

## Programme Specification

### Course record information

Name and level of final award:	<b>MA Photography Arts</b> The MA Photography Arts is a degree that is Bologna FQ-EHEA second cycle degree or diploma compatible.
Name and level of intermediate awards:	Postgraduate Diploma Photography Arts Postgraduate Certificate Photography Arts
Awarding body/institution:	University of Westminster
Teaching Institution:	University of Westminster
Status of awarding body/institution:	Recognised Body
Location of delivery:	Harrow Campus College of Design, Creative and Digital Industries
Language of delivery and assessment:	English
Mode, length of study and normal starting month:	One year (full time). September start. Two years (part time day/evening). September start.
<a href="#">QAA subject benchmarking group(s)</a> :	Art & Design <i>and</i> Communication, Media, Film and Cultural Studies
Professional statutory or regulatory body:	N/A
Date of course validation/review:	September 2015
Date of programme specification approval:	July 2016 Updated 2019
Valid for cohorts:	From 2016-17
Course Leader:	David Bate
Course URL: Westminster Course Code: JACS code: UKPASS code:	<a href="http://westminster.ac.uk/courses/postgraduate">westminster.ac.uk/courses/postgraduate</a> PMPHT02F (FT) PMPHT02P (PT) W600 (Cinematics & Photography)

## **Admissions requirements**

There are standard minimum [entry requirements](#) for all undergraduate courses. Students are advised to check the standard requirements for the most up-to-date information. For most courses a decision will be made on the basis of your application form alone. However, for some courses the selection process may include an interview to demonstrate your strengths in addition to any formal entry requirements. More information can be found here: [westminster.ac.uk/courses/postgraduate/how-to-apply](http://westminster.ac.uk/courses/postgraduate/how-to-apply)

## **Introduction**

The MA Photography Arts programme is a new updated version of the long established MA Photographic Studies course. The MA Photographic Studies programme existed since 1994 with great success, and drew on the world renowned BA Photographic Arts programme. The BA course was one of the first degree courses dedicated to photography in the UK, founded in the late 1970s. Teaching innovation and excellence in the school can be traced back to the 1850s, when the school pioneered the first teaching classes in photography.

The new MA Photography Arts course embraces recent changes in photography, whilst maintaining a solid link with tradition, and provides students with extensive access to both analogue and digital photographic facilities. Students often combine the different values of both to create new and innovative creative work.

This exciting new Photography Arts programme is orientated towards photography as an independent art practice, contextualised within the modern global media environment, visual art history, aesthetics and critical communication studies. Students develop their own independent photographic research and studies, drawing on knowledge and skills developed or acquired during the course. As an object of study 'photography' is defined as a practice of representation produced within the framework of its general cultural use, an environment with considerable impact and value in everyday life.

## **Aims of the course**

The MA Photography Arts is an international photography arts course for those who wish to develop their photography into a distinct visual and conceptual expression alongside research into contemporary photography and its related cultural context. The course draws on the wider scene of photography in social and established media practices to inform and set out a critical context for study and understanding of contemporary issues and questions. The course aim is that students establish new avenues of individual practice, challenging existing thought and ideas about photography through practical and critical research. Technological skills are developed through and alongside these aims as part of an expanded practice, understood in the context of photography as central to contemporary art and media culture.

The course aims to enable:

- Students to focus on a particular aspect of the broader subject area of photography in which they have prior knowledge or experience through previous study or employment.
- To develop specialist subject areas or fields of photographic expertise in study and greater depth than encountered during previous study or experience (including enabling students to develop knowledge of photography as a new subject or field of study in combination with a relevant subject area in which they have prior experience, thus enabling inter or multidisciplinary study).
- Students to undertake a research project on a topic within the area of interest that makes up the majority of the overall assessment.
- Students to learn how to conduct research and undertake training in research methods, often linked to a particular subject or field of study
- Students to specialise or to become more highly specialised in an area of practice related to a particular profession employment or supporting progression towards professional registration in a particular profession.

### **Employment and further study opportunities**

Graduates of this master's degree are equipped to enter a variety of employment types (either subject-specific or generalist) or to continue academic study at a higher level, for example a doctorate (provided that they meet the necessary entry requirements). Graduates of photographic practice and theory master's programmes in particular also possess the skills and experience necessary for professions or areas of related practice.

The graduates of this course have gone on to successful careers as artists, curators, lecturers, researchers, gallery and museum educationalists, and other related cultural work, based in images and cultural institutions such as museums, galleries, photography agencies, media companies and freelance photographic work.

Today's organisations need graduates with both good degrees and skills relevant to the workplace, i.e. employability skills. The University of Westminster is committed to developing employable graduates by ensuring that:

- career development skills are embedded at appropriate points in the course
- opportunities for part-time work, placements and work-related learning activities are widely available to students
- Staff continue to widen and strengthen the University's links with employers in all sectors, involving them in curriculum design and encouraging their participation in other aspects of the University's career education and guidance provision
- Staff are provided with up-to-date data on market trends and employers' requirements, which will inform the service delivered to students.

### **Course learning outcomes**

At the end of the course students will have achieved the ability to plan and produce a substantial body of critically informed photographic work, and be able to research and approach an appropriate field of photographic study within a historical, critical and contemporary framework.

The learning strategy for the MA Photography Arts reflects the University's policy of 'Educating for Professional Life' and is designed to provide a broad range of

transferable skills that equip students to develop or enhance careers in the media and communication fields.

<b>Course Learning Outcomes</b>	<b>Modules in which LO is assessed</b>
<b>Knowledge and Understanding (KU)</b>	
<i>Graduates will be able to</i>	
1. Participate effectively in the creative and critical production of visual work, using conceptual and technical processes.	Photography practice Research and Development (Photography) Masters project
2. Develop individual research methods and critically discuss the understanding of photographic practice and theory.	Theories of the image Photography and aesthetics Contemporary debates Research and Development (Photography)
3. Evaluate the social, cultural and technological context of specific practices and theories of photography.	Photography practice Theories of the image Research and Development (Photography)
<b>Specific Skills (SS)</b>	
<i>Graduates will be able to</i>	
4. Evaluate and reflect on their own and others' visual research work.	Photography practice Research and Development (Photography) Contemporary debates Masters project
5. Manage, plan and analyse progress of visual practice and critical research.	Photography practice Research and Development (Photography) Masters project
6. Participate effectively in the peer review and discussion of photographic work.	Photography practice Research and Development (Photography) Masters project

<p>5. Implement technological proficiency in one or more areas of dedicated photographic practice, its production and presentation.</p> <p>6. Communicate with new verbal/written skills in photographic criticism, located within the social context of photography, art and visual culture.</p>	<p>Photography practice  Research and Development (Photography)  Masters project  Theories of the image  Photography and aesthetics  Contemporary debates  Research methods</p>
<p><b>Key Transferable Skills (KTS)</b>  <i>Graduates will be able to</i></p>	
<p>6. Access learning resources and be able to locate, use and evaluate a full range of research sources, e.g. carry out literature reviews and engage in research activity</p>	<p>Theories of the image  Photography and aesthetics  Contemporary debates  Research and Development (Photography)</p>
<p>7. Advance their own knowledge and understanding, and recognise new strategic development needs.</p>	<p>Photography practice  Theories of the image  Research and Development (Photography)  Masters project</p>
<p>8. Mobilize independent, critical and self-reflective approaches towards ideas and concepts in photography and the visual arts.</p>	<p>Photography practice  Contemporary debates  Research and Development (Photography)  Masters project</p>
<p>9. Be able to engage confidently in academic and professional communication both orally, in presentations and in writing: reporting on actions, concepts and ideas clearly, autonomously and competently.</p>	<p>Photography practice  Masters project  Research and Development (Photography)  Theories of the image  Photography and aesthetics  Contemporary debates</p>
<p>10. Adopt a problem-solving approach to respond to issues and obstacles, at a level expected in professional life and continuing academic study.</p>	<p>Photography practice  Theories of the image  Photography and aesthetics  Contemporary debates  Research methods  Masters project</p>

**Learning, teaching and assessment methods**

Teaching and learning on this course is designed to enhance your skills, knowledge and experience of practices related to your field of study and the needs of each module. The teaching and learning methods on the course include the following:

**Lectures** are designed to introduce relevant topics and are usually concise explorations of them, and aim to help you develop your own knowledge and thinking further. Lectures are usually accompanied by Q&A (question and answer sessions), group discussions, class work or student presentations. If you do not understand a point, or disagree with it, you should become able to ask questions and argue your case.

**Seminars** are designed to encourage you to discuss a topic, based on the lecture, reading and assigned or in-class viewing. Sometimes individual students will be asked to introduce a specific topic in a class.

**Individual Reading** and viewing: We provide lists of recommended reading and visual materials, which are given out for each module. Some modules will include a written list of recommended photography books, films, television or other relevant related materials, which you should try to look at. 'Browsing' materials is a crucial part of your process of informal learning and has an important impact on your formal work. Reading lists represent a basis for exploration of a subject. You are expected to read and regularly view works outside class time, and to go beyond the basic reading and viewing list to seek out other new material.

**Workshops:** These are designed so that you work in a group in class on a particular topic, research question, practical technique or skill. Workshops often using real scenarios or examples to work intensively to solve practical problems. Occasionally, everyone in the group will contribute to create communication materials together.

**Guest speakers:** We invite leading researchers, professionals, thinkers and practitioners to speak on the course, sharing their expertise and insights on current or past practices, future developments in the field and questions relating to the practice of photography in a more general context of visual culture.

**Presentations:** Asking students to give individual (or group) presentations is crucial in giving you experience of presenting ideas and arguments concisely. The aim is to familiarise you with the preparation and use of presentational formats (PowerPoint, etc), and to learn how to interact with an audience. Typically your presentation should show a clarity of argument, with evidence of reading and finding an appropriate presentational style.

**Independent Research:** Student-led work on projects or essays is crucial to masters study, and involves you developing your research activity and a range of analytic, critical, planning and practical skills. These are crucial in informing to the assessed practical project work and written essays, where required.

**Visits and trips:** Modules may include visits to see museums, art exhibitions, photography festivals, conferences, or work environments, including Westminster's exhibition spaces. All these events aim to enable you to engage with professional activities and practices related to the course. Some class trips simply take advantage of our location in London to expose you to important historical and contemporary developments in photography, film, art and culture.

**Internet:** Modules will require you to undertake web searches on particular topics. The aim is for you to gain expertise and experience in using different web-based interfaces to develop research skills. Being able to assess, critically view online data and make decisions about what is important in the integration of this material into assessed and non-assessed coursework and class discussions.

**Research Diary:** Some modules may require you to maintain a 'research diary'. These are usually a A3 sized art book that documents your research process in each practical module. The materials of the research book become an important reference document, showing important visual and written references (artworks, essays, films, photobooks, images, advertising, fashion, etc.) that you have engaged with in developing your project, alongside visual and technical experiments, their results and other relevant experiences linked to the practical work produced.

**Social media** may be used as a learning tool (e.g. blogs, microblogs, social networks, user-generated videos). You would be encouraged to make active and analytic use of these technologies in order to present and critically reflect on theoretical questions. This also helps you to develop your practical experience of using social media for research and professional ends.

## **Assessment**

There are no formal exams in this course. Your progress will be assessed by a variety of methods which we have developed in order to carefully equip you with the skills identified by potential employers, as well as transferable critical thinking and problem solving skills that are expected to be fostered in postgraduate study.

You will be briefed and provided with full information on the assessment in the relevant module and handbook, also discussed in class with an opportunity for questions. For each module you will be given assessment criteria against which your work will be assessed, and at the end provided with a feedback sheet, clearly showing the outcomes.

The assessment methods we have developed are designed to showcase a range of skills and understanding, to give you a portfolio of materials which you can show to others, e.g. future employers, etc. These methods also allow all students to stretch and to develop new ideas, skills and practices, regardless of their level of experience and understanding at the start.

Assessment methods include:

- Practical project work, to test development of practical, visual, technical and conceptual skills.
- Academic essays to develop argumentation and research skills, critical thinking, new knowledge and better contextual awareness.
- Reflective writing (research diary, blogs or workbooks and critical reviews) that document developments of new skills and knowledge and evaluation of innovative approaches to contemporary practice in visual arts and related media.
- Presentations to develop public speaking skills and verbal confidence; □  
Written introductions to visual work to develop practical skills in writing.



## COURSE DIAGRAM

## MA PHOTOGRAPHY ARTS

SEPTEMBER  
SEPT

JANUARY

MAY/JUNE

PHOTOGRAPHY PRACTICES

THEORIES OF THE  
IMAGE

PHOTOGRAPHY &  
AESTHETICS

YEAR ONE P/T

-----  
YEAR TWO P/T

RESEARCH AND  
DEVELOPMENT

MASTERS PROJECT

CONTEMPORARY  
DEBATES

S

Full-time: complete all these modules (or options) in one full year (September to September).

Part-time: complete these modules (or options) across two years.

### Academic regulations

The current Handbook of Academic Regulations is available at [westminster.ac.uk/academic-regulations](http://westminster.ac.uk/academic-regulations)

### How will you be supported in your studies?

#### Course Management

The MA Photographic Arts is taught within the Westminster School of Arts, in the College of Design, Creative and Digital Industries. The management structure supporting the course is as follows:

- Lucy Soutter, Course Leader responsible for day to day running and overall management of the course and development of the curriculum. She can be contacted by email: [L.Soutter@westminster.ac.uk](mailto:L.Soutter@westminster.ac.uk)

The Course Leader will be responsible for:

- Admissions
- Approving students' programme of study
- Organisation of tutorial and supervisory support and pastoral care
- Co-ordination of Dissertation supervision

- Co-ordination of marks for assessment boards
- General management of the course

The course team reviews and develops the course and sets the framework for the above procedures, in which all members of course team participate. Module leaders oversee the delivery of all aspects of the module(s) they are responsible for. They consult students on matters relevant to their module.

### **Academic Support**

Upon arrival, an induction programme will introduce you to the staff responsible for the course, the campus on which you will be studying, the Library and IT facilities, additional support available and to your Campus Registry. You will be provided with the Course Handbook, which provides detailed information about the course. Each course has a course leader or Director of Studies. All students enrolled on a full-time course and part time students registered for more than 60 credits a year have a personal tutor, who provides advice and guidance on academic matters. The University uses a Virtual Learning Environment called Blackboard where students access their course materials, and can communicate and collaborate with staff and other students. Further information on Blackboard can be found at [westminster.ac.uk/blackboard](http://westminster.ac.uk/blackboard).

### **Learning Support**

The Academic Learning Development Centre supports students in developing the skills required for higher education. As well as online resources in Blackboard, students have the opportunity to attend Study Skills workshops and one to one appointments. Further information on the Academic Learning Development Centre can be found at [westminster.ac.uk/academic-learning-development](http://westminster.ac.uk/academic-learning-development).

Learning support includes four libraries, each holding a collection of resources related to the subjects taught at that site. Students<sup>1</sup> can search the entire library collection online through the Library Search service to find and reserve printed books, and access electronic resources (databases, e-journals, e-books). Students can choose to study in the libraries, which have areas for silent and group study, desktop computers, laptops for loan, photocopying and printing services. They can also choose from several computer rooms at each campus where desktop computers are available with the general and specialist software that supports the courses taught in their College. Students can also securely connect their own laptops and mobile devices to the University wireless network.

### **Support Services**

The University of Westminster Student and Academic Services department provide advice and guidance on accommodation, financial and legal matters, personal counselling, health and disability issues, careers, specialist advice for international students and the chaplaincy providing multi-faith guidance. Further information on the advice available to students can be found at [westminster.ac.uk/student-advice](http://westminster.ac.uk/student-advice). The University of Westminster Students' Union also provides a range of facilities to support students during their time at the University. Further information on UWSU can be found at [westminster.ac.uk/students-union](http://westminster.ac.uk/students-union).

**How do we ensure the quality of our courses and continuous improvement?**

The course was reapproved by a University Validation Panel in 2015. The panel included internal peers from the University, academic(s) from another university and a representative from industry. This helps to ensure the comparability of the course to those offered in other universities and the relevance to employers.

The course is also monitored each year by the College to ensure it is running effectively and that issues which might affect the student experience have been appropriately addressed. Staff will consider evidence about the course, including the outcomes from student engagement activities, including School Staff Student Exchange meetings, evidence of student progression and achievement and the reports from external examiners, to evaluate the effectiveness of the course. Each College puts in to place an action plan. This may for example include making changes on the way the module is taught, assessed or even how the course is structured in order to improve the course, in such cases an approval process is in place.

A Course review takes place periodically to ensure that the curriculum is up-to-date and that the skills gained on the course continue to be relevant to employers. Students meet with review panels to provide feedback on their experiences. Student feedback from previous years is also part of the evidence used to assess how the course has been running.

### **How do we act on student feedback?**

Student feedback is important to the University and student views are taken seriously. Student feedback is gathered in a variety of ways.

- Through student engagement activities at Course/Module level, students have the opportunity to express their voice in the running of their course. Student representatives are elected to expressly represent the views of their peers. The University and the Students' Union work together to provide a full induction to the role of the student representatives.
- There are also School Staff Student Exchange meetings that enable wider discussions across the School. Student representatives are also represented on key College and University committees.
- All students are invited to complete a questionnaire before the end of each module. The feedback from this will inform the module leader on the effectiveness of the module and highlight areas that could be enhanced.
- The University also has an annual Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey or PTES which helps us compare how we are doing with other institutions, to make changes that will improve what we do in future and to keep doing the things that you value.

**Please note:** This programme specification provides a concise summary of the main features of the course and the learning outcomes that a student might reasonably be expected to achieve and demonstrate if s/he takes full advantage of the learning opportunities that are provided. This specification should be read in conjunction with the Course Handbook provided to students and Module Handbooks, which provide more detailed information on the specific learning outcomes, content, teaching, learning and assessment methods for each module.