and the permeable interface between ‘western’ and ‘non-western’ arts and cultures

A3. demonstrate understanding of the specific ethical challenges attached to conducting research into diverse global communities

A4. provide a systematic and critically engaged approach to the representation of art in museums and galleries

A5. demonstrate a critical knowledge of professional practice in the arts and creative cultural industries

Subject specific skills and attributes (B)

B1. deploy sophisticated visual literacy including formal analysis

B2. show systematic, critical engagement with texts and objects

B3. conduct successful and original research, including the application of appropriate methodologies for locating, assessing and interpreting primary sources

B4. show excellent writing skills including logical and structured narratives and arguments supported by relevant primary and secondary evidence

B5. demonstrate professional presentation skills including verbal visual analysis, communicated clearly to specialist and non-specialist audiences

Transferable intellectual and personal attributes (C)

C1. apply systematic cognitive skills of analysis, synthesis, summarization, sophisticated critical judgment and complex problem-solving

C2. conduct successful autonomous research. This includes: critical, effective and testable information retrieval and organization, and the ability to design and carry out a self-directed, original thesis research project with limited tutorial guidance

C3. communicate clearly, effectively and professionally information, arguments and ideas in written, spoken or other form using appropriate visual aids and IT resources, as well as an ability to listen effectively, and thus to participate constructively in discussion with team members

C4. demonstrate nuanced open-mindedness, particularly with regard to intercultural issues

Practical and/or professional skills and attributes (D)

D1. read critically around the skills and knowledge required to work in a career in the arts and creative industries

D2. apply relevant current technologies and theories to enhance research in the creative and cultural industries

D3. approach a complex problem/topic from a variety of sophisticated methodological, interdisciplinary, and comparative approaches

D4. engage in network and community-forming in the creative and cultural sector

TEACHING, LEARNING, AND ASSESSMENT

Teaching and Learning Strategy

Programme specification and curriculum map – MASTER OF Art History & Visual Culture DEGREE

The teaching and learning strategy for the MA in **Art History & Visual Culture** is based on the understanding that all students are active learners and researchers and are embarking on advanced professional practice with a view to their future career development. This is designed to maximise student engagement in the programme and ensure full participation throughout. The precise approach will vary from course to course, but the learning outcomes relating to each class are designed to ensure that students immerse themselves fully in the subject and take full responsibility for their progress through the programme. The concept of progression through the distinct aspects of the degree (class-based learning focusing on theory and practice, guided independent study and practical work, internship and professional research project including a critical reflection) is integral to the intellectual journey that the students will make during their time on the programme.

A variety of approaches will be used in teaching, including:

- Formal seminars and debates
- Formal lectures, supplemented with audio-visual materials
- Informal lectures and discussions with guest speakers or on visits
- Individual and group projects, culminating in oral presentations and written work
- Group and individual tutorials
- Self-directed and directed reading

Student knowledge will be acquired through:

- Structured seminars and debates (including the sharing of other students' learning and experience), lectures, guest lectures, visits to agencies – including supporting materials
- Directed reading and use of electronic sources
- Independent research and work experience

Student thinking skills are developed through:

- Undertaking practical exercises and making presentations
- Learning alongside others, including group work, seminars, debates and discussions
- Conducting research
- Preparing assessed work

Student practical skills are developed through:

- Applying theory to practice in practical exercises and assessed work
- Specific training related to PR and journalism and related fields, including the use of different media
- Team and individual project work and reflection thereon
- Vocational experience gained through internships

The University welcomes applications from students with disabilities. These disabilities might include a physical or sensory impairment, a medical or psychiatric condition or a specific learning difficulty such as dyslexia, and may require additional support or adaptations to our facilities. The University endeavours to make all practical and reasonable adjustments to ensure students are able to fully participate in the University community.

Assessment Strategy

Assessment is by examination, essays, dissertations, and other forms of written work; oral presentations and group work; as well as projects and this assessment strategy meets the University Assessment Norms at level 7.

As seen above, the University places considerable emphasis on developing its students' learning and skills. Creating independent thinkers is a part of the University's mission statement and MA academic staff deliver on this promise in a number of different ways at the postgraduate level. A key aspect of their work involves devising methodologies, consistent with best-practice approaches within the field, with which to adequately assess students' performance. These approaches include the setting of learning outcomes encompassing each course as well as regular discussion and interaction amongst academic staff in order to set common goals for the entire degree and each of its courses.

In terms of following up with the assessment of student learning and consistent with US Liberal Arts traditions, MA classes rely on the system of continuous assessment on a course by course basis and throughout any given semester. This approach often involves the use of short essays, research papers, learning journals, annotated bibliographies, gallery reviews, book reviews, student presentations, research proposals and general class discussion. Not every component applies to every course, but most do relate to many of the classes that are offered. There is an emphasis on writing essays, particularly research papers, at postgraduate level, and reflective work including learning journals.

The variety of instruments used permits academic staff to assess each student's developing and evolving knowledge and skills base as outlined in the previous section. For example, the research paper tests for, amongst other things, a student's ability to engage with primary and/or secondary sources of information and his or her ability to evaluate and analyse this. Site visits encourage students to engage with objects, applying theory and method taught in classes. In addition, the University sets specific guidelines on the weighting of coursework in order to effect balance in the process of assessment. As the coursework load for each course set out in the course descriptor shows, a variety of assessment strategies with weighting spread facilitates this across the courses, with the typical course settling for around 50% for the final research paper.

A component part of the programme's efforts to ascertain an appropriate approach to the assessment of student learning involves the use of grade descriptors (made available in the Student Handbook). This information allows the student to see the expected level of performance that co-relates with a particular letter grade summarizing his or her overall achievement level. The programme also has a formalised system of exit questionnaires and feedback meetings punctuated at key moments throughout the year (mid-semester break, end of semester and end of year) for its students as a framework through which the views and opinions of those who have experienced the programme, as students, can be captured and responded to. Evidence of this approach in action is demonstrated in minutes of

meetings with students and academic staff and response to comments from the External Examiner.

The academic staff are confident that the assessment processes are sound. Much of this confidence emanates from the comments MA academic staff have received from External Examiners. An equally important measure is the success that so many students on the Master of Arts programmes enjoy beyond their post-Richmond experiences. Students generally move on to take on challenging opportunities on postgraduate programmes and as professionals in the arts and creative cultural industries. This is testimony to their level of preparedness for the real world of careers in the visual arts, and are an indication of the academic staff's and University's ability to fulfil its mission.

Academic Standing

A	4.000	Excellent
A-	3.666	Excellent
B+	3.333	Good
B	3.000	Good
B-	2.666	Good
C+	2.333	Satisfactory
C	2.000	Satisfactory
C-	1.666	Below average (may only be awarded at graded activity level)
F	0.000	Fail (may be awarded at graded activity level, and awarded at
FA	0.000	Fail (Attendance)
FS	0.000	Fail (Non-Submission)
FX	0.000	Fail (Academic Misconduct)

A graduate student is in good academic standing if maintaining a cumulative Grade Point Average (GPA) of 2.0 (C).

Graduate students with a cumulative (GPA) of less than 2.0 (C) risk dismissal from the university (see below under "Grade Point Average" and "Academic Probation").

Grade Point Average

A grade point average (GPA) is calculated each semester and summer session and is recorded on the student's transcript. A cumulative GPA, including all graduate courses taken at Richmond, is also calculated. The numerical equivalent for the grade (see above) of each course is multiplied by the number of credits for that course to give the number of quality points for the course.

The GPA is then the sum of quality points for all courses divided by the total number of credits of all courses attempted.

- Students achieving a minimum cumulative GPA of 3.333 will be awarded the degree with Distinction.
- Students achieving a cumulative GPA within the range of 2.667 to 3.332 will be awarded the degree with Merit.
- Students achieving a minimum cumulative GPA within the range of 2.0 to 2.666 will be awarded a Pass degree.
- Students achieving a cumulative GPA of less than 2.0 will fail the degree.

Students who choose not to submit the Professional Project, or who do not obtain a minimum grade of C (2.0) on the Professional Project, may transfer programs and apply to receive a (US) Postgraduate Certificate. A minimum cumulative GPA of 2.0 on all coursework is required for the award of the Postgraduate Certificate. Students must successfully submit and have approved a research proposal before progressing to the Professional Project.

ENTRY REQUIREMENTS

Details of the entry requirements, including English language requirements, may be found at the appropriate page of the University website listed below, where a comprehensive Admissions Policy and Summary of Practice document is also published.

<http://www.richmond.ac.uk/admissions/postgraduate-admissions/>

STUDENT SUPPORT AND GUIDANCE

There is a range of student support and guidance, for both academic and general wellbeing, available to students. This is accomplished through a range of programmes and services that positively impact learning as well as the total student life experience.

All students have an allocated full-time faculty member who acts as their Programme Director. Programme Directors have on-going responsibility for students' academic progress, meeting with each student at least once per semester. Programme Directors assist students with registration, enabling smooth progression through the degree. They also advise on career opportunities, and also provide pastoral support in many cases.

A range of Maths, English, Technology and Writing workshops have been established to support students with particular needs in these areas. Librarians are on hand to assist with library use, which includes instruction in web-based resources.

The University endeavours to make all practical and reasonable adjustments to ensure students are able to fully participate in the University community. Students who declare a physical disability or a special educational need are supported to ensure the quality of their educational experience meets their individual requirements. SEN students, for instance,

receive extra time in examinations, and have the option of writing exams on university-provided computers, and/or of taking exams in a separate room.

The University operates a well-staffed Student Affairs department that provides services intended to support and encourage student welfare, safety and development. This department oversees medical registration of students and provides counselling services. It also organizes a range of extracurricular activities and travel designed to further enhance students' educational experiences. Disciplinary and social grievance procedures are also overseen by this department.

INTERNSHIPS

The Careers & Internship Office of the University offers a formal mechanism through which students may receive work-placement opportunities. These placements are supervised, career-related work experiences combined with reflective, academic study that help students apply theoretical knowledge in the workplace. Participation in the internship programme is optional but highly encouraged because the Masters Programmes have been designed to offer students the option to graduate with both a qualification as well as experience of the workplace.

The internship has been established to act as a conduit between the classroom and a career, enabling students to meet and work with potential future employers. The internship programme demands that students interact with professionals in their field, allowing them to learn by seeing as well as by doing. Key to the success of this initiative is the relationship that has been developed with organisations and governmental agencies.

Expectations with regard to careers education, information, advice and guidance (as outlined in The UK Quality Code for Higher Education) are handled by the university's Student Affairs department. This department conducts a variety of career services for students, ranging from resource provision to a CV service, and in particular through the professional development seminar series. For full details of career services offered to students at Richmond may be obtained from the Student Affairs Department.

In addition to these services, the alumni office offers networking opportunities where students may contact alumni working in a variety of fields. The alumni office also offers these services via social media such as LinkedIn and Facebook.

POSTGRADUATE ACADEMIC POLICIES

Please see the Policies page on the University website listed below for the relevant academic policies of this programme. (<https://www.richmond.ac.uk/university-policies/>)

REGULATORY FRAMEWORK

Programme specification and curriculum map – MASTER OF Art History & Visual Culture DEGREE

The **MA Art History & Visual Culture** is operated under the policy and regulatory frameworks of Richmond American University in London, the Middle States Commission on Higher Education, the Framework of Higher Education Qualifications, and the UK Quality Code for Higher Education.

Also key to the background for this description are the following documents:

- QAA (2018). The Revised UK Quality Code for Higher Education. (www.qaa.ac.uk)
- QAA (2008). Higher Education Credit Framework for England: guidance on academic credit arrangements in Higher Education in England.
- SEEC (2016). Credit Level Descriptors for Higher Education. Southern England Consortium for Credit Accumulation and Transfer (www.seec.org.uk).
- Middle States Commission on Higher Education. Standards for Accreditation and Requirements of Affiliation. 2014: Thirteenth Edition; Rev. Ed. 2015. (<http://www.msche.org/publications/RevisedStandardsFINAL.pdf>)

Ensuring and Enhancing the Quality of the Programme

The **MA Art History & Visual Culture** features detailed published educational objectives that are consistent with the mission of the institution. All course outlines contain course specific objectives that are regularly monitored by the individual instructors and by the faculty as a group.

The University has several methods for evaluating and improving the quality and standards of its provision. These include:

- External examiners
- Internal Moderation
- Student representation
- Curricular change approval process
- Annual Programme Monitoring and Assessment
- Formal Programme Review, every 5 years
- Course evaluation
- Student satisfaction surveys and the NSS
- Feedback from employers

The **MA Art History & Visual Culture** is provided through a system of ongoing evaluations that demonstrate achievement of the programme's objectives, and uses the results to improve the effectiveness of the programme. Ongoing evaluation is carried out for both US (the Middle States Commission on Higher Education) and UK (QAA) reviews. The University is a voluntary subscriber member of the QAA, and underwent its first full Institutional Review in May 2013 and a Higher Education Review (AP) in 2017.

Credit Equivalence

Programme specification and curriculum map – MASTER OF Art History & Visual Culture DEGREE

	US credit	ECTS credit	UK credit
UK Level 7	1	2.5	5
Required minimum number of credits for MA	36	90	180 (120 of which must be at Level 7)
Richmond MA in Advertising and PR	36	90	180 (at Level 7)

Levels

The Framework for Higher Education Qualifications in the UK defines the MA degree in higher education in terms of a series of numbered levels, as follows:

Level 4-6 (previously HE1-3) – years 1 to 3 of a UK undergraduate degree

Level 7 (previously M) – UK Masters degrees and postgraduate diplomas and certificates
 Level 8 (previously D) – UK Doctoral degrees

Each level is illustrated by, and each award determined by, reference to a qualification descriptor. The level 7 descriptors can be found in the *FHEQ* (QAA, August 2008).

References

QAA. *The Framework for Higher Education Qualifications in England, Wales, and Northern Ireland*. November 2014.

QAA. *The Higher Education Credit Framework for England: Advice on Academic Credit Arrangements*. May 2021, 2nd Ed

QAA. *Making Use of Credit: A Companion to the Higher Education Credit Framework for England*. May 2021

European Communities. *ECTS Users' Guide*. February 2009; *ECTS Users' Guide* 2015.

Programme Specification Publication Dates

First Edition	April 2013
Revision 1	August 2013
Revision 2	January 2014
Revision 3	May 2014
Revision 4	July 2014

Revision 5	July 2015
Revision 6	April 2016
Revision 7	April 2017
Revision 8	April 2018
Revision 9	March 2019
Revision 10	May 2019
Revision 11	May 2020
Revision 12	May 2021
Revision 13	August 2022
Revision 14	January 2023
Revision 15	May/June 2023

APPENDIX 1: Curriculum Map

CURRICULUM MAP

		Knowledge and Understanding					Subject specific skills and attributes					Transferable intellectual and personal attributes					Practical and/or professional skills and attributes				
		A1	A2	A3	A4	A5	B1	B2	B3	B4	B5	C1	C2	C3	C4	C5	D1	D2	D3	D4	D5
Course ID	Title																				
AVC 7100	Research Methods	x		x			x	x	x	x	x	x									
AVC 7102	Art and Its Histories	x					x	x		x	x	x		x					x		
AVC 7XXX	World and Global Arts		x		x		x	x		x	x				x			x		x	
AVC 7104	Contemporary Art	x					x	x		x	x	x			x			x		x	
AVC 7105	Visual Cultures	x	x				x	x		x	x			x				x		x	
AVC 7XXX	Professional Practices in the Visual Arts	x				x					x	x			x		x	x	x	x	x
Plus either																					
AVC 7902	Internship					x					x			x			x	x	x	x	x
AVC 7500	Thesis Research						x	x		x		x	x	x		x		x		x	
OR																					
AVC 7550	Extended Thesis Research						x	x		x		x	x	x	x		x		x		x

Faculty may access the KILO map: [010 KILO KPO tables](#)