



Programme Specification

1. General Information

Programme title:	Digital Direction
Award:	Masters
Qualification Framework level:	Level 7
School/Department or equivalent:	School of Communication
Campus location(s):	White City
Total UK credits:	180
Date valid from/to:	2023-24

2. Programme Philosophy

Digital Direction addresses our urgent need for inclusive and relevant storytelling. Our programme examines the emergence of new technologies for telling stories, such as VR, AR, AI, games engines and frameworks, and mobile platforms, alongside the future of storytelling itself. Our purpose is to inspire communication practitioners to approach contemporary communication critically, and to discover new and meaningful ways to tell stories in our world today. Our programme is not just open to practitioners from the arts but also to journalists, writers, musicians, theatre makers and anyone who wants to experiment creatively and collectively with new narrative approaches driven by ethical, environmental, epistemological and social imperatives. It is for students who want to use emerging storytelling tools and technologies critically, working with others to assemble and amplify stories that should be told and heard.

In a climate of continually shifting social, political, cultural and technological contexts, global challenges, pervasive and systemic inequalities, new communication paradigms are emerging that require bold, imaginative and critically informed concepts, processes and practitioners. Entangled with the social and material implications of digital technologies, contemporary media platforms such as VR, mobile apps, web environments and the time-based narrative content they host are ubiquitous in contemporary life. They have the potential to be accessible to us all and to support individual and shared forms of authorship, expression and curation, yet they can also be exclusive, inextricably linked with technological innovation and the politics of control.

Our programme sets out to enhance our understanding of the role that digital culture can play within these broader contexts, looking at how media and storytelling in a post-digital era can help to positively change the terms and means of global communication. We look at ways to rethink what storytelling can be and what it can achieve, we invite new perspectives, we explore the ethics of

technology and the politics and poetics of storytelling from diverse intellectual and practical standpoints. As our relationships with species, our planet and technologies evolve we look at ways of rethinking and reframing storytelling itself, at parallel human and nonhuman realities, other futures, at sensuous modes of storytelling experience, at new forms of narrative ecologies and subjectivities. Our approach is informed by critically reflexive, situated, cooperative and exploratory forms of research, and we expect students to continuously interrogate emerging storytelling knowledge and practice in and across relevant disciplines.

In Digital Direction you might set out to develop research-led social and sustainable communication strategies responding to urgent needs for urban housing, responsive and accessible production methods to raise awareness of environmental threats, or explore new storytelling questions, contexts or challenges. You might work with families to create augmented documentaries, develop an open-source storytelling platform with a local community, design accessible social VR experiences, or experiment with performance to examine the implications of narratives created with or by machines. You could collaborate with others to address urgent concerns, investigate distributed forms of human and nonhuman intelligence, or explore what it means to tell stories with frogs, ponds, plants and trees. You might engage with political or intercultural issues, material and intangible heritages, explore ways to leverage the power of contemporary media platforms to instigate positive social or cultural change, deconstruct (post)colonial storytelling practices, narratives and tropes, or experiment with forms of storytelling guided by nature to speculate on our comprehension of the world or to ask questions about who we understand ourselves to be.

Appealing to creative and critical practitioners from a diverse range of backgrounds and with a passion for exploring how storytelling can inform positive change, our programme addresses the need for creative leaders, makers and critical thinkers who can engage with fast changing social and professional contexts, develop inclusive practices that leverage the power of emerging media, and open up new storytelling possibilities for the benefit of us all.

3. Educational Aims and Outcomes of the Programme

Programme aims

MA Digital Direction aims to:

- provide a critical and connected environment for digital storytelling pedagogy, research and practice at the forefront of the field;

and to enable students to:

- address the future of storytelling, exploring emerging storytelling practices, cultures and technologies critically and cooperatively;
- engage meaningfully with urgent social, environmental, epistemological and technological challenges through imaginative, collective and critically reflective forms of practice;
- define and develop inclusive, accessible and relevant storytelling in digital cultures;
- form connections and build relationships with others, guided by critical practices in relevant disciplines;

- build a nuanced understanding of digital storytelling in relation to diverse storytelling traditions, cultures and knowledges;
- experiment with materials, processes, technologies, forms and environments to gain the skills needed for rapidly changing professional contexts;
- explore and develop ethical forms of leadership for the creative industries.

What will I be expected to achieve?

Upon successful completion of the programme, you will be expected to meet the requirements of both the College-wide Learning Outcomes and your programme-specific Learning Outcomes.

College-Wide Learning Outcomes

You should be able to:

- Interrogate and articulate the intentions of your work in relation to the critical and conceptual context of your field(s) of study;
- Independently plan and produce work that is informed by developments at the forefront of your field(s) of study;
- Evaluate and critique the principles and methods of research in your field(s) of study, and apply these principles to your creative, professional and/or scholarly practice;
- Demonstrate originality in how you translate knowledge into practice;
- Communicate your creative, professional and/or scholarly practice to a non-specialist audience;
- Critically reflect on the likely public impact of your creative, professional and/or scholarly practice, and on your responsibilities as a practitioner;
- Define your professional ambitions and identify the challenges involved in meeting them

Programme-Specific Learning Outcomes

You should be able to:

- Experiment with digital storytelling concepts, processes and environments, working with and in consideration of others to address concerns in contemporary culture;
- Investigate future possibilities for digital storytelling, examining emerging issues situated within real-world media contexts, communities, traditions and professions;
- Devise, apply and evaluate inclusive digital storytelling approaches for real-world situations and audiences;
- Design and test a technical approach to global, inclusive storytelling that critically applies digital technology through cooperative forms of practice;
- Prototype experimental content for extended reality contexts using relevant technical approaches informed by research, critique and collaboration;
- Design, direct and manage a complex storytelling project in a relevant format and environment using innovative methods and techniques ethically within your practice.

4. What will I learn?

Curriculum Map

Term 1	Term 2	Term 3
Critical Stories (45 credits)	Making Worlds with Others (15 credits)	Independent Research Project (60 credits)
	Immersive Enquiries (30 credits)	
AcrossRCA (30 credits)		

Programme Structure

Unit Title	Term	Credit Value	Core or Elective?
Critical Stories	1	45	Core
AcrossRCA	1 & 2	30	Core
Making Worlds with Others	2	15	Elective
Immersive Enquiries	2	30	Core
Independent Research Project	3	60	Core

During **unit 1, Critical Stories**, we will explore the foundational approaches of the programme, focusing on critical, co-operative and experimental storytelling methods, media ecologies and artefacts. During the unit you will be introduced to diverse concepts and practices relevant to contemporary storytelling, media and communication. Working with others, you will be asked to assemble a project that proposes, tests and evaluates inclusive forms of digital storytelling practice, using responsive methods to explore contexts and/or raise the visibility of urgent concerns in contemporary culture.

Across **terms 1 and 2**, you will participate in **AcrossRCA**. This unit aims to support you to meet the challenges of a complex, uncertain and changing world by bringing you together to work collaboratively in interdisciplinary teams on a series of themed projects informed by expertise within and beyond the College. These projects will challenge you to use your intellect and imagination to address key cultural, social, environmental and economic challenges. In doing so, you will develop and reflect on the abilities required to translate knowledge into action, and help

demonstrate the contribution that the creative arts can make to our understanding and experience of the world.

In **term 2, the Making Worlds with Others** School-wide unit will allow you to work alongside students within and across the School. Working from the perspective of your individual practices and disciplines, you will develop a project that engages with others and/or creates mutual exchanges of ideas and understandings, with the intention to create critically engaged situations and/or outcomes resulting in convivial knowledge exchange. Through collaborative learning and making, the unit will support you in understanding knowledge exchange and public engagement and how you are to situate your own practice in these territories. The unit will also ask you to question how socially engaged practice can contribute to cultural understanding, co-researching and co-creating methods for knowing with, not knowing about.

Unit 4, Immersive Enquiries, focuses on working critically and experimentally with immersive environments, mobile platforms, and emerging areas of media practice to conceptualise, test and evaluate future directions. During the unit you will be asked to produce a prototype for an immersive storytelling environment and/or mobile platform that looks critically and collectively at real-world concerns, and to collaborate with others to explore the changing effects of interactive time-based media on human communication, behaviour and experience.

In unit 5, the Independent Research Project (IRP), you will have the opportunity to work independently to develop a comprehensive programme of research-led practice, critically exploring a topic of your own choosing through individual or collaborative approaches. The unit provides scope for you to bring together the core competencies, methods and processes you have developed during the programme and to define, contextualise, produce and evaluate a substantial body of creative and critical research. During the unit you will be asked to engage responsibly with storytelling perspectives and research methods, and to address real-world concerns inclusively within your work. You will also be encouraged to hone your research, professional and leadership skills, articulate your future direction, and show how your practice contributes to debates that are at the forefront of the field.

5. How will I learn?

Briefings

Introduction to core information about a unit, including unit aims, schedule, academic delivery, assessment and feedback processes.

Storytelling Communities

During your studies you will be expected to form thematic storytelling communities to support the development of your learning. Community building activities will be co-led with programme tutors who will work with you at the start of the programme to collectively identify common interests, ambitions and ways of working. Each storytelling community will be supported by the programme

team, who will help you shape a learning agenda and programme of activities to support the development of your studies. Focusing on peer learning alongside contributions from tutors, this might involve establishing reading / watching / listening groups, presenting and discussing your work, or experimenting with concepts or processes.

Storytelling Forums

At key points during each term, the storytelling communities will come together through storytelling forums engaging the whole programme community to share and discuss the ideas, questions and activities they have been developing. Storytelling forums will typically be organised to review thematic areas of interest, debate and critique ideas, share work in progress, and inform emerging directions within the programme. They will be facilitated by the programme team and may also involve collaborators, partner organisations and communities.

Projects

Projects are the core learning and teaching method for the programme. Projects can be structured to suit the ambitions of an individual student or a collaborative group. Each unit has a set project – focused on making – that leverages the knowledge and skills delivered through seminars, workshops, tutorials, critical reviews, and technical development. Projects for each unit can vary in length and intended outcome. They build on the core principles of experimentation, critical thinking and a material understanding of digital and post/non-digital cultures and practices. Projects may be developed in partnership with organisations and communities, creating opportunities to co-originate and co-locate work in specific contexts. For each project you will be asked to identify any associated technical needs and ethical, health & safety or data issues, in a project proposal and technical plan to help you and us manage them.

Tutorials

Tutorials can be organised on an individual or group basis. Several themes underlie most tutorials and will be addressed throughout the programme. Your relationship with your tutor is based on discussion and collaboration and it is important to establish a professional working relationship with them. Tutors generally have a great deal of expertise in their field so professional concerns are an area of focus too. In advance of a tutorial, you will be expected to prepare a progress report, reflecting on the development of your work. You should use your progress report to document any challenges or issues you are facing, as well as your wider learning journey. Following the tutorials, you and your tutor will complete a progress report and an action plan. Your tutor will comment on your current projects and give an overall report on your work, referencing criteria used in relevant assessments. With your tutor you will be asked to complete one progress report each term.

Programme Seminars, Lectures and Critical Forums

Theory/practice seminars enable discussion, debate, and offer a collective take on expanded, poetic and critical perspectives on media, communication, and contemporary art and design practices. The Digital Direction Critical Forums are seminars co-led by students, tutors and guests who are active practitioners and/or researchers. They are based around key texts and artefacts

that students will be expected to read and review. Seminars address topics such as new materialisms, intra-actions, diffraction, augmented and virtual realities, digital sensuousness, surveillance and control, architectures of power, indigenous epistemologies and ontologies, AI language and translation, symbiotic systems, coevolution, rituals, resistance and collective making, futurisms and counterfuturisms. Lectures draw on the expertise of tutors and guests to bring new perspectives and insights to themes and subjects offered by each unit. Lectures can be delivered as conventionally understood or adopt more experimental, performative and unorthodox approaches.

Technical Inductions

Arranged by Technical Services, these are activities that enable students to use technical facilities safely and, when appropriate, without supervision.

Technical and Practical Workshops

Workshops, which are skills and knowledge-based, are designed to introduce students to practices associated with the production and understanding of digital and post/non-digital communication, media and design. Workshops provide students with practical and critical tools to apply to unit projects and/or to their own self-initiated work.

Negotiated Technical Learning

Sessions that are arranged by students with technical staff, either individually or in small groups, to discuss and gain feedback on technical considerations.

Offsite Visits

You will have opportunities to participate in off-site visits and field trips during your studies to visit galleries and events and/or to visit studios and meet practitioners. Offsite visits may be organised across the programme or by the programme's storytelling communities.

Public Activities

Towards the end of the programme, you will have the opportunity to participate in a public activity to celebrate and share the work you have created. This might take the form of a collectively curated group exhibition, a symposium, festival or performative event during which you will be encouraged to display, present and/or introduce your work to others.

Blended Learning

Blended learning is an important aspect of the programme. You will be asked to make extensive use of online platforms and learning environments (e.g. blogs, podcasts, Moodle, Padlet, Zoom, Panopto) to develop your learning, to share your ideas and work in progress with your tutor and with your peers, and to gain their feedback on the development of your work.

6. Assessment and feedback

Unit assessment

In programme-specific units, assessment takes place through a collective review process that involves tutors and students meeting to discuss, assess, grade, and agree feedback on the work that has been produced. This process seeks to collectively produce an accurate, balanced, and beneficial evaluation of a student's learning. The work that has been created is graded collectively by tutors and students, according to learning outcomes and assessment criteria that are associated with the units. In the case of the Critical Stories, Immersive Enquiries and Independent Research Project units, assessment centres on the quality of the proposal and body of practice that have been completed during the units.

Information regarding individual assessments will be included in the unit descriptors, and will be available to students at the beginning of the academic year.

7. What award can I get?

To be awarded an RCA MA degree you need to gain 180 credits at level 7 of the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications (FHEQ). This will involve successfully completing all units.

If you fail a unit at the first attempt, you will be offered an opportunity to resit the unit. If you are successful at resit you will be awarded the credits for that unit. If you are unsuccessful, you cannot progress further in your programme.

Exit awards:

If you have gained at least 120 credits at level 7 of the FHEQ, you may be eligible for the exit award of Postgraduate Diploma. An exit award is a final award from the College and cannot be rescinded.

For more detailed information about the College's assessment, progression and awards policies see the Regulations.

8. Admissions

Cross-College requirements

Academic Entry Requirements

Candidates must normally have obtained a good relevant undergraduate degree or an equivalent qualification. The College recognises as an equivalent qualification any degree, diploma, certificate or other evidence of formal qualification awarded by a university or other higher education establishment where the award is made following the successful completion of a programme of at least three years' study, the programme of study being open, as a general rule, only to persons holding a certificate awarded on the successful completion of a full programme of upper secondary

education.

Other qualifications may be approved, providing that the College's Academic Board for Concessions and Discipline (ABCD) is satisfied that the applicant has the ability to pursue the programme of study successfully. The ABCD is empowered to make judgements about the extent to which qualifications or experience gained elsewhere may be accepted in partial fulfilment of its requirements.

Portfolio

All applicants are required to submit a portfolio as part of the application process. A portfolio is a showcase of an applicant's work as an artist or designer and can be made up of images, videos or writing examples. The portfolio helps us to better understand the applicant and allows them to show evidence of their ability and motivation to undertake a given programme.

Each programme is looking for different things in a portfolio; each Head of Programme provides specific advice on portfolio requirements in the online application system. We advise prospective students to consider these requirements carefully before submitting their application.

Applicant Qualities

Generally, we are looking for applicants to demonstrate their:

- creativity, imagination and innovation;
- ability to articulate the intentions of the work;
- intellectual engagement in areas relevant to the work;
- technical skills appropriate to the work;
- potential to benefit from the programme and achieve MA standards overall.

English Language

Applicants who are not a national of a majority English-speaking country will need to demonstrate their English language proficiency. The College accepts a range of English language qualifications.

The full list can be seen at <https://www.rca.ac.uk/studying-at-the-rca/apply/entrance-requirements/english-language-requirements/>

Applicants are exempt from this requirement if they have received a 2.1 degree or above from a university in a majority English-speaking nation within the last two years.

If a student would need a Student Visa visa to study at the RCA, they will also need to meet the Home Office's minimum requirements for entry clearance.

Admission Process

Applications must be made directly to the College through our online application portal:

<https://www.rca.ac.uk/studying-at-the-rca/apply/application-process/ma-application-process/>

Upon completion of that first stage of the application process, candidates will be invited to submit a

portfolio of their work, a 300-word statement of intent and a video communicating clearly their motivations, personal interests and why they are pursuing a Masters degree at the Royal College of Art. These materials are reviewed by members of the programme team who will communicate an academic decision to the College Registry, who manage the process of offer-making in line with the College's recruitment targets. In some cases, where the programme team is not able to make an admission decision based solely upon the work submitted by the applicant, we may invite the candidate to undertake an interview with us.

Whilst there are still spaces available, successful candidates will be made an offer of a place. If there is no vacancy for a subsequent successful applicant, the candidate will be placed on a waiting list, and may be made a firm offer should a place become available.

Programme-specific requirements

Specific advice on programme portfolio requirements is provided by the Head of Programme in the online application system. Please consult the College website for further information on programme-specific admission and portfolio requirements:

<https://www.rca.ac.uk/study/programme-finder/digital-direction-ma/#requirements>