

Art and Design Practice (Photography) National Diploma level 3

Course Overview

This is the first year of a two-year course and is equivalent to 1.5 A levels. Successful progression can lead to entry onto the Extended Diploma Photography (equivalent to 3 A levels) second year. This course is ideal for complete beginners/anyone who is passionate about taking photographs using traditional and digital technology. If you are studying an art or photography GCSE, this is the natural progression to go into a full-time photography level 3 course and progress to university and/or work in the photography industry.

If you are aged 16-18, 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

In year 1 you will look at landscape, portraits, still life, experimental, documentary, advertising, and abstract photography. You will cover traditional film processes and digital technology using a variety of camera formats. You will also experience moving images (video); computer-aided design (Photoshop); drawing and illustration; professional practice; and study the history of art. You are expected to keep a sketchbook and write reports/essays. Throughout the course, you will be encouraged to enter competitions and will exhibit your work at local centres/galleries. It is important to mention that although you are on a photography course, you will be taught many different creative subjects alongside this specialism. This programme comprises 90 credits each year.

100% internally assessed this course is highly practical and progression focused. Featuring large, flexible teaching modules, it allows for practical and professional skills development

If you successfully complete year one, you will progress onto year two of this programme. The second-year content on the course involves negotiated projects; personal and professional development in art and design; art and design specialist contextual investigation; management of art and design projects; studio photography; photography location techniques; specialist location photography; digital image manipulation; and computer applications.

An external show is also part of the curriculum and students will investigate, plan, and deliver their own promotional external event.

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

You should expect to spend about £10 per week on materials for the course. There is equipment to loan out so owning a camera is not essential, however, if you intend to pursue a career in photography you should consider buying the necessary equipment.

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

Course Progression

The course equips students to enter the creative industries at a junior level. There will also be an element of simulated work experience through live projects, photography industry guest speakers, competitions, and industrial assignments during year two of the course. You can continue to higher education or pre-degree foundation, Higher National Certificate, Higher National Diploma, professional diploma, or degree programmes.

Although a competitive industry, there are job opportunities in the photographic/art/design world, such as being a photographer's assistant or a freelance photographer.

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	P00118
Start Date	07/09/2026
Study Hours	Full Time
Duration	1 year
Campus	St Margaret's Campus
Level	3

Apply Here