

PROGRAMME SPECIFICATION (Taught Postgraduate)



1 Awarding Institution	Newcastle University
2 Teaching Institution	Newcastle University
3 Final Award	MFA
4 Programme Title	Fine Art
5 UCAS/Programme Code	5808 F/P
6 Programme Accreditation	N/A
7 QAA Subject Benchmark(s)	Fine Art
8 FHEQ Level	Level 7
9 Date written/revised	July 2021

10 Programme Aims

The aims of the programme are:

1. To provide a supportive and responsive learning environment in which students can acquire such advanced practical and theoretical skills as will enable them to establish themselves as practitioners in fine art or in other careers in the visual arts field, either nationally or internationally.
2. To provide a varied learning experience that encourages the development of individual potential and abilities through self-directed and independent practice-led research.
3. To provide students with a learning environment where the relationship between theory and practice is constantly interrogated and critiqued.
4. To improve graduate's knowledge and use of appropriate key skills. These key skills include the ability to manage projects with regard to time and resources, the ability to work as part of a group and independently, the ability to solve problems creatively, the ability to communicate effectively both verbally and in writing and the ability to use library resources and IT efficiently and appropriately.
5. To foster creative imagination, intellectual rigour and innovative thinking through active engagement with practice and relevant artistic and academic debates.
6. To provide a framework within which students can acquire an advanced knowledge of a range of intellectual and practical approaches to their subject such that they are prepared for further academic or practice-led research.
7. To provide a qualification which fully meets the learning outcomes at Level 7 in the FHEQ.
8. To comply with prevailing University policies and procedures and QAA codes of practice.

11 Learning Outcomes

The programme provides opportunities for students to develop and demonstrate knowledge and understanding, qualities, skills and other attributes in the following areas. The programme outcomes have references to the benchmark statements for Fine Art.

Knowledge and Understanding

On completing the programme students should:

- A1.** An advanced knowledge and understanding through intensive studio practice of the techniques and methods both physical and intellectual necessary for the resolved statement of visual ideas in appropriate media.
- A2.** A critical understanding of the range of historical and contemporary critical debates surrounding visual arts practice and their impact on individual practice in different media.
- A3.** An in depth understanding of historical, practical and critical issues surrounding a broad range of exhibition practices.
- A4.** A critical understanding of the institutional and professional structures within which contemporary visual arts practice exists.
- A5.** A critical understanding of the roles of artists, curators, critics and audiences in shaping contemporary visual art.
- A6.** An awareness of research methodologies and a critical understanding of the relationship between the written and the theoretical and the visual in their creative practice and that of others.

Teaching and Learning Methods

Teaching strategy

Tutorials, seminars and group criticisms are the primary means by which specialist knowledge and understanding are imparted. This is supplemented by lectures given by Fine Art staff and a range of professional visitors (A1-6). In the specific area of exhibition management, knowledge and understanding are developed in practical workshops and exhibition (A3). Exchange trips to overseas institutions are available to students where the strategy for teaching is consistent with the achievement of all of the principal learning outcomes (A1-6). An understanding of the various roles of written material in relation to the visual is developed in Stage One (A6). A1 & A2 are also encountered in Stage 1.

Learning strategy

Students are expected to develop their understanding throughout the programme through the production of independently achieved bodies of studio work (A1-6). In addition, understanding of the implications of public exhibition is encouraged through students working as a team to realise all aspects of an interim public exhibition of work at the end of Stage One of the programme (A3 & A5). Students are encouraged to seek opportunities to exhibit independently outside the institution (A3 & A5). Understanding of historical, theoretical and contemporary debates and the relationship between text and their own practice is also encouraged through the Dissertation Module in Stage 2 (A6).

Assessment Strategy

Assessment strategy

Knowledge and understanding (A1-6) are assessed in Stage 2 by means of an exhibition presentation and a 5000 word dissertation, or a 3000 word dissertation/extended essay, plus a 15-20 minute presentation, on a topic related to the student's practice and/or theoretical concerns. They are also appraised through a viva voce examination with the External Examiner. All or some of A1-6 are assessed in Stage 1 by an exhibition proposal, 1500 word Essay, 2000 word Contextual/literature Review + Bibliography, together with a body of studio work. A 15-minute presentation representing the outcomes of the Beyond Discipline module is assessed in Semester 2 of Stage 1.

Intellectual Skills

On completing the programme students should be able to:

- B1.** The ability to assess critically different models of theory and practice in the visual arts field.
- B2.** The ability to test such critical judgements in relation to their own practices.

- B3.** The ability to evaluate and coherently structure material towards practical and/or intellectual ends.
- B4.** The ability to assess and evaluate new ideas in relation to previously established orthodoxies, conventions and knowledge, and to establish their possible role in opening avenues for further research.
- B5.** The ability to test arguments and apply them coherently and consistently in dealing with their own ideas and those of others.
- B6.** The ability to identify and solve problems.
- B7.** The ability to identify, direct and organise their own practice.
- B8.** The ability to think innovatively and creatively.

Teaching and Learning Methods

Teaching strategy

The development of skills B1, B2, B4 & B5 is encouraged through lecture and seminar programmes including the lecture series based on the contribution of visiting professionals (artists, curators, critics, publishers etc). These skills are also encouraged through regular group criticisms in the studios. Cognitive skills B3 and B6 are promoted in the production of bodies of studio work and in the essay, Contextual/literature Review + Bibliography, dissertation, extended essay and presentation and exhibition proposal. To varying degrees all eight cognitive skills are encouraged by the preparation and presentation of material for public exhibition/publication. In addition B4 is specifically encouraged through a required engagement with media outside of the student's main area of practice.

Learning strategy

Independent learning of cognitive skills B1-B8 takes place in the development of all studio based projects and in the research for and production of the written components. Opportunities to develop B1-B5 are present in the contributions made by students to seminars and group criticisms. B6 is encouraged in the exhibition projects organised collectively in Stages One and Two.

Assessment Strategy

Cognitive skills B1-B8 are assessed through the final presentation of studio work and the written components by an internal panel. These skills are also appraised through viva voce examination by an External Examiner.

Practical Skills

On completing the programme students should be able to:

- C1.** Use the techniques appropriate for the realisation of projects in visual arts media at an advanced level.
- C2.** Negotiate with support organisations, professional and funding bodies necessary for the realisation of exhibition projects.
- C3.** Communicate effectively with sponsors, art administrators, patrons and suppliers.
- C4.** Demonstrate the skills known as professional and life skills that are also transferable to a wide range of vocational fields, and which include critical, innovative and creative thought, and skills in visual and verbal presentation, time management and organisation.

Teaching and Learning Methods

Teaching strategy

Understanding of advanced studio practice is gained through tutorials, group criticisms and seminars (C1) throughout the two year programme. Understanding and practical experience (C2 & C3) of exhibition management are provided by seminars and workshops in Stage One of the programme. Technical skills training are also available via the FA workshops and specially organised training sessions. Individual projects may be supported where appropriate by technical staff.

Learning strategy

The development of practical skills is a constant element in the self-directed studio projects undertaken by all students (C1& C4). The skills necessary for managing the public exhibition of these projects are developed through the preparation of exhibitions of work at the end of Stages One and Two, an exhibition of work at the end of Semester 1 Stage 1 and the writing of an exhibition proposal in Stage One (C2 &C3).

Assessment Strategy

Subject specific and practical skills are assessed by the Exhibition of Work in Stage Two (C1). And through the final presentation of studio work and the written components by an internal panel. These skills are also appraised through viva voce examination by an External Examiner

Transferable/Key Skills

On completing the programme students should be able to:

- D1.** Communicate by means of clearly articulated, well supported and confident verbal presentations and well-argued and coherently structured written documents.
- D2.** Use library and other sources of information efficiently and appropriately.
- D3.** Use IT resources efficiently and appropriately.
- D4.** Plan and manage projects efficiently and appropriately.
- D5.** Work independently with initiative and also in groups.
- D6.** Identify and solve problems.
- D7.** Think critically, innovatively and creatively

Teaching and Learning Methods***Teaching strategy***

Key skills are taught in relation to most elements of the programme. D1 is taught in seminars dealing with the style and structure of critical writing and in other seminars and group criticisms. D2 and D3 are taught in the context of the Dissertation Development Module in Stage One. Skills D4, D5, D6 and D7 are promoted through commentaries on specific student projects in tutorials, group criticisms and reviews. Planning and management D4 and its related skills D5 and D6 are developed throughout all self initiated projects and through group work in the two student exhibitions. The dissertation provides opportunities for the development of skills D1-D7.

Learning strategy

Students are encouraged to acquire key skills D1, D5 and D7 through participation in seminars and group criticisms throughout the programme. D1 is also promoted through tutorial contact. D1-D7 are developed in the writing of a dissertation and the preparation of the interim exhibition and the final presentation of studio work.

Assessment Strategy

Key skills are not independently assessed. All key skills are examined by means of a presentation of studio work and written work to an internal panel. These skills are also appraised through viva voce examination by an External Examiner

12 Programme Curriculum, Structure and Features***Basic structure of the programme***

The Master of Fine Art Programme, which is modular, runs for six semesters within two calendar years. It is assumed that most students will undertake the full programme of study, however, those students unable to complete it in its entirety, or who fail to reach the standard required to progress to Stage 2 may be awarded a Diploma after fulfilling the commitments for Stage 1.

The components of the course are significantly different modular values. The majority of a student's time will be spent in developing self-directed studio projects in consultation with an academic tutor/supervisor. The a 5000 word dissertation, or a 3000 word dissertation/extended essay, plus a 15-20 minute presentation, which is prepared in Stage 2, is intended to function as a support for the student's development as a practitioner. It may develop accordingly in a number of possible ways and be formed by one or more from a number of critical or methodological approaches.

There is encouragement at all stages of the programme for students to undertake independent exhibition projects in public venues.

Stage 1 begins with introductory seminars in which new students and Stage 2 students give brief presentations to introduce their work to each other. Following these seminars, students at Stage 1 are involved in the management of Exhibition Projects, involving the development of a variety of practical and theoretical skills and the gaining of professional skills and knowledge. In Semesters 2 and 3 students prepare and complete the Interim Exhibition which is mounted in the Fine Art studios and/or in external venues. The exhibition provides opportunities to explore the roles of exhibiting artist, curator, exhibition designer and gallery technician. It is also an occasion on which MFA students may work with research students to create a joint exhibition. Students write an exhibition proposal, submitted at the end of Semester 2 of Stage 1 which encourages the development of those skills necessary for negotiating with gallery administrators and funding bodies in the development of exhibition projects.

In Stage 1 students undertake Dissertation preparation and complete a 1500 word essay and a 2000 word Contextual/literature Review + Bibliography. The preparation consists of a variety of workshops/seminars looking at approaches and forms of writing on visual arts subjects in relation to the student's own studio practice and their research for the Stage two Dissertation Module. It provides general skills and an awareness of methodologies for research. It also addresses a number of distinct elements such as Information Technology, Information Retrieval and Critical Strategies.

In Stage 1, there is an optional 20 credit module. This makes the student step outside of their normal sphere of studio practice and has the aim of encouraging cross-disciplinary opportunities and a reflective and more objective understanding of their particular practice.

A seminar series, presented by students, and facilitated by both students, staff and visitors, is common to both years of the programme. Subjects are selected by the student in relation to their studio practice and research interests and cover areas of theoretical and critical issues relevant to contemporary arts practice. The student's individual practice is the main focus for tutorial teaching and for group teaching in the form of group criticisms which begin in Semester Two and involve students from both years of the programme. Tutorial teaching is supplied by the student's academic tutor, by other departmental staff as surgery tutorials, and by visiting professionals, i.e. artists, curators and critics. The capacity to explore ideas articulately is at the centre of this element in the programme.

The final exhibition is seen as demonstrating the student's acquisition of knowledge of the curriculum and his/her capacity to employ key skills in problem solving and project management. The dissertation, or extended essay, plus a 15-20 minute presentation, which is submitted at the end of the Semester 1 in Stage 2 is the principal instrument in developing the abilities necessary for the successful articulation of ideas about visual arts practice in a variety of textual forms.

All modules, apart from Beyond Discipline are compulsory. Students must undertake Beyond Discipline or an equivalent 20 credit module.

Key features of the programme (including what makes the programme distinctive)

The MFA at Newcastle University is a two-year studio-based programme in Fine Art and is designed primarily to enable students to develop careers as professional artists, or careers in the visual arts field, either nationally or internationally. It is designed for graduates in Fine Art and for those with other backgrounds who wish to establish or extend their position as leading

practitioners in the contemporary art world. The programme also offers a sound grounding for those hoping to progress to PhD degree study.

The course is based in excellent purpose-built studio space and is taught by a wide range of distinguished and internationally celebrated practicing artists. The course can accommodate a wide range of practice: painting, sculpture, digital media, drawing, performance, photography, printmaking, installation or video art. Our weekly Visiting Lecturer programme enables some of the most interesting and original artists, critics, curators, historians and art professionals working today to present and discuss their projects. Students have 24hr access to studios and towards the end of June, when the undergraduate students are no longer in the building, the MFA students have access and the use of all the studios in the building in which to work over the summer and to subsequently exhibit if they wish. Students also use the Hatton Gallery to show work and are encouraged to engage fully with galleries and other professional and potential employment opportunities in the region and beyond. The course (and student body) very much benefits from being within a large, culturally and technologically rich, multidisciplinary university, in the centre of a city with a vibrant and growing contemporary art scene.

Programme regulations (link to on-line version)

[5808 Programme Regulations 23-24](#)

13 Support for Student Learning

Generic information regarding University provision is available [here](#).

14 Methods for evaluating and improving the quality and standards of teaching and learning

Generic information regarding University provision is available [here](#).

Accreditation reports

N/A

Additional mechanisms

Feedback from arts organisations employing graduates and from individual graduates working independently

- Feedback from the external examiner
- Feedback from independent external reviews (QAA, HEFCE)
- Relevance of the programme in relation to the general employability of graduates
- Relevance of the programme in relation to funding sources (AHRC etc)

15 Regulation of assessment

Generic information regarding University provision is available [here](#).

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In addition, information relating to the programme is provided in:

The University Prospectus: <http://www.ncl.ac.uk/postgraduate/courses/>

Degree Programme and University Regulations: <http://www.ncl.ac.uk/regulations/docs/>

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