Plymouth University

Faculty of Arts & Humanities

School of Art & Media

Programme Specification

MA Contemporary Art Practice

Approved by Minor Change 12/11/14
1. **Final award title:** MA Contemporary Art Practice

    Intermediate award : PGCert

    Intermediate award : PGDip

1. **Awarding Institution:** Plymouth University

    **Teaching institution(s):** Plymouth University

2. **Accrediting body** N/A

3. **Distinctive Features of the Programme and the Student Experience**

   The Contemporary Art Practice Programme offers a number of distinctive features, which are variously evident throughout the course:

   - MA Contemporary Art Practice provides a multi disciplinary programme for arts practitioners to develop their skills, knowledge and understanding across the wide and discursive range of methods, techniques, media, and approaches that contribute to contemporary arts and its changing and growing contexts and audiences.
   - It enables students to explore, reflect upon, propose, negotiate and establish their own artistic identity through critical engagement with ideas, concepts and traditions through group, collaborative and individual learning. Crucially, the student is at the centre of her/his learning, but brings a wealth of experiences - professional and personal - to contribute to the dynamic and supportive learning environment of the group, whilst also drawing upon the diverse range of staff expertise and research interests.
   - The programme emphasises negotiation as a key strategy, and this gives the students a high level of self-direction as reflective practitioners. The process of self-evaluation of their negotiated aims and objectives places students in an active role in terms of learning and assessment. For CPD students negotiation can take the form of aims and intentions specific to their professional context needs.
   - The MA Contemporary Art Practice programme is distinctive in that it offers a two year Extended Full-time (EFT) mode of study (2 x 30 weeks) in line with European models for Masters provision (Bologna 2nd Cycle). Students can also study part-time (PT) over 3 years (3 x 30 weeks) which enables Continuing Professional Development (CPD).
EFT students study for a minimum of 3 days per week and PT students study for a minimum of 2 days per week.

- The programme places emphasis on the students’ own research interests and themes, and through the supervisory process these are aligned with the research interests and foci of staff, drawn from the Fine Art subject team.
- Students are able to negotiate the incorporation of professionally commissioned projects and residencies as well as work-based learning/placements into their MA Project, and to work with external agencies to realise their projects.
- The programme maintains international links through field trips, staff research, and staff membership of pan-European educational bodies. There are also opportunities for Erasmus exchange in the International Exchange module.

4. **Relevant QAA Subject Benchmark Group(s)**
   QAA and SEEC Masters Level Descriptors

5. **Programme Structure**

Programme structure and modules with credit and award requirements for MA Contemporary Art Practice are as follows:

### Year One EFT

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mandatory (core) modules</th>
<th>Level 7 credits</th>
<th>Option modules</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>MAC 701 Contemporary Art Practice 1</td>
<td>30</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MAC 702 Contemporary Art Practice 2</td>
<td>30</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MAC 703 Contemporary Art Practice 3</td>
<td>30</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MAC 704 Contemporary Art Practice 4</td>
<td>30</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

### Year Two EFT

| MAC 705 MA Project | 60 | |

### Year One PT

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mandatory (core) modules</th>
<th>Level 7 credits</th>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>MAC 702 Contemporary Art Practice 2</td>
<td>30</td>
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<tr>
<td>Year Two PT</td>
<td></td>
<td>Year Three PT</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>MAC 703 Contemporary Art Practice 3</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>MAC 705 MA Project</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MAC 706 International Exchange</td>
<td>30</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MAC 704 Contemporary Art Practice 4</td>
<td>30</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Award requirements**: students require 180 level 7 MA CAP credits.

**Award**: Masters

**Award Title**: MA Contemporary Art Practice

**Award requirements**: students require 120 level 7 credits.

**Award**: Postgraduate Diploma

**Award requirements**: students require 60 level 7 credits.

**Award**: Postgraduate Certificate

6. **Programme Aims**
   1. Maintain and continue to develop a learning environment appropriate to postgraduate study in the field of contemporary art
   2. Provide high-quality teaching, underpinned by innovative staff research, scholarship, professional practice and artistic research
   3. To encourage students’ engagement, learning and professional development within broader cultural and social contexts through negotiated art projects
   4. Enable students to achieve a high level of performance in their art practice through self-directed learning and engaging in research opportunities appropriate to the award of a masters degree
   5. Enhance the quality of students’ art practice through the development of critical enquiry, speculative and innovative thinking and making, and realised through appropriate experimentation, processes, approaches, methods, ideas, artworks and texts
   6. Introduce students to the methods, approaches and strategies of artistic research.
   7. Enable students to develop and test an effective conceptual, contextual, and critical framework for their art practice informed by
disciplinary perspectives and cultural, social, ethical and political contexts

8. Widen participation to include all those who can benefit from the programme

7. Programme Intended Learning Outcomes

8.1. Knowledge and understanding

On successful completion graduates should have developed:

1) a systematic understanding of knowledge, and a critical awareness of new insights much of which is informed by the fields of critical theory, and at the forefront of contemporary art practice

2) a comprehensive understanding of techniques applicable to their own research or advanced art practice

3) continue to advance their knowledge and understanding and to develop new skills to a high level

4) originality in the application of knowledge, together with an ethical and practical understanding of how established techniques of research and enquiry are used to create and interpret knowledge within artistic research

8.2. Cognitive and intellectual skills

On successful completion graduates should have developed:

1) the ability to deal with complex issues both systematically and creatively, make sound judgments and communicate their conclusions clearly to specialist and non-specialist audiences

2) the ability to evaluate critically current research and advanced scholarship in the discipline of contemporary arts practice

3) the ability to evaluate methodologies and develop critiques of them and, where appropriate, to propose and test new methods and forms of artistic research

4) an appropriate conceptual and critical framework for their art practice
8.3. **Key and transferable skills**

On successful completion graduates should have developed:

1) self-directed learning and originality in tackling and solving problems, and act autonomously in planning and implementing tasks at a professional or equivalent level

2) the ability to critically evaluate their art practice against self-determined criteria

3) a high level of communication skills in appropriate visual/spatial/material/sonic and verbal/written modes

8.4. **Employment related skills**

On successful completion graduates should have developed:

1) the exercise of initiative and personal reliability

2) decision-making skills in complex and unpredictable situations

3) the independent learning skills required for continuing professional and careers development

8.5. **Practical skills**

On successful completion graduates should have developed:

1) the ability to make creative use of the relationship between practice and theory and generated innovative responses to problems and issues

2) flexibility and effectiveness in the application of technical knowledge and expertise in the field of contemporary arts practice

3) exploratory and experimental approaches to ideas, methods, processes and material investigation

9. **Admissions Criteria, including APCL, APEL and DAS arrangements**

Qualifications: Applicants will be expected to have either of the following- BA or BSc in a related subject or equivalent
Applicants are normally interviewed by two members of staff, with portfolio (physical or digital), containing developmental and finished work; sketchbooks; critically annotated workbooks outlining the processes of research, ideas; samples of critical writing, and a written proposal for MA study. In the case of CPD applicants the interview team would expect to discuss the applicant’s intentions in relation to their professional context and their expectations for development through a mode of study.

Applicants with disabilities will be considered on the same basis as other applicants. If an offer is made they will then be invited to attend a DAS interview that the programme Admissions Tutor will also attend, to establish their particular needs and support requirements followed by a DAS assessment. It is therefore important that applicants declare any disability prior to interview on the application form. Special interview arrangement will be made if necessary for those with disabilities.

NB. DAS evaluation of individual students by the university specialist unit assesses their needs. The subsequent relevant information is circulated to the teaching team and subject librarians and appropriate technical and other provision is made accordingly.

Overseas students, if unavailable for interview, can be selected through the production of an electronic portfolio and a skype interview, and are required to have achieved a IELTS English score of 6.5.

Applicants with Accredited Prior Learning or Accredited Prior Experiential Learning are considered on an individual basis according to the University regulations framework. We welcome applicants with APL or APEL because of the diverse experiences and contributions they can bring to the course whilst recognising that their needs may differ from standard entry students.

9. Progression criteria for Final and Intermediate Awards
   N/A

10. Exceptions to Regulations
All modules are assessed on a pass/fail basis, and awards are unclassified. All 30 and 60 credit modules are non compensatable.

Student assessment marks will remain provisional until they have been considered and ratified at the relevant Subject Assessment Panel. Progression decisions remain provisional until they have been considered and agreed at the relevant PGT Board.

11. Transitional Arrangements
Students undertaking the 3 year programme will change in Sept 2015/16 to the new CEP. The transitional process for the EFT requires students to undertake an extra 30 credits in year two in Sept 2015/16.

12. Mapping and Appendices:
   12.1. ILO’s & Assessment against Modules Mapping

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Programme Intended Learning Outcomes Map</th>
<th>MA Contemporary Art Practice</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Core Programme Intended Learning Outcomes</strong></td>
<td><strong>Module Aims (MA) and Programme Aims (PA)</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge and Understanding</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>On successful completion postgraduates should have developed:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- a systematic understanding of knowledge, and a critical awareness of new insights much of which is informed by the fields of critical theory, and at the forefront of contemporary art practice</td>
<td>enable students to develop and test an effective conceptual, contextual, and critical framework for their art practice informed by disciplinary perspectives and cultural, social, ethical and political contexts (PA7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- a comprehensive understanding of techniques applicable to their own research or advanced art practice</td>
<td>to enable students to further explore and realise [...] ideas through practice in an individual or collaborative project utilising appropriate processes, methods and approaches (MA)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- continue to advance their knowledge and understanding and to develop new skills to a high level</td>
<td>to develop an understanding of the motives, intentions and ideologies which frame and inform art practice and develop tools of analysis and critical questioning in order to challenge such frames (MA)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
- originality in the application of knowledge, together with an ethical and practical understanding of how established techniques of research and enquiry are used to create and interpret knowledge within artistic research

to enable students to apply knowledge through undertaking artistic research, and for sustained analysis, critical reflection and evaluation (MA)

A,C,E,F MAC 705

**Cognitive and intellectual skills**

On successful completion postgraduates should have developed:

- the ability to deal with complex issues both systematically and creatively, make sound judgments and communicate their conclusions clearly to specialist and non-specialist audiences

to enable students to present outcomes through critically considered and professional strategies for dissemination including critically reflective writing (MA)

D,E,F, G,M MAC 705

- the ability to evaluate critically current research and advanced scholarship in the discipline of contemporary arts practice

to provide a critical forum for examining and presenting ideas, interrogating and contextualising practice, and for shared critical analysis and reflection (MA)

D,E,F,H MAC 701

- the ability to evaluate methodologies and develop critiques of them and, where appropriate, to propose and test new methods and forms of artistic research

Introduce students to the methods, approaches and strategies of artistic research (PA6)

A,C,G, K,L MAC 704 MAC 705

- an appropriate conceptual and critical framework for their art practice

to enable students to question how critical frameworks relate to the student’s own practice, informed by a new cultural setting (MA)

A,D,E,O MAC 706(PT)

**Key Transferable Skills**

(Generic).

On successful completion postgraduates should have developed:
| - self-directed learning and originality in tackling and solving problems, and act autonomously in planning and implementing tasks at a professional or equivalent level | enable students to achieve a high level of performance in their art practice through self-directed learning and engaging in research opportunities appropriate to the award of a masters degree (PA4) | G,J,L,N | MAC 701, MAC 702, MAC 703, MAC 704, MAC 705, MAC 706(PT) |
| - the ability to critically evaluate their art practice against self-determined criteria | to enable students to evaluate their artistic research against self-determined aims and objectives (MA) | F,J,M | MAC 705 |
| - a high level of communication skills in appropriate visual/spatial/material/sonic and verbal/written modes | to support the writing of a coherent proposal for the development of future artistic research that articulates a developing critical framework and self-determined aims and objectives | L,M,O,P,Q | MAC 704, MAC 702 |

**Employment related skills**

On successful completion postgraduates should have developed:

| - the exercise of initiative and personal reliability | to enable students to identify ideas and themes appropriate to Masters level enquiry through self-directed practice and writing | E,G,I,J,L,O | MAC 701 |
| - decision-making skills in complex and unpredictable situations | to enable students to realise ideas and intentions through a coherently conceived MA project effectively deploying appropriate research methods, speculative approaches, processes and media (MA) | G,L,M,O,P,Q | MAC 705 |
| - the independent learning skills required for | to encourage students’ engagement, learning and | A,G,L,M | MAC 701, MAC 702 |
**Practical Skills** (Subject Specific)

On successful completion postgraduates should have developed:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Practical Skills</th>
<th>MAC 703</th>
<th>MAC 704</th>
<th>MAC 705</th>
<th>MAC 706(PT)</th>
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<tr>
<td>to enable students to realise ideas and intentions through a coherently conceived MA project effectively deploying appropriate research methods, speculative approaches, processes and media (MA)</td>
<td>A,C,D,E, G,I, M,N O,P,Q</td>
<td>MAC 705</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>flexibility and effectiveness in the application of technical knowledge and expertise in the field of contemporary arts practice</td>
<td>C,I,O,P Q</td>
<td>MAC 701 MAC 702 MAC 703</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
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<td>enhance the quality of student’s art practice through the development of critical enquiry, speculative and innovative thinking and making, and realised through appropriate experimentation, processes, approaches, methods, ideas, artworks and texts (PA5)</td>
<td>A,B,C,D, E,F,G,I,J, K,L,M,N O,P,Q</td>
<td>MAC 701 MAC 702 MAC 703 MAC 704 MAC 705 MAC 706(PT)</td>
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**Appendix 1: SCEE Credit Level descriptors for FE and HE**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level 7: Masters</th>
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</table>
Development of Knowledge and Understanding (subject specific)

The Learner

A. **Knowledge base:** has depth and systematic understanding of knowledge in specialised / applied areas and / across areas and can work with theoretical / research-based knowledge at the forefront of their academic discipline

B. **Ethical issues:** has the awareness and ability to manage the implications of ethical dilemmas and work pro-actively with others to formulate solutions

C. **Disciplinary methodologies:** has a comprehensive understanding of techniques / methodologies applicable to their own work (theory or research-based).

Cognitive and Intellectual Skills (generic)

The Learner:

D. **Analysis:** with critical awareness can undertake analysis of complex, incomplete or contradictory areas of knowledge communicating the outcome effectively

E. **Synthesis:** with critical awareness, can synthesise information in a manner that may be innovative, utilising knowledge or processes from the forefront of the discipline / practice

F. **Evaluation:** has a level of conceptual understanding that will allow her/him critically to evaluate research, advanced scholarship and methodologies and argue alternative approaches

G. **Application:** can demonstrate initiative and originality in problem solving. Can act autonomously in planning and implementing tasks at a professional or equivalent level, making decisions in complex and unpredictable situations

Key/Transferable Skills (generic)

The Learner:

H. **Group working:** can work effectively with a group as leader or member. Can clarify tasks and make appropriate use of the capacities of group members. Is able to negotiate and handle conflict with confidence

I. **Learning resources:** is able to use full range of learning resources

J. **Self evaluation:** is reflective on own and others’ functioning in order to improve practice

K. **Management of information:** can competently undertake research tasks with minimum guidance

L. **Autonomy:** is an independent and self critical learner, guiding the learning of others and managing own requirements for continuing professional development.

M. **Communications:** can engage confidently in academic and professional communication with others, reporting on action clearly, autonomously and competently
N. **Problem solving:** has independent learning ability required for continuing professional study, making professional use of others where appropriate

**Practical Skills (subject specific)**

The Learner:

O. **Application of skills:** can operate in complex and unpredictable and/or specialised contexts, and has an overview of the issues governing good practice

P. **Autonomy in skill use:** is able to exercise initiative and personal responsibility in professional practice

Q. **Technical expertise:** has technical expertise, performs smoothly with precision and effectiveness; can adapt skills and design or develop new skills and/or procedures for new situations.