

Art and Design Practice National Diploma level 3

Course Overview

This is the first year of a two year qualification and is equivalent to 1.5 A Levels. Successful students will progress onto the second year Extended Diploma (equivalent to 3 A Levels). This established course is designed to equip students with the necessary skills and understanding to become a creative arts and crafts practitioner. It is a two-year qualification providing a broad-based art and design overview which can lead students into an exciting range of career areas including graphic design, illustration, interior design, photography, digital art and media architecture, fine art, gallery technicians, and prop design. Each year comprises of two units covering a broad range of 2D and 3D subjects. The course is supported by regular trips to galleries and museums as well as location research trips. There is also a developing programme of artist/designer and opportunities for work experience, volunteering, and live projects. Previous opportunities have involved local fashion retailers, local hospitals and Attenborough Arts. If you are aged 16 to 18, you will be enrolled on a study programme. This will include retaking GCSEs or undertaking Functional Skills in English and maths if you haven't already achieved a grade 4 or above. You will take part in activities that help you to develop your personal skills, such as building your character and confidence. This will help you to live well and move into your chosen career. If you are 16-19 years old these activities will be timetabled as will work experience and placement. You can also choose to take part in other activities. For other age groups, activities will be tailored to your needs.

What you will learn

The course is predominantly a fine art and craft where you will study a mixture of mandatory and optional subjects that are comprised of drawing and painting, still life and life drawing, graphics, mixed media, screen printing, 3D, ceramics, textiles, history of art and contextual studies. The areas in which you are most successful can form the basis for your major project in the second year.

The second year of the programme (If the first year is completed to a satisfactory level) continues to explore and capitalise on skills and techniques from year one leading to your specialising in the areas of your choice for your final major project. You will also learn how to use related machinery safely within our specialist workshops. 100% internally assessed this course is highly practical and progression focused. Featuring large, flexible teaching modules, it allows for practical and professional skills development.

Entry Requirements

Standard entry to this course requires one reference. It is desirable that you can demonstrate 90% attendance. 4 GCSEs at grade 4 (C) including English including an Art/Design related subject is required. GCSE Maths at grade 4 (C) or above is desirable. You will also require a portfolio that demonstrates your suitability for your chosen course. Consideration will be given to all applicants over the age of 19 who do not hold formal English and maths qualifications.

Course Fees

If you are 18 or above entering this course you may incur fees if you apply for entry on the first or second year of the programme. Please see our guidance on 19+ fees on our website.

Course Progression

Completion of the second year Extended Diploma allows successful students to progress either into the creative arts industry or higher education in art-related qualifications, or a range of allied subject areas. The course equips you to enter the creative industries at a junior level. There will also be an element of simulated work experience through live projects, competitions and industrial assignments during year two of the course. Learners who leave with the 540 Diploma will still gain UCAS points and are eligible to apply for undergraduate study. Successful completion of the course means you will be eligible to study for a degree in a related field.

What Happens Next

Apply online via the College website, or if your school uses the Positive Steps @16 (PS16) application system please apply through this and speak to your careers advisor if you are unsure. You will need details of your qualifications and employment history, a reference, and a personal statement to complete your application. Once your application has been successfully processed, you will be sent a conditional offer and be invited to a Welcome Event at the College to meet your tutors, learn more about your chosen course of study and tour the facilities. You will then need to confirm your acceptance of the course offered to you.

Course Details

Course Code	P00012
Start Date	07/09/2026
Study Hours	Full Time
Duration	1 year
Campus	St Margaret's Campus
Level	3

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