

**PROGRAMME SPECIFICATION
(Taught Postgraduate)**



1	Awarding Institution	Newcastle University
2	Teaching Institution	Newcastle University
3	Final Award	Master of Arts
4	Programme Title	MA Fine Art
5	Programme Code	4186 F/P
6	Programme Accreditation	N/A
7	QAA Subject Benchmark(s)	Art and Design Benchmark Statement 2026
8	FHEQ Level	Level 7
9	Last updated	May 2026

10 Programme Aims

MA Fine Art (4186 F/P) is about making and exhibiting art. The curriculum encourages experimentation, risk-taking, and reflective practice, offering a bespoke and individualised studio-based learning experience that equips graduates with a versatile set of skills applicable to contemporary fine art careers.

The programme provides a learning environment which actively supports and fosters curiosity, innovation, individual enquiry and practical skills, towards the development of a distinctive and sustainable studio practice. Students gain a thorough understanding of the diversity of fine art methods, which allows them to create and critically analyse their own work and build skills and expertise.

Central to the programme is the cultivation of a networked graduate cohort that recognises the importance of building sustainable relationships within the contemporary art ecosystem. Through projects, studio and exhibition-making, students learn the value of collaboration, communication, and community-building. This is built into the lived experience of the course, with students encouraged to actively engage with other artists, curators, scholars, and audiences, fostering connections that extend beyond the classroom and into the wider art community.

Underpinned by a holistic approach to practice, MA Fine Art explores a wide range of cultural, social and historical contexts. The programme exposes students to leading-edge research and practice in contemporary art, enabling them to advance their self-reflection, communication and critical thinking. Engaging in interdisciplinary dialogue and collaboration, graduates are empowered to navigate the complexities of contemporary fine art with confidence. The aims of the programmes are:

1. To support students to develop a self-determined, independent, coherent body of artwork.
2. To build awareness of the contextual frameworks in which the student's creative practice exists and the issues related to this, enabling the development and understanding of their creative identity.

3. To develop an understanding of the roles of artists, audiences and organisations within the fine art ecosystem and the professional skills required to navigate the sector.
4. To produce students with the ability to collaborate, communicate and discuss the concerns of their work confidently with one another and within a broader professional context.

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 Art and Design (2020), which emphasise the study of art and design as an academic and intellectual pursuit. Learning Outcomes develops a range of cognitive abilities related to the aesthetic, ethical and social contexts of art as a human experience.

Knowledge and Understanding

On completing the programme students will have acquired knowledge and understanding of:

- A1.** The physical and intellectual methods necessary for building an ambitious studio and exhibition practice.
- A2.** The range of historical and contemporary critical debates surrounding visual arts practice and the implications of these for their own studio work.
- A3.** Historical, practical and critical issues surrounding a broad range of exhibition practices.
- A4.** The institutional and professional structures within which contemporary visual arts practice exists, and how to engage with them.
- A5.** The roles of artists, curators, critics and audiences in shaping contemporary visual art.
- A6.** Advance research methodologies and the relationship between theory and practice.

11a) Teaching and Learning Methods

The Learning and Teaching Strategy (LTAS) for MA Fine Art is based around facilitating critically-engaged making, collaboration and communication through experiential learning.

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.)

Students develop as artists through the production of independently achieved bodies of studio work (A1-6). In the specific area of exhibition management, knowledge and understanding are developed in practical workshops in Exhibiting Art (A2,4,5). In addition, understanding of the implications of public exhibition is encouraged through students working as a team to realise all aspects of an ambitious public exhibition of work at the end of the year (A3,; A5) . An understanding of the various roles of written material in relation to the visual is developed in Stage One. Understanding of historical, theoretical and contemporary debates and the relationship between text and their own practice is also encouraged through Art writing (IA2-A6).

The programme takes a holistic approach to learning, teaching and student-led assessment, supporting students to overcome challenges with focused individualised support. Such problem-based learning advances and encourages the sharing of knowledge around contemporary practice, discipline-specific understanding and vocabularies and the testing and evaluating of material approaches. The programme is underpinned by the building of understanding and communication of intercultural, interdisciplinary and individual ideas. Working with professional artists and leading researchers, students learn in groups and individually to advance their critical abilities through interdisciplinary dialogue. Through this, students build recognition of regional, national and global contexts for creative work and the specific vocabularies associated with these.

The teaching and learning methods are underpinned by a multidisciplinary, experiential learning approach that fosters collaboration and innovation. The programme incorporates face-to-face and online activities to promote the acquisition of knowledge and the application of theoretical concepts in real-world contexts. The curriculum recognises the importance of integrating theory and practice by involving both academic experts and practitioners. Modules are designed to empower learners to take risks and experiment, whilst consolidating their conceptual and practical understanding and preparing for exhibiting their own work.

Key to achieving this is engagement with studio work, individual one-to-one tutorials and group critiques, as well as seminars, lectures and workshops. Regional and national trips to exhibitions, visiting lectures and 'working parties' for team projects scaffold learning and provide reflective and interdisciplinary experiences. Individual and group-led research activities may involve conducting library research, visiting relevant sites and organisations, and dialogue with professional practitioners. Furthermore, learners are provided with opportunities to deliver group presentations to build confidence and supportive networks. Overall, this teaching and learning approach equips learners with a well-rounded skill set that combines theoretical knowledge, research-skills, practical application, collaboration, critical thinking, and innovation.

11 b) Assessment Strategy

This programme uses authentic and integrated assessment methods designed to evaluate knowledge and understanding of key practices, theories and frameworks related to fine art in real world contexts. Assessment across modules works holistically at each semester to critically appraise their practical development alongside their grasp of theoretical, social and cultural contexts. Additionally, the assessment strategy aims to foster multi-disciplinary collaboration and reflective practice among learners working both individually and as a group. Studio work, critical analysis and written and verbal communication underpin learning and teaching and the assessment of these skills and abilities. The assessment criteria focus on the student's creative practice and the written and verbal articulation of its concerns, as evidence of depth of knowledge, critical analysis, creativity, ethical awareness and collaborative skills.

Across the programme students are assessed in the following ways:

Studio-based art practice and the dissemination of this through digital portfolios and in-person exhibitions (A1; A2; A3; A4)

Collaborative curatorial projects involving students' own work and that of others (A4; A5)

Critical writing about art in a range of contexts, in relation to their own and other artists' work A3; A6;

Assessed group critique of their work within a studio or exhibition context (A1; A4; A6)

Regular constructive feedback is provided to learners on their assessments and throughout the programme through group, peer-to-peer crits and individual tutorials. Feedback emphasises strengths and areas of improvement to encourage continuous learning and development throughout the programme. By employing this cohesive assessment and feedback strategy, the programme effectively and constantly evaluates learners' knowledge and understanding, thereby promoting a reflexive approach to addressing the complex challenges of building a distinctive and sustainable fine art practice.

Intellectual Skills

On completing the programme, students will be able to:

- B1.** Critically assess different models of theory and practice in the visual arts.
- B2.** Test such critical judgements in relation to their own practices and challenge their position.
- B3.** Evaluate and coherently structure material towards practical and/or intellectual ends.
- B4.** Assess and evaluate new ideas in relation to previously established orthodoxies, conventions and knowledge, and to establish their role in opening possible avenues for further research.
- B5.** Articulate their own ideas and those of others in the visual arts field
- B6.** Evaluate and communicate their position of their own practice within the wider visual arts field.

Teaching and Learning Methods

The LTAS is articulated in section 11a and is based around experiential and project-based learning and teaching methods. To develop the intellectual skills B1-B6, which encompass critical thinking, creativity, flexibility, problem-solving and critical analysis, the programme provides a range of teaching and learning methods to engage learners. These include:

- Critical analysis of studio and exhibition based work and digital portfolios (B1; B2; B3).
- Studio based and curatorial practices (B2; B3; B6)
- Writing about art in a range of different contexts (B2; B3; B4)
- Presenting work to others, effectively communicating different perspectives and problem-solving approaches through collaborative learning experiences and projects (B4; B6)

Regular feedback from tutors within the studio supports students throughout the programme. It emphasises strengths of critical practice and encourages students to broaden their horizons and knowledge. Combining these teaching and learning methods creates a dynamic and enriching educational experience, fostering the development of the creative and critical thinking and analytical skills necessary for developing a robust and self-reflexive contemporary art practice.

Assessment Strategy

The main objective of the overall programme assessment strategy is provided in section 11a.

In addition, intellectual skills are assessed by digital portfolios of work (B1; B3; B4), art writing (B1; B2; B4; B5; B6), studio-based practice and curational practices (B2; B3; B4), and group critiques (B5, B6).

Practical Skills

On completing the programme students will be able to:

- C1.** Use the techniques appropriate for the realisation of professional projects in the visual arts.
- C2.** Communicate and negotiate with a range of professional organisations and individuals necessary for the exhibition and/or dissemination of their work.
- C3.** Demonstrate critical and creative thought in visual and verbal forms
- C4.** Direct and organise their own practice.

Teaching and Learning Methods

The LTAS is articulated in section 11a and is based around experiential and project-based learning and teaching methods. To develop the practical skills C1-C4 which encompass the creating and exhibiting of creative work, students will engage in:

- Studio-based practice and creative solutions to problem-solving (C1; C4).
- The organisation and management of a major exhibition with support from peers, professional artists and teaching staff (C2; C3)
- Working in groups to collectively solve exhibition problems (C1-C4)
- Self-reflexive analysis of their work and development of the abilities to articulate their own place and position as an artist (C1-C4)

These teaching methods are the main learning strand of the programme, with students working in the studio for 40 credits in Semesters 1 and 2 and then being resident in their exhibition space for the 60-credit final project module. This allows for a dynamic and bespoke learning experience.

Assessment Strategy

The main objective of the overall programme assessment strategy is provided in section 11a. In addition, practice-based skills are assessed by producing art in the studio (C1, C2), exhibitions, analysis of these through viva tutorials and group critiques and in writing about art and exhibition practices (C3, C4).

Transferable/Key Skills

On completing the programme students will be able to:

- D1.** Communicate clearly and confidentially, both verbally and in writing
- D2.** Use secondary and digital resources efficiently and appropriately.
- D3.** Plan and manage professional projects with leadership support, both independently and in groups.
- D4.** Think critically and creatively to solve problems in relation to the production, exhibition and communication of their practice.

Teaching and Learning Methods

The LTAS is articulated in section 11a and is based around experiential and project-based learning and teaching methods. In addition, and to enable this, students:

- Acquire key transferable skills through knowledge, intellectual and practice-based skills and learning strategies (see above).
- Use case studies, examples and digital resource to position themselves as experts and solve complex problems (D1; D3).
- Engage in debates and discussions around contemporary art practice with leaders in the field (D1; D2).
- Are supported to produce and promote public facing exhibitions (D3; D4).
- Present their work, ideas and critical arguments in front of their peers and professional artists, allowing for constructive feedback (D1; D4).

Assessment Strategy

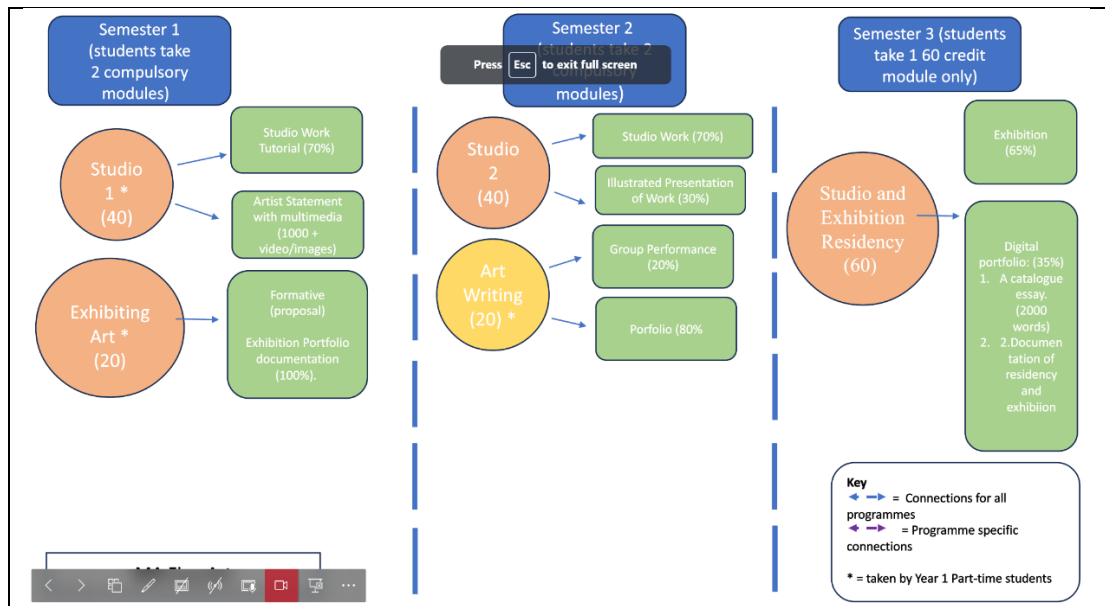
The main objective of the overall programme assessment strategy is provided in section 11a. Key transferable skills are also acquired through successful attainment of the skills and knowledge outcomes and assessment (see above). Specifically, key transferable skills are assessed through writing about art practice, (D1 and D2) supported and scaffolded management of practice and through the exhibiting and digital presentation of their work (D3; D4).

12 Programme Curriculum, Structure and Features

MA Fine Art is about making and exhibiting art. It offers a contemporary creative education, focussed around bespoke and individualised studio-based support for learning that equips graduates with a versatile set of skills vital for a continuing professional life as a visual artist. **Semester 1** focuses on developing skills in the first studio-based module and expanding knowledge of the contemporary art field and in curating and exhibiting practices. Students develop their individual studio practice and start to think about how their work might be exhibited through theoretical and critical understanding and exploration of curation. **Semester 2** focuses on production and reflection and allows students to start mapping out their own plans for exhibition. Advancing their skills in writing about art supports this activity and provides transferable skills for the wider art sector. **Semester 3** offers students a fully immersive residency in their large exhibition space, where they can build their own expertise and independence as an artist through a final major public project.

An optional studio project offered in Semester 2 enables the student to 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.

Basic structure of the programme and assessment journey



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

The Fine Art department celebrates the **centenary of the establishment of the Fine Art degree at Newcastle University in 1923**, as the first Fine Art BA in the country. The MA Fine Art course draws closely on the legacy of the BA Fine Art and the MFA Fine Art, which has established itself as **one of the longest running Fine Art MFA programmes in the UK**.

MA Fine Art (4186) at Newcastle University is a one-year full time (or 2year PT) studio-based Fine Art course based on and taught in parallel with MFA stage 1 (5808)

MA Fine Art (4186) is designed for graduates in Fine Art and for those with other backgrounds who wish to develop their creative interests and research questions in the contemporary visual arts field.

The programme offers excellent preparation for students interested in further developing their professional practice as an artist or researcher on our Fine Art MFA (Top-up) 5900

The suite of Fine Art postgraduate taught courses (MFA 5808, MA Fine Art, 4186 MFA (top-up) 5900) is housed together and based in excellent purpose-built studio space and 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. 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 which includes BA, MA, MFA and PhD) 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.

At the heart of the programme is a **curriculum that centres creative, critical, self-reflexive practice and research**. Students are encouraged to explore their own creative interests and research questions, guided by a diverse staff made up of practicing artists and art historians. Through workshops, lectures, group work and independent study projects, students develop their own sustainable studio practice and own voice and vision as artist. By emphasizing experimentation, risk-taking, and reflective practice, the programme fosters a culture of innovation and inquiry, preparing students to make meaningful contributions to the field of Fine Art practice.

The MA programme plays a crucial role in the art department and continues to challenge successfully radical models of Fine Art practice. The MA course continues to instil open ended, practice-led approaches to art education and maintains traditional values of Fine Art pedagogy based on the dealings with the tools, materials and making in the studio-based course. The **unique provision of student studios and exhibition spaces** allowing for a full semester residency for final exhibition has become a rarity in the field.

The Fine Art department successfully creates a strong **sense of belonging** and a meaningful learning environment, reflected not only in a high level of student satisfaction and NSS results (National Student Survey) as one of the best courses in the country. The MA Fine Art programme responds also to societal challenges through its highly ambitious studio programme as well as a wide range of *Extra Curricular Activities* and opportunities open to MA students. Current extra-curricular activities include specialist Forums (Performance, Animation, Painting, Greenfinger Forum) in order to facilitate opportunities for cross-year teaching and engagement.

[For more information please see the Fine Art Community Board.](#)

Preparing students for life after university is a key priority in Fine Art. Thanks to the **Bartlett and Forshaw endowments**, Fine Art students (UGT and PGT) can apply their skills and develop professional relationships outside of the department. They complete artist residencies, work at the British Pavilion at the Venice Biennale, receive feedback from leading artists, curators, and critics, and exhibit their work outside the department engaging with the art world in Newcastle. Fine Art students also benefit from the department's partnerships with the European Ceramics Work Centre, The NewBridge Project, the British School at Rome, Newcastle City, and local schools.

The department encourages artistic responsibility. Students and staff have responded to the climate emergency through the **Bartlett Sustainable Practice Award** which encourages students to develop a sustainable artistic practice. Fine Art also has a Climate Crisis Working Party made up of teaching and technical staff committed to lowering the department's carbon footprint. The Fine Art department works towards best practice principles in climate aware arts education in line with Newcastle University's Vision Statement that recognizes **environmental sustainability** as strategic goal. Soup Wednesdays see staff and students make and share soup with the Fine Art community.

New initiatives including the new public research seminar **Art and Ecology** series offer a platform for engagement with research in history of art at a time when the

discipline is under-going change in response to issues of urgent significance, including intergenerational justice, colonial legacies, and environmental breakdown.

The Fine Art public speaker series **Future Climates: Artists and Curators** responds to the Climate Crisis in a new series of talks developed in collaboration between Art Monthly and the Fine Art, Newcastle University. The series brings together international artists, curators, writers to reflect on how cultural practices can respond to the climate crisis and its complex, societal, political, economic, historical entanglements with a specific focus on practices and thinking that go beyond aesthetic and conceptual engagement and set about making a real-life difference.

The Fine Art department celebrates **FINE ART 100**, the four-year-long centenary of the creation in 1923 of the very first BA Fine Art in Britain, at Newcastle University. Our activities 2023-27, will celebrate the past, look at the present, and question what the next 100 years of Fine Art education and creative research might be.

13 Support for Student Learning

Generic information regarding University provision is available at the following link.

[Generic Information](#)

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

Generic information regarding University provision is available at the following link.

[Generic Information](#)

Accreditation reports

Additional mechanisms

15 Regulation of assessment

Generic information regarding University provision is available at the following link.

[Generic Information](#)

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: [Programme Regulations 2026-27](#)

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.

Mapping of Intended Learning Outcomes onto Curriculum/Modules

Module	Type	Intended Learning Outcomes Level 7			
		A	B	C	D
FIN8013 Studio 1 (40)	Compulsory	1, 2	1, 6.	1,	4
FIN8014 Studio 2 (40)	Compulsory	1, 2	2, 3, 4	1,	3,
FIN8016 Art Writing (20)	Compulsory	3, 6.	3,	3,	1, 2
FIN8019 Exhibiting Art (20)	Compulsory	2, 4, 5,	1, 5	2, 4	2, 3
FIN8015 Studio Residency and Exhibition (60)	Compulsory	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6	2, 4, 5, 6,	1, 2, 4,	1, 2, 3, 4