

**MFA in Fine Art (full-time)**  
**For students entering in 2014/5**

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|---|---|
| Awarding Institution:                       | University of Reading                       |
| Teaching Institution:                       | University of Reading                       |
| Relevant QAA subject Benchmarking group(s): |   |
| Faculty:                                    | Arts, Humanities and Social Science Faculty |
| Programme length:                           | 21 months                                   |
| Date of specification:                      | 08/Sep/2014                                 |
| Programme Director:                         | Prof Susanne Clausen                        |
| Programme Advisor:                          | Prof Alun Rowlands                          |
| Board of Studies:                           | Fine Art                                    |
| Accreditation:                              |   |

**Summary of programme aims**

The programme aims to instigate professional excellence through subjecting independent practice - the ideas, concepts and the work produced - to critical enquiry. The central aim of the programme is to build on students' practice, extending their knowledge and theoretical understanding, enhancing existing skills in critical and theoretical analysis of the debates in contemporary art. The programme seeks to implement these aims through a challenging environment that encourages students to speculate with innovative practices. It develops and fosters an independent approach to learning, introducing methods relevant to contemporary art practice in order to consolidate and review students' position as an artist. The programme therefore places emphasis on student-centred learning and individually directed research. Key to this is students' self-reflexivity within their own practice, its ambitions and wider significance within the current debates in art. To this end the programme's learning and teaching is organised in order to facilitate critical understanding and reflection through exposure to professional practice and criticism.

**Transferable skills**

Through the exercise of initiative and personal responsibility, organisational skills will be developed including developing creative enquiries, meeting deadlines, planning, team working, problem solving and career management.

- Undertaking and managing independent and self directed work through the management of a substantial practice-based project
- Analysing and thinking critically through the relation of theory and practice
- Formulating, both in practice and writing, complex arguments with an awareness of their position in the cultural field
- Extensive understanding of methods, resources and skills necessary to develop practical knowledge
- Planning and producing a substantial piece of research as critical practice
- Gaining experience of teaching, its planning and delivery, through Postgraduate Teaching Assistant Scheme.

**Programme content**

Year One of the 21 month programme runs from October to the end of June. Students develop their own independent practice-based research throughout the year, supported by regular meetings with staff. During this year students will work in the studios and workshops (FAM1S) testing their practice through tutorials, seminars and via internal and external exhibitions and events.

Students will write two essays of not less than 1500 words per term (FAM1C) responding to the urgencies of their practice and its location within current debates.

Year Two runs from July to June. It builds on the work in Year One extending research and development throughout the module (FAM2S) culminating in the Final Exhibition. The six essays (FAM2C) establish the theoretical framework for practice, supporting the studio achievements. Throughout the programme students will document their work collating and articulating their practice reflectively in the appropriate form.

| Code  | Title   | Credits | Level |
|-------|---|---------|-------|
| FAM1S | Studio practice                               | 90      | 7     |
| FAM1C | Contextual Texts                              | 30      | 7     |
| FAM2S | Studio and exhibition                         | 140     | 7     |
| FAM2C | Contextual Texts and professional development | 40      | 7     |

**Part-time or modular arrangements**

There are no part time arrangements for this programme.

## **Progression requirements**

N/A

## **Summary of Teaching and Assessment**

Teaching takes place through weekly tutorials, seminars and presentations. Deviations from the schedule may be made to accommodate visiting lecturers or organised study visits. Students receive feedback on presentations throughout the year towards final assessment. Assessment of studio work is by exhibition and documentation at the end of the year. Essays submitted two per term, receive feedback and formative assessment, before submission of all six essays for summative assessment at the end of the Spring term.

The University's taught postgraduate marks classification is as follows:

### **Mark Interpretation**

70-100% Distinction

60-69% Merit

50-59% Good standard (Pass)

### **Failing categories:**

40-49% Work below threshold standard

0-39% Unsatisfactory Work

### **For Masters Degrees**

The final degree is derived from a weighted average of second year modules FAM2S and FAM2C only. To pass the degree of MFA students must gain an average mark of 50 or more overall. Modules marked below 50 must not exceed 60 credits.

Students who gain an average mark of 70 or more overall and have no mark below 40 will be eligible for a Distinction. Those gaining an average mark of 60 or more overall and no mark below 40 will be eligible for a Merit.

### **For Postgraduate Diplomas**

Students successfully completing FAM1S and FAM1C may be awarded the Diploma in Fine Art.

To pass the Postgraduate Diploma students must gain an average mark of 50 or more overall. Modules marked below 50 must not exceed 60 credits.

Students who gain an average mark of 70 or more overall and have no mark below 40 will be eligible for a Distinction. Those gaining an average mark of 60 or more overall and no mark below 40 will be eligible for a merit.

The Marking Criteria and Classification Framework for Taught Postgraduate Programmes which applies across the University, may be found at: <http://www.reading.ac.uk/Exams/>.

## **Admission requirements**

Entrants to this programme are normally required to have obtained a good Honours degree in Fine Art or equivalent qualification, together with a portfolio submission. The Department reserves the right to request relevant experience of practice, particularly in the case of candidates with a first degree from non-art related fields. In the case of applications without a first degree, evidence of relevant professional practice should be provided.

**Admissions Tutor:** Alun Rowlands

## **Support for students and their learning**

University support for students and their learning falls into two categories. Learning support is provided by a wide array of services across the University, including: the University Library, the Careers, Placement and Experience Centre (CPEC), In-session English Support Programme, the Study Advice and Mathematics Support Centre teams, IT Services and the Student Access to Independent Learning (S@il) computer-based

teaching and learning facilities. There are language laboratory facilities both for those students studying on a language degree and for those taking modules offered by the Institution-wide Language Programme. Student guidance and welfare support is provided by Personal Tutors, School Senior Tutors, the Students' Union, the Medical Practice and advisers in the Student Services Centre. The Student Services Centre is housed in the Carrington Building and offers advice on accommodation, careers, disability, finance, and wellbeing, academic issues (eg problems with module selection) and exam related queries. Students can get key information and guidance from the team of Helpdesk Advisers, or make an appointment with a specialist adviser; Student Services also offer drop-in sessions and runs workshops and seminars on a range of topics. For more information see [www.reading.ac.uk/student](http://www.reading.ac.uk/student)

In Art each student is allocated a studio with twenty-four hour access. There is access to studio workshop for construction and two digital workshops including facilities for film and video editing, imaging, sound and website building. The department runs inductions and workshops covering core skills, embedded with health and safety as good practice. There are several bookable spaces available for installation, time-based work, testing modes of display and curation. Students can avail themselves of the opportunity to curate or collaborate on projects within the department gallery through proposal submission. New students are provided with a copy of the *Handbook for taught post-graduate programmes* (available online via Blackboard) that covers resources, programme-specific matters and examinations. Academic feedback and guidance is given orally and in written feedback, and is supported through individual tutorials and group seminars. In addition there are directed study visits to museums and galleries. The Library houses key journals and publications alongside electronic databases. Specialist subject librarians are available to advise and guide students to library resources. The University has a number of collections and archives, including the Samuel Beckett Archive and Ure Museum, while the Department also houses the University Drawings Collection and archives of 150 years of Art at Reading.

Across the PGDiP and MFA Fine Art, there are opportunities via the Post Graduate Teaching Assistant scheme to gain experience of teaching. Working with a member of staff postgraduate students can assist in the delivery of workshops, seminars and projects at undergraduate level.

### **Career prospects**

Graduates of the PGDiP and MFA Fine Art are equipped to sustain their practice as artists, curators and writers. The programme is excellent preparation for further study at PhD level. Graduates have found that the specific and transferable skills developed by the programme enable them to enter professions across the cultural field. It also offers, through the Postgraduate Teaching Assistant scheme, experience and preparation for teaching in higher education.

### **Opportunities for study abroad or for placements**

Informal opportunities to spend time abroad occur from time to time as do opportunities to exhibit.

### **Programme Outcomes**

#### **Knowledge and Understanding**

##### **A. Knowledge and understanding of:**

1. individual critical practice situated within a changing and transformative cultural field
2. the complex relation between practice and theory, informed by current debates within contemporary art
3. methods of practice-based research and enquiry
4. exhibition, modes of display and staging practice within different contexts
5. appropriate documentation of studio work
6. qualities and skills necessary for professional practice, further study and lifelong learning.

##### **Teaching/learning methods and strategies**

Knowledge and understanding are gained through individual studio tutorials (1) and peer group seminars (1-2), attending lectures by visiting artists and postgraduate research seminars (3) that engage with current debates in contemporary art. Self-initiated and directed visits to museum and gallery exhibitions and events are integral to the programme (5). Opportunities for presenting and curating exhibitions allow for appropriate processes to be negotiated and tested (4-5).

##### *Assessment*

Knowledge is assessed through individual exhibitions, performances or events emerging from studio work and documentation.

Essays display understanding of the relevant critical discourse utilised to reflect upon practice and concerns of contemporary art.

### Skills and other attributes

#### B. Intellectual skills - *able to:*

To be able to:

1. reflect critically and analytically within independent practice
2. articulate both orally and in writing concerns in their own work and in response to other art practices and theory
3. use critical judgement engaging, identifying and evaluating relevant critical contexts
4. consider and situate practice and research within social and cultural contexts
5. utilise source material effectively within self-directed objectives of individual practice and research.

#### C. Practical skills - *able to:*

To be able to:

- 1 work within practical processes with regard to health and safety
- 2 draw from working knowledge of a wide range of materials and processes
- 3 research and produce reflective documentation
- 4 understand the issues surrounding display and presentation of practice.

#### D. Transferable skills - *able to:*

To be able to:

- 1 engage in creative speculation managing self-directed work
- 2 initiate and work responsibly both alone and as a team
- 3 communicate effectively in visual, spoken and written forms
- 4 develop and update portfolio of skills
- 5 understand methods, resources and skills necessary for research.

#### Teaching/learning methods and strategies

Intellectual skills are acquired through independent practice that includes reading and visiting key cultural exhibitions and events in preparation for tutorials, seminars and essay writing.

#### Assessment

Intellectual skills are formatively tested through individual contributions to seminars and through summative assessment of essays. Critical judgement is assessed through production of exhibitions, including documentation of studio practice.

#### Teaching/learning methods and strategies

Consultation with studio tutors and practical demonstration by technicians. The writing of risk assessment forms for particular projects (1-2).

Developed through tutorials, workshops and feedback on practice and associated documentation (3-4).

#### Assessment

Formative assessment throughout the year of exhibitions of studio work and contextual essays.

#### Teaching/learning methods and strategies

Transferable skills are embedded throughout the programme in both studio teaching and seminars (1-3).

Individual practices highlight certain practical skills as appropriate to the respective scope of the work undertaken (4). Articulation of skills and abilities are emphasised through formative and summative exhibitions and presentations (5).

#### Assessment

Students must demonstrate these skills in their practice and in their reflective documentation.

**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 he/she 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 module can be found in the module description and in the programme handbook. The University reserves the right to modify this specification in unforeseen circumstances, or where the process of academic development and feedback from students, quality assurance process or external sources, such as professional bodies, requires a change to be made. In such circumstances, a revised specification will be issued.**