

Visual Arts

Graduate Diploma Programme

Programme Summary	
Awarding body	University of Sussex
Teaching institution	West Dean College
Programme title	Visual Arts
Final award / FHEQ level	Graduate Diploma / level 6
Mode of study	Full-time, 36 weeks
Programme Leader	Dr David Stent
External reference points/benchmarks	The UK Quality Code for Higher Education Chapter A Qualification Descriptor for Level 6 Subject Benchmarks Statements: • Art and design
Criteria for admission to the programme	The following qualifications will be considered for entry on to the Graduate Diploma programme: • A recognised degree or equivalent in an art-related subject • A qualification equivalent to a second year of successful undergraduate study, e.g. HND or DipHE. • A relevant Foundation Degree in Fine Art or related subject • Portfolio: including a concise overview of the development and current focus on practice, including sketchbooks, journals and an example of previous written work. • English language: CEFR (Common European

	Framework of Reference for Languages) Level B1 or IELTS 6.5.
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Programme Aims

The content of the Graduate Diploma in Visual Arts is focused around the integration of three major domains of study essential to the successful development of a sustainable studio practice: **Practical**, **Theoretical** and **Professional**. The study units throughout the programme contribute to a learning environment that incorporates these domains at the appropriate academic standard. The Programme Aims and associated Learning Outcomes are consistent with the descriptors for a qualification at QAA Level 6.

The Programme Aims are to:

Practical

- Provide a stimulating and supportive learning environment for students to develop their creative, intellectual and material practices
- Provide access to facilities, workshops and expertise for the fabrication of artworks relating to the individual student's approach and intentions
- Encourage and support experimental, creative approaches to studio work, at least some of which is at the boundaries of the discipline

Theoretical

- Encourage students to achieve a systematic understanding and detailed knowledge of key aspects of their field of study
- Increase student's ability to deploy accurately established techniques of analysis and inquiry within their chosen discipline
- Provide a stimulating environment where applied research methods and critical practice can be articulated and where a comprehensive understanding of techniques applicable to personal research and associated scholarship can flourish
- Enable students to articulate an informed, critical understanding of studio practice and its contexts within contemporary visual art culture

Professional

- Provide support for personal and professional development, including development and

application of transferable skills such as self-management, decision-making, communication, collaboration, problem solving, IT and research skills

- Educate students to possess independence, self-understanding, self-reliance motivated toward future learning, practice or employment

Learning Outcomes

Practical

Ideas and Intentions

Exhibit a body of original work that demonstrates the culmination of self-directed studio practice

Materials and Methods

Apply a considered understanding of forms, techniques and materials to the development of practical work

Innovation and Creativity

Demonstrate effective, ambitious and innovative approaches to selected media through which original, creative ideas and intentions are realised

Theoretical

Contextual Knowledge

Situate studio practice within a critical context in which theoretical perspectives can be addressed, demonstrating some knowledge at the limits of their field of study

Conceptual Understanding

Display originality in the application of knowledge about individual practice, and the work of others, as well as understanding how techniques of critical research are used to generate and interpret works of art

Research and Enquiry

Demonstrate an awareness of research methodologies and appropriate strategies for enquiring effectively into their own work and the potential boundaries of their chosen discipline

Professional

Communication

Effectively communicate information using a vocabulary appropriate to the theoretical and practical contexts in which their work sits

Professional Standards

Demonstrate professional standards throughout the development, production, presentation and documentation of practical and

	theoretical work
<i>Independence and Self-Management</i>	Show an informed, independent awareness of future opportunities and career development, including use of transferable skills in relation to continuing practice, further study or related employment

Alignment to External Reference Points

The programme documents reflect subject benchmarks associated with the QAA Quality Code, including specific statements within descriptors of individual study units.

The programme also benefits from the ongoing practices and research interests of staff, including the Programme Leader and Associate Tutors. This includes international exhibition profiles, active publishing projects, networking opportunities and evidence of collaboration with other institutions, staff involvement in symposia and related events. The Programme Leader is also a Fellow of the Higher Education Academy (FHEA).

In addition, there is regular student engagement with professional artists through the Artist-in-Residence programme and the series of Visiting Artists and guest speakers. Students are also given resources to conduct study visits that best suit individual needs.

The Teaching and Learning strategy reflects a College-wide mission statement concerning shared skills development between the Visual Arts provision and other departments (such as Conservation) in common areas such as Writing / Research Skills, documentation and archiving of artworks/artefacts, Information Technology (such as shared online resources).

Programme Structure

Graduate Diploma – 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	Exhibitions / Final Assessment
Unit VA G1A Materials of the Artist (10 credits)		Unit VA G2A Extended Drawing (5 credits)		Unit VA G3A Contextual Research (10 credits)		Unit VA G4A Professional Practice (10 credits)	
Unit VA G1B Introduction to Philosophical Aesthetics (10 credits)				Unit VA G3B Studio Work II (40 credits)			
Unit VA G1C Studio Work I (35 credits)							

Distinctive Programme Features

The programme is designed to advance students' capacities in practical, theoretical and professional domains, supporting the development of independent and sustainable artistic practices. The unique setting of the College, including its connections to Surrealism and key figures in art history, provides an

immersive environment in which students can develop interdisciplinary and specialist studio work. The programme is supported by specialist facilities, including large studio spaces, regular technical and tutorial support. The programme also involves making use of an historic house and extensive grounds to explore site-specific work. As well as skills-based making in a variety of media, students develop critical contextual knowledge and transferable skills that will allow them to go onto further study, continuing practice or related employment. Exposure to prominent Visiting Artists (and Artists-in-Residence), academics and art professionals, as well as other departments and expertise across the college, not only provides students with inspiration for their individual practices but links to other opportunities beyond graduation.

Learning and Teaching – methods and strategy

The Learning and Teaching Methods seek to reflect the rationale, aims and learning outcomes of the programme and engage the active participation of a committed group of academic staff and students within practice and text-based academic frameworks. The methods support the practical and scholarly work required at Level 6 of the QAA Quality Code.

Independent study

The Graduate Diploma in Visual Arts is centred upon supporting and developing students' individual creative practices. As well as students negotiating, planning and managing their own projects in dialogue with tutors and support staff, the teaching approach allows for the development of student autonomy and self-direction. Students are expected to become increasingly self-motivated and to manage their agreed programme of work. They are also encouraged to engage in group and peer co-operation, collaboration and support. Effective use of available learning resources (including Library and IT services) is expected.

Evaluation and Assessment

A number of different approaches to evaluation and assessment are used to inform learning and teaching methods. Appraisals from tutors and academic staff are provided in formal and informal settings, with critical feedback (written and oral), addressing learning outcomes as appropriate. Peer evaluation of students' progress is also employed, with fellow students giving and receiving constructive criticism in order to develop a self-awareness and self-critical attitude to their work. Self-evaluation is also useful, with students encouraged to engaging with critical judgements about their own progress, identifying strengths and weakness against their intentions and the learning outcomes.

Lectures and Seminars

A programme of lectures and seminars provide specialist input for Graduate Diploma students, introducing and developing knowledge of theoretical, historical and critical concerns that inform contemporary practice. Lectures are designed to expand upon studio-based work, emphasising the creative potential of the relationship between theory and practice. A range of important themes and ideas are presented throughout the series, generating a stimulating climate of exploration and debate.

Seminar sessions provide an opportunity for subjects to be further developed through discussion between students, tutors and guest speakers (including Visiting Artists, academics, curators, professionals, etc.). Student-led seminars are used to complement the lecture programme, promoting dialogue and debate within the peer group. Written assignments such as essays are also made in response to the lectures.

Demonstrations and practice-based Workshops

Materials workshops are integrated into studio teaching so that traditional and innovative techniques and practical skills are placed at the centre of the discipline. Workshops can also be tailored to suit individual students' needs. Relevant Health and Safety measures and precautions are covered in the induction process. Workshop sessions can also focus on information technologies and software (for example image manipulation) and other forms of extending the studio practice.

Individual and Group Tutorials

Tutorials are an important point of continuing contact between staff and students. One-to-one sessions aim to foster a climate in which in-depth discussion of individual's development can take place. Group tutorials, usually involving a student in dialogue with more than one member of staff, aim to establish open discussion of progress as well as the discussion of a specific body of work. Tutorials occur regularly within each block of study, either formally scheduled, or requested by staff / student.

Group Critiques

Group critiques usually take the form of studio-based discussions of student work. Other sessions may be arranged in the context of a workshop or in relation to a specific display or event. All students present during critiques are encouraged to engage in critical reflection and judgement, offering considered and constructive criticism of the work of their peers. Students gain valuable insight into collaborative learning in relation to programme outcomes, assessment procedures and contextual development.

Written and Oral Presentations

Written assignments are undertaken in relation to specific study units. Emphasis is placed on relating theoretical components and assignments to studio practice. Through a combination of presented written work, participation in seminars and tutorials, students are expected to show evidence of developing critical and conceptual understanding. The programme uses writing assignments in the first term of study in order to diagnose potential problems in writing skills or spoken English. Students may receive learning support to help them with written requirements.

Study Trips

Students are provided with a budget to subsidise trips, either independently or as a formal group, most often selected in direct relation to individual practice. These can include visits to galleries, museums, exhibits, workshops, studios or other institutions.

Learning Support

Students can seek support in relation to language training, study and research skills, including the use of the College Library. There are also provision for English language support and learning difficulties (such as dyslexia).

Practical Experience & Work Placement

Students are required to stage a series of three exhibitions as part of their development, including an initial Fundraising Show that introduces them to professional requirements of exhibition management, whilst providing a chance to contribute to the budget for subsequent Summer Shows. Following that, as well as the assessed public exhibition at West Dean, the programme also provides the opportunity for a London exhibition, in a privately-hired space in which the students, in consultation with staff, collaboratively stage a group show.

Assessment – methods and strategy

Student work is monitored on a continuous basis throughout the year, with informal discussions and tutorial records feeding into both formative (mid-term) and summative assessment points.

Assessors use a pro-forma prompt sheet to ensure a consistent range of elements of work required is assessed.

Students are asked to submit an essay, deliver presentations and/or exhibit a body of work at the end of each semester to determine their conceptual, theoretical and historical knowledge.

Essay work is 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.