

MA Conservation Studies

Programme Summary	
Awarding body	University of Sussex
Teaching institution	West Dean College
Programme title	MA Conservation Studies
Final award / FHEQ level	Master of Arts Level 7
Mode of study	Full-time 46 weeks , including PGD and MA
Programme Coordinator	Lorna Calcutt
External reference points/benchmarks	<p>The UK Quality Code for Higher Education Chapter A Descriptor for a Qualification at Level 7 – Masters Degree</p> <p>Subject Benchmarks Statements:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Archaeology • Art and design • History of art, architecture and design <p>Institute of Conservation PACR Standards</p>
Criteria for admission to the programme	Successful completion of Units PGD IA, B and C

Programme Aims

Practical

1. Provide the facilities and support through which students can further develop their skills and fluency to an advanced level as accomplished practitioners, gaining a comprehensive understanding of techniques applicable to their own research or advanced scholarship.
2. Encourage innovative approaches to practical work through which conceptual ideas are fully tested and informed.
3. Develop originality in the application of knowledge, together with a practical understanding of how established techniques of research and enquiry are used to create and interpret knowledge in the field of Conservation Studies.

Theoretical

1. Provide a stimulating environment of academic enquiry which encourages the critical evaluation of current research and advanced scholarship within Conservation Studies.
2. Evaluate methodologies, develop critiques of them and, where appropriate, to propose new hypotheses.
3. Consolidate a systematic understanding of knowledge and critical awareness of current problems and/or new insights, much of which is at, or informed by, the forefront of Conservation theory and practice.
4. Evaluate the historical and social contexts of objects and identify the interaction between conservator, scientist, curator and society at large.

Professional

1. Consolidate the students' potential and aptitude for professional practice, research and employment by amplifying research skills, encouraging self-direction and originality in tackling and solving problems and in planning and implementing projects.
2. Further develop high levels of practical workshop skills with an extended command of theories and knowledge to enable versatile, authoritative application and communication of professional practice.
3. Support the construction of coherent arguments that allow the student to articulate ideas clearly to a range of expert and non-expert audiences, formally and informally, through a variety of techniques

Learning Outcomes

Practical

- Use appropriate materials, media and techniques effectively and fluently to enable the development of aesthetic judgement, acquisition of a critical awareness of current problems together with new insights, much of which will be at, or informed by, the forefront of the discipline of Conservation and its related fields of study.
- Undertake applied research through practice demonstrating a comprehensive understanding of techniques applicable to personal research and advanced scholarship.

Theoretical

- Make informed judgements demonstrating the ability to evaluate methodologies and develop critiques of them and, where appropriate, to propose new hypotheses.
- Deal with complex issues both systematically and creatively, making sound judgements and reaching authoritative conclusions.
- Develop inter-disciplinary understanding of the attitudes and philosophies that underpin the historical development of conservation as a profession within social and cultural contexts.
- Demonstrate the ability to evaluate current research and advanced scholarship through reference to primary source material.

Professional

- Demonstrate transferable communication and advocacy skills necessary for employment requiring the exercise of initiative and personal responsibility
- Make decisions in complex and unpredictable situations through the development of a personal code of professional conduct.

Alignment to External Reference Points

The Programme Leader, Tutors and many of the visiting lecturers are accredited members of Icon and maintain extensive professional affiliations within the field of cultural heritage. As part of the curriculum students have access to professionals within leading organisations in the field, such as conservators, conservation scientists, specialists and academics such as those from The Fitzwilliam Museum, The Institute of Archaeology/UCL, The National Archives and private conservation consultancies.

Programme Structure

MA – Programme Diagram

Semester 1 (18 weeks)				Semester 2 (18 weeks)			
Study Block 1	Formative Review/ Christmas Vacation	Study Block 2	Stage Assessment	Study Block 3	Formative Review/ Easter Vacation	Study Block 4	Stage Assessment
Subject Specific Unit PGD1A – Extending Practice - 45 credits				Subject Specific Unit PGD2A – Professional Practice - 45 credits			
Unit PGD1B – Science Analysis – 10 credits				Unit MA2 –Project Development – 30 credits			

Unit PGD1C – Research Methods for Conservation – 5 credits					
Semester 3 (10 weeks)					
Study Block 5				Final Assessment	
Unit MA3 – Project Realisation- 45 credits					

Distinctive Programme Features

The multi-disciplinary environment provides broad exposure to conservation theory and practice reflecting attitudes in a range of disciplines, with collaborative interdisciplinary research encouraged where appropriate. This produces versatile, knowledgeable students well equipped to enter a profession in which a reflective and open-minded approach is a necessity. Visiting lecturers are highly regarded academics, consultants and conservators embodying a broad range of expertise and professional engagement. The historic collection and science laboratory within West Dean College provides a supportive environment for students to engage in research activity. The broadly creative mission of the College overall provides an additionally inspiring element of the learning environment.

Learning and Teaching – methods and strategy

West Dean is committed to providing a distinctive, high quality teaching and learning environment for practice-led study and research. The College is also committed to continuous improvement of teaching and learning to nurture a deep engagement with practice and its integration with historical, theoretical, cultural and contextual frameworks. The College seeks to ensure that teaching and learning activities and associated resources provide every student with an equal and effective opportunity to achieve intended learning outcomes. Our overriding intention is that, on successful completion of their programme of study, West Dean students become practically accomplished, theoretically aware and professionally autonomous practitioners.

Our continuing priorities are to:

- Provide students with opportunities to learn and develop their skills through working on a range of very high quality, often museum-class objects.
- Further develop practice-led study and research within a stimulating and creative cultural environment.
- Promote the integration of theory and practice where each is tested and informed by the other.

- Increase opportunities for students to engage in professional practice through engagement with live projects involving liaison with clients.
- Enhance and further develop a range of specialist learning resources.
- Support staff development by encouraging opportunities to engage in high-profile consultancy and research projects.

Specific approaches to teaching and learning for MA include:

Negotiated learning

This is at the centre of the MA component, the most significant part of which is the supervised individual project undertaken between July and September. The area explored is based upon a proposal by the student but the precise focus of the project is finalised by negotiation and agreement between the student and academic staff - including the student's project supervisor(s).

Lectures and seminars

These provide specialist input, introducing and reinforcing knowledge of theoretical and reflective concerns that inform contemporary practice and provide the conceptual tools for its analysis. Lectures provide the means by which key issues and ideas are presented and the seminar promotes dialogue and debate between students and speakers. Seminars provide the opportunity for students to analyse the common concerns that affect their proposed projects and a common forum in which the linking of theory and practice can be explored.

Lectures focus upon issues related to research skills and methods, conservation ethics, philosophy, context, and innovative practice so that the interpretations emanating from these areas of study generate a stimulating climate of exploration and debate.

Student-led seminars are a particular feature of the MA component and provide the opportunity for students to both select (through negotiation) and identify the academic territory to be explored and thereby assume a leading role in defining the parameters of the debate and the definition of its agenda.

Individual and group tutorials

Tutorials are an important point of continuing contact between staff and students. They aim to foster a climate in which in-depth discussion of project development can take place allowing for continual review of negotiated learning as new information comes to light. While a number of individual tutorials are scheduled within each Unit of study, additional tutorials maybe arranged on request.

Independent study

The MA component is centred upon the student's individual project. In terms of both guided preparation and continuing supervision the teaching approach allows for a high level of student autonomy and self-direction. Students are expected to be self-motivated and to manage their own agreed programme of work. They are encouraged to be independent and self-reliant, engaging in group and peer co-operation and support. Effective use of research skills and learning (including IT) resources,

both within and outside the College, is expected and as the component progresses there is an increasing emphasis on independent study, self-evaluation and personal responsibility that demonstrates effective independent learning.

Practice

Throughout the MA component students are expected to maintain their practice as the main vehicle for determining their study, achievements and ambitions. In the MA units, however, an increased emphasis and profile is given to the critical, theoretical and conceptual analysis of the students' own research through practice as well as the work of other conservators. The parallel strands of critical theory and innovative practice converge as they develop, focusing towards the critically astute, intellectually mature, reflective practitioner.

Practical Experience & Work Placement

Students:

- develop a proposal to undertake a range of appropriate practical steps to implement their individual conservation studies projects
- continue to build a refined research plan through independent learning, liaison with supervisors and external experts in the fields of curation, materials analysis and primary source material
- may negotiate to undertake their Unit 2 study on or off campus, while making themselves available for tutorials
- have the opportunity to contribute to valuable research within the field and disseminate project outcomes appropriately

Assessment – methods and strategy

- Work is assessed on a continuous basis independently by at least two supervisors (normally the programme leader and a programme tutor). This assessment is fed to students informally on an on-going basis through discussion and formally at assessment and review points (completion of MA Unit 1, two draft deadlines during Unit 2 and final assessments)
- Essays and thesis are assessed independently and graded according to the assessment definitions
- All assessment is formalised in grades as set out in the assessment definitions
- Assessment is reviewed and moderated by the external examiner