

Research and Scholarship Strategy

This document has been informed by the expectations, core and common practices of the UK Quality Code for Higher Education: Learning and Teaching . This can be found at the following location and contains further guidelines, references and resources: <https://www.qaa.ac.uk/en/quality-code/advice-and-guidance>

1. Overview & context

As Art Academy London enters the arena of Higher Education provision, it is required to develop a culture of Research and Scholarly Activity (RASA). The Quality Code for Higher Education places an obligation on institutions delivering HE to keep up to date with developments in their disciplines and evidence engagement in RASA, as one of the ways in which they must demonstrate their distinct nature as Higher Education, as opposed to Further Education, providers. It is expected that such scholarly activity will add value to the students' learning opportunities, enhance the overall quality of teaching and learning, raise academic standards and help to create an innovative curriculum that meets employer needs and maintains the currency of staff subject knowledge.

Drawing upon the QAA guidance, the Academy has begun to develop its own strategy for introducing Research and Scholarly Activity within the college, to support the creation of an HE culture which will in turn enhance the student experience and support student learning and development.

1.2 Definitions

The Quality Code produced by the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) states that 'Scholarship and research lie at the heart of higher education' (Chapter B3, page 13). However, the QAA suggests that the nature of scholarship and research will depend upon the academic level of the programme, the subject area and the provider.

'Scholarly activity undertaken in some providers may not necessarily involve original research, or lead to the production of new knowledge or the publication of academic journals but it does mean more than professional development. Enhancing the research abilities of staff is likely to have a positive impact on their teaching and helps to develop a higher education ethos among staff and student'. (QAA Higher Education Toolkit - Alternative Providers: Engaging with the UK Quality Code for Higher Education - June 2017)

The QAA states that whilst there is no agreed definition for scholarly activity in an college or Alternative Provider (API) based context, it is about developing and informing practice through specific activities – including the following examples:

- Keeping up to date with the subject.
- Curriculum development, particularly in relation to foundation degrees, often working with degree-awarding bodies.
- Curriculum development that involves research.
- Updating information and communications technology (ICT) skills.
- Taking higher qualifications - master's degrees, doctorates and teaching qualifications.
- Consultancy to industry and other agencies.
- Industrial secondments or work shadowing.
- Involvement with Sector Skills Councils.
- Research and publications.
- Applied research.
- Personal development.
- Attending staff development events.
- Attending conferences and workshops externally.

The QAA suggests that:

'This would involve reading the latest books, and academic and professional journals, but could also include writing, observations and review of other professionals, attendance at relevant conferences, attendance at workshops and seminars, professional networking and specific project work of an academic or specific professional nature. Scholarly activity in this context includes activity that supports deeper understanding and maintains the latest thinking of the academic community and keeping up to date with professional or vocational applications of the subject'.

2. Art Academy London's Approach

The QAA notes that providers will want to assure themselves that everyone involved in teaching is appropriately qualified, but also observes that it won't always be necessary for teaching staff to hold a relevant formal qualification *'where staff bring with them industrial experience and expertise or where they have current practitioner knowledge and an understanding of the subject they teach'*. Whilst the Academy shares some characteristics with other Alternative Providers of Higher Education, it is unique in that all its tutors are practising artists, many of them eminent in their fields. In fact, the majority of them hold undergraduate degrees, and many of them also hold postgraduate degrees, but the expertise they bring is derived from their practice and experience as artists.

In developing its Research and Scholarship Activity, the Academy will build upon this expertise, and the developmental research work undertaken by its tutors in their art practices. The Academy's curriculum is subject to continual review. It has been devised in the light of fundamental techniques across fine art disciplines and current practice in the application of those techniques, together with contemporary thinking around fine art and other relevant discourses. Core tutors involved in curriculum enhancement and development draw upon their knowledge and expertise in these areas. Capturing and developing this understanding further, to inform the Academy's curriculum and thereby enhance the student experience at the Academy, will form the heart of its RASA strategy. The strategy will work in tandem with the Academy's CPD programme, through which Academy tutors are encouraged to engage with opportunities to develop, extend and reflect upon their pedagogic practice.

2.1 Research, Scholarship and Ethics Committee

Art Academy London's Academic Board has established a RSE Committee to oversee and support its Research and Scholarship Activity. Chaired by the Director of Programmes, membership of the Committee comprises the Principal, Director of Academic Quality, Standards and Student Experience, and programme leaders including the BA Deputy Programme Leader, FD Sculpture Pathway Leader, FD Contemporary Portraiture Pathway Leader, Professional Development Department Leader, Art History and Theory Department Leader and Head of Special Educational Needs.

The role of the Committee is to be a driving force for the Academy's RASA. Its remit is to:

- A. Establish the terms of the Academy's Research and Scholarship programme;
- B. create a framework for the allocation of funds and manage an annual bidding round to support small-scale research or scholarship activities;
- C. hold responsibility for ethical considerations relating to any research undertaken within the Academy;
- D. oversee the publication of research undertaken as part of the programme, as appropriate;
- E. consider other appropriate methods for disseminating research findings to the Academy community and beyond;
- F. set up and oversee other relevant activities to support and enhance a culture of research and scholarship with the Academy;
- G. consider student engagement with the Academy's RASA.

2.2 Funding

Art Academy London will make available a small amount of funding annually to support research activity to be determined as part of its annual budgeting process. In 2018/19, £5,000 has been allocated as an initial fund for RASA. This will be reviewed in the next budgeting round with subsequent funding allocated taking account of the experience during this first year of research activity at the Academy. The RSE Committee will establish a

framework for the allocation of funds, including consideration of the number of projects it wishes to support and the maximum amount to be allocated to an individual project. (This framework may be subject to variation annually, depending upon the level of funding available). Tutors will be invited to bid for funding and the RSE Committee will determine the allocation of funds. Where appropriate, applicants will be encouraged to use the funding to supplement research work funded from other sources, or to seek additional funding to supplement that provided by the Academy, to maximise the benefit from the Academy's research fund.

The Academy will also consider other means by which it can support research projects, through, for example, access to its facilities (including its gallery space), marketing support and access to personnel from the Academy's staff group or student body to help with research activities where possible and appropriate. The value of such support

2.3 Approach to Research Activity

Research by Denis Feather (*'Oh to be a scholar – an HE in FE perspective'*, 2012, published in the Journal of Further and Higher Education) states that:

'the field of scholarship should not be forced upon a person, as this is likely to disillusion and demotivate that person....Individuals need to be allowed to select their preferred field of study, to be given the time and resources to explore that field, and to interact with other like-minded people'.

The Academy's approach to research activity will be to support tutors in pursuing research topics that are of interest to them. These may or may not relate directly to the Academy's curriculum, but will enhance learning and academic understanding within the Academy. On occasion, there may be an area of study identified by the Academy where it would like research undertaken. In this instance, the Academy may propose the topic for research to the RSE Committee and tutors invited to bid to undertake the work should they be interested in doing so.

Research activity may take the form of original research. It may also be:

- Subject specific research – this might include, for eg, support to learn a new technique relating to the discipline being taught by the tutor;
- attending conferences, symposia or workshops relating to the tutor's area of interest;
- research work centred around one of the relevant professional bodies;
- research around curriculum development or teaching strategies and approaches.

The Academy will also consider ways in which it might support tutors to study for further degrees or teaching qualifications, although funding is currently limited.

In considering which research proposals to support in any given year, the RSE Committee will aim to ensure that collectively the research projects it supports will achieve one or more of the following objectives:

- Cover a range of topics;
- Relate to current or future priorities for teaching and learning at the Academy;
- Encompass a range of research activities (which might include any of those listed above);
- Contribute to the continuing professional development of Academy tutors;
- Provide networking opportunities for Academy tutors and/or staff (in addition to another of the objectives listed here).

2.4 Delivery of Research Findings

Any tutor in receipt of funding from the Academy will be expected to deliver their research findings within an agreed timescale. The method(s) for disseminating the findings will be determined by the RSE Committee on the award of the funding, and may include publication (on-line or physically) and one or more workshop, lecture, seminar or symposia. Where the research activity has taken the form of attendance at a conference or workshop, the attendee will be expected to report back, either through a written report, or through a practical demonstration of the skill or information learnt.

2.5 Copyright

The RSE Committee will agree a policy around the copyright of research findings, although this may be agreed on a case by case basis upon the award of funds for each individual research project.

2.6 Ethics

The RSE Committee will establish a research ethics policy to which all research proposals and projects will be subject.

2.7 Annual Research Symposium and Publication

The RSE Committee will arrange an Annual Research Symposium. This may take the form of an event to showcase the research the Academy has supported over the year, it may involve Academy tutors, or it may be run in partnership with another organisation, or with external tutors or academics, on a topic to be determined by the Committee.

The RSE Committee will oversee the publication of research findings from the research activity it has supported over the year. This may take the form of an online publication or findings may be published in physical form.

2.8 Other Activities

The RSE Committee will consider other activities it might support to promote a culture of research and scholarship within the Academy. This might include a reading or discussion group, to be extended to all teaching staff in the first instance. This group could meet physically, or might simply be involved in the shared reading of articles or publications, or a combination of the two.

2.9 Student Engagement

The findings from research undertaken will be shared with students as appropriate, both in written form, and through workshops, lectures or symposia. Some research may be used to enhance the curriculum or teaching strategies, so students will engage more indirectly with those research findings. Once the RASA strategy is successfully up and running, the RSE Committee will consider ways in which students may be further involved. There may be potential to invite students to submit research papers for inclusion in the publication of research findings, for eg, perhaps drawing upon their research work undertaken for their extended research projects in Level 6. A student reading group might be established, either as part of, or alongside, the tutor group.

3. Timescale

The RASA strategy will be presented to the Academic Board for approval in summer 2018.

An embryo Research and Ethics Committee has already met to consider proposals for the strategy and to input its thoughts and ideas. Subject to AB approval, the Committee will meet again before the end of the 2017/18 academic year to agree plans for the 2018/19 year.

Invitations will be extended to all core tutors to submit research proposals for the next academic year for consideration by the Committee at its next meeting.

Policies and documents that supplement and reference this document:

Teaching and Learning Strategy
Staff Development Strategy.
QA Handbook

Version 1 April 2018

Approved by the Academic Board.