

## 1. Introduction and context

The Art Academy offers an alternative to most fine art education models; we focus on the development of *both* traditional and contemporary skills fostering practical, experiential learning through the practice and application of those skills. Students develop a practical skill set by undertaking an individually tailored study programme through which they evolve their own artistic language and creative ideas. This is realised by students undertaking a series of individual term- long elective skills workshop courses in technical skills that underpin the studio practice modules where they develop work and critical skills in response to a series of practical briefs that foster increasingly independent learning.

This is the first formal strategy to be focused on teaching, learning and assessment and specifically relates to our approach over the next five years. Its principal intention is to ensure that our academic and pedagogic principles are central to the ongoing development of our provision; we aim to provide a supportive learning experience that is characterised by the development of strong relationships with students from the very first point of contact to graduation and life as alumni. Our students expect a different approach to arts education in a stimulating and dynamic environment that will prepare them for lifelong learning, further study or life as an independent fine art practitioner.

The Art Academy is committed to developing graduates who:

- Are intellectually curious, responsive to challenges and demonstrate initiative and resilience.
- Think independently, analytically, creatively and engage imaginatively with new areas of investigation
- Have an informed understanding of their discipline and artistic practice, and the ability to question it and challenge their own boundaries.
- Seize and shape the opportunities open to them on leaving the Academy.

## 2. The philosophy of Teaching and Learning at the Art Academy

### 2.1 Specialist learning

We champion specialist and experiential learning through practice to provide students with an individually defined practical skill set which forms the basis of their own artistic practice and enables them to develop their own artistic language and creative ideas.

Central to this approach is the teaching of technical skills, allowing students to:

- learn through making;
- gain professional knowledge and develop technical expertise in their artwork;
- develop aesthetic judgement and critical skills;
- excel as practitioners in their field.

## **2.2 A student centred approach, distinguished from the standard arts educational model**

All teaching, learning and assessment methodologies employed in the Art Academy are student-centred, intended to celebrate individual differences in our students and tutors; we aim to encourage, empower and facilitate each individual's creative 'voice', support and challenge them to exceed their own expectations. The design, delivery and assessment of our programmes, modules and elective skills workshop courses aim to address the learning needs of all students through engagement with their interests and aspirations as individuals from a wide range of backgrounds.

In order to facilitate this, one to one teaching is central to our delivery, supported by group critiques, seminars, lectures and workshops. We further distinguish ourselves from other providers by championing small class sizes and teaching groups (usually restricted to 15 students per class/tutor) in order to maximise student - tutor contact time and facilitate greater student achievement. Additionally, the principle of employing active and significant practitioners as tutors is central to our ethos and institutional mission.

The Academy encourages all staff (teaching and non - contact) to take the time to get to know our students, creating a safe and respectful learning environment, where individuals are encouraged to articulate their thinking and express themselves creatively, without fear of ridicule, through the acquisition of contextualised practical skills.

### **2.2.1 Inclusivity**

In accordance with our Equality and Diversity policy we believe that everyone should be treated as an individual in our approach to teaching and learning. In order to foster this we need to ensure our understanding of each student's differing needs (physical, cultural and pastoral).

We will ensure that all teaching materials have clear content that is inclusive, avoiding stereotypes and assumptions as to what constitutes 'normal'. All materials will be made available in alternative formats appropriate to the needs of individuals where possible (for example, different paper colours for dyslexia).

### **2.2.2 'Reasonable adjustments'**

The Art Academy adheres to the 'reasonable adjustments' requirements of the Equality Act. We will endeavour to meet the requirements of students who declare a disability or special need to eliminate any attributable disadvantage by all appropriate and lawful means, making reasonable adjustments to delivery and/or assessment methods, without compromising our expected academic standards or making students feel marginalised. We will not however, make any adjustment to recruitment or admissions criteria, teaching or assessment which would alter or compromise those standards

## **2.3 Preparation for life after Graduation**

Central to the Academy's ethos is the preparation of students for life as professional artists. Such a life may entail working in wide variety of contexts and more often in a freelance or commission - based capacity. Therefore graduates need to be flexible, resilient and confidently prepared for unpredictable and complicated careers which can involve a mixture of freelance and part time contracted work. In this regard we aim to equip our graduates with important life skills and a thorough understanding of the art market that will enable them to continue to develop as professional artists. Along with the professional development module(s), which gives students the knowledge and tools to establish and administer their professional artistic practices, students develop important transferable skills such as numeracy, literacy, IT, presentation and communication skills through embedded delivery and associated teaching, learning and assessment strategies.

Students are encouraged to be involved in commissions and real world projects and undertake projects which investigate the skills and requirements of commission based practice. The fact that tutors at The Art Academy are working professional artists means students gain a first-hand understanding of professional life.

### **3. Strategic Objectives 2017- 2022**

Although we are confident and clear about our pedagogic aims and principles, we acknowledge that in order to expand our provision and become a recognised and significant institution in arts education we need to improve our organisational and regulatory infrastructure in order to better support our student's learning and provide equality of access to all aspects of education we offer. We also, however place great emphasis on the need to not lose sight of our values and ethos during this process and retain the qualities and advantages of being a small scale specialist institution.

As part of this strategy we aim to build on our distinctive approach to fine art education by enhancing the teaching and learning in the Academy under the following headings:

- Staff
- Students
- Assessment and Feedback
- Continuous reflection

#### **3.1 Strategic Objective 1: A commitment to support staff excellence**

We will continue to support teaching staff through the flexible working opportunities central to the academic staffing structure at the Academy, enabling tutors to support, continue in and excel in their own careers as professional practitioners. We intend to continue to improve the level of support we offer to staff with particular regard to the development of their pedagogic practice and will address this through a range of initiatives.

We will improve this support during the five year period by:

- Providing clear guidance for all staff on all aspects of teaching and learning policy, assessment procedures and the academic regulations relevant to validation by the Open university.
- Developing and implementing a suite of clear policy and guidance documents, making them easily available and providing training and briefing sessions to staff to enable them to understand and implement each policy effectively.
- Use peer observation as a tool to share and develop good practice as well as a means of informing the development of a training programme through the identification of key themes needing improvement.
- Providing a mentoring scheme for new tutors and those with identified support needs.
- Improving digital literacy by providing professional development opportunities to become familiar with the use of technologies to enhance learning.
- Developing a programme of professional developmental training (both physical and virtual)
- Providing staff with access to HEA resources
- Working with individuals to provide support where they have the opportunity to undertake teaching qualifications.
- Aligning capital investments with the needs of students and the learning, teaching and assessment design within the curriculum.
- Ensuring that this strategy is accessible to and understood by staff.

#### **3.2 Strategic Objective 2: A commitment to support student excellence**

We will continue to put our students at the heart of everything we do at the Academy. Over the next five years we will build on initiatives and approaches that ensure that students learning needs are the paramount concern in the development and growth of the Academy. The aim is to widen access to arts education and foster an environment where all forms of artistic expression are deemed equally relevant in contemporary society remain a key aspects of our mission.

We will enhance our commitment to supporting excellence in our students during the five year period by:

- Embedding student representation at all levels of decision making.
- Upholding and enhancing equality and access and learning for students, irrespective of their social, cultural and economic through raised funds for bursaries and scholarships and improvements to access to our facilities.
- Improved processes for identifying as early as possible students with any learning issues to ensure that support is in place and any necessary adjustments are made in good time.
- Build upon support already in place for students of all types of disability and disadvantage.
- Working with students to enhance the design and delivery of curriculum.
- Improving digital literacy in students and providing opportunities to become familiar with the use of technologies to enhance learning.
- Developing and evaluating activities aimed at nurturing a culture of belonging via pre-entry and transition activities, mentoring, personal tutoring, group and collaborative learning.
- Increasing extra-curricular activities and opportunities within the Academy, encouraging and supporting all students to take advantage of them.
- Aligning capital investments with the needs of students and the learning, teaching and assessment design within the curriculum.
- Improving access to learning resources (physical and virtual) and information technologies.
- Investing in Moodle as a pedagogic tool and repository of information.
- Providing briefing, training and support to enable students to understand and implement relevant policy and follow procedures.
- Ensuring that this strategy is accessible to and understood by staff.

### **3.3 Strategic Objective 3: Assessment and Feedback**

We believe that formative assessment and feedback is essential to student improvement and should be a continuous process and dialogue throughout a student's programme of study. Summative assessment should encourage and enable students to analyse their own progress and achievements through the use of effective feedback (and feedforward). Assessment tasks are designed to encourage student engagement. As part of our development and move towards validated programmes we aim to embed a comprehensive system of assessment and feedback throughout all programmes of study.

We will enhance our assessment and feedback provision during the five year period by:

- Implementing a Assessment and Feedback policy which reaffirms and builds on our current practices and which will provide a suitable system for our newly validated programmes and a framework for future curriculum developments.
- Providing accessible and comprehensive information and guidance relating to assessment and feedback processes and requirements for students and staff.
- Provide briefing, training and support to staff around assessment and feedback policy and good practice.
- Reviewing processes effectively in annual programme reviews.
- Ensuring that the balance between formative and summative assessments and the type of assessment set, enables active learning.
- Ensuring that approaches to assessment and feedback impact positively upon learning and result in improvements to student outcomes.
- Ensure that assessment complies with the principles of fairness and transparency.

### **3.4 Strategic Objective 4: Continuous Reflection**

We are committed to examining and reviewing our processes and the effectiveness of our approaches through regular reporting, involving inputs from both students and staff as part of our ongoing cycle of development and improvement.

We will improve the effectiveness of our reflective practices during the five year period by:

- More systematic evaluation and use the information gleaned from sources such as admission, retention, E&D monitoring and performance statistics to improve the quality of teaching and learning.
  - Improving and refining the processes by which the Academy engages with student feedback.
  - Implement staff surveys to complement the information gleaned from student surveys and inform the development of the pedagogic CPD plan/ schedule.
  - Undertake annual reviews at programme and institutional level.
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**Policies and documents that supplement and reference this document:**

Quality Handbook  
Staff Development strategy