



Royal College of Art

Admissions Policy

Introduction

1. The Royal College of Art (“RCA” or “College”) is committed to creating and supporting a community which is diverse, multicultural and inclusive for all students and staff. Our shared goal is ensuring that the College environment encourages all members of our community to teach, learn, work and practise in a shared spirit of inclusivity and cultural exchange. The Royal College of Art aims to achieve international standards of excellence in the postgraduate and pre- /mid-professional education of artists and designers and related practitioners. It aims to achieve these through the quality of its teaching, research and practice and through its relationship with the institutions, industries and technologies associated with the disciplines of art and design.
2. This policy applies for all applications to programmes of postgraduate study at the RCA. It outlines the commitments made by the College in ensuring that its admissions procedures are fair, transparent and equitable.
3. The admission of each student to the RCA shall be based on clearly published criteria for entry. The entry criteria shall be defined with a view to ensuring that there is a reasonable likelihood for each admitted student that they are able to fulfil the objectives of the programme and achieve the standard required for the academic award.
4. Each applicant who meets the entry criteria shall be offered a place on the programme unless that programme is full for that application round¹. Suitable applicants for whom there is not an available place on the programme will be placed on a waiting list and may be offered a place if one becomes available later in the cycle.
5. In addition to its legal obligations under the Equality Act 2010, the RCA is committed to the recruitment of students with suitable academic ability and potential, irrespective of their social, cultural and economic background.
6. The RCA is committed to equity of treatment for all of its applicants, and applications are considered on their individual merits. Admission to a programme of study offered by the RCA is based solely on information provided to the College

¹ The College operates an “application round” system, whereby a certain number of offers of places are reserved for each programme in each round.

during the application process.

7. The RCA is committed to fair, transparent and consistent admissions practices and aims to offer clear advice and guidance to prospective applicants to enable them to make informed choices.
8. This policy is consistent with good admissions practice in higher education, as defined in the Office for Students' guidance on fair admissions and recruitment 2020.
9. Applicants should be aware that, under the Data Protection Act, the RCA is only able to speak directly with the applicant themselves, unless the College has been provided with verifiable, written permission from the applicant that they give permission for the College to speak to a representative.

Roles and Responsibilities

10. For each programme of study, Admissions Tutors shall have delegated authority (from the Dean of School, or equivalent) to make recommendations on the suitability of applications to their programme. Admissions Tutors may further delegate that responsibility to Heads of Programme or other appropriately trained staff within the School or relevant academic department. Authorised staff will assess each candidate's suitability for a programme of study, in accordance with the published admissions criteria for that Programme, and make recommendations to the Head of Student Admissions within the Registry on offers to be made to applicants. For research programmes, the Head of Research Programmes shall also be responsible for making final recommendations to the Head of Student Admissions on whether appropriate facilities and supervision are available to enable the student to satisfactorily complete their intended programme of research.
11. The Head of Student Admissions shall determine the final number of suitable applicants who should receive an offer, working to agreed recruitment targets.
12. The Registry shall communicate all admission decisions to applicants; Heads of Programmes should not notify applicants of their decisions.
13. It is the responsibility of the Admissions Tutors to ensure that members of Programme Teams with authority to assess applicants are aware of their rights and responsibilities. The Admissions Tutors shall have the final say in the selection of candidates to be recommended to the Head of Student Admissions for the offer of a place.
14. Admissions Tutors, Heads of Programme, and all colleagues with delegated authority to review and assess applications, shall be provided with regular training to

ensure decisions comply with this Policy and other related policies.

Academic Entry Criteria

15. The RCA publishes entry criteria on its website. These may be reproduced in external sources of information, advice and guidance.
16. The RCA aims to ensure that its published information on admissions and any available scholarships is accurate, clear and unambiguous, and is published within a timeframe to enable applicants to make a considered decision on whether to apply to study on a programme offered by the College. The College commits to complying with the Competition and Markets Authority Consumer Law Advice for Providers and Students of Higher Education. As such, the College commits to avoiding altering admissions criteria during the course of the application cycle.
17. The published entry requirements reflect a typical offer; however, meeting or being predicted to meet these requirements does not guarantee an offer.
18. Applicants considering postgraduate taught programmes are expected to have obtained an undergraduate degree at the point of enrolment on to the programme at the RCA; the typical minimum entry requirement is a lower second class degree (2.2) or equivalent, or alternatively relevant, equivalent professional practice. Individual programmes may specify higher entry requirements with the approval of the Academic Standards Committee (ASC); these will be published on the College's website. 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 year's 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 course of upper secondary education. Where an equivalency is not clear, enquiries should be directed to the RCA Registry (admissions@rca.ac.uk).
19. Applicants considering postgraduate research programmes are expected to have obtained an undergraduate degree (typically a 2.1). In addition, they will typically be expected to have achieved a taught postgraduate degree in a relevant subject, or equivalent.
20. Exceptionally, other qualifications may be approved, providing that the Academic Board for Concessions & Discipline ("ABCD") is satisfied that the applicant has the ability to pursue the programme of study successfully.
21. The Quality Assurance Agency for the UK is responsible for safeguarding the quality and standards of degree programmes across the UK. The RCA does not explicitly

discriminate between UK degrees awarded a similar classification. However, where similar regulatory institutional standards are not in place for other countries, the College reserves the right to differentiate between different institutions of that country. The College may do this through the use of research, market intelligence and/or the performance of existing students.

Subject Specific Requirements

22. Subject specific requirements for each programme are clearly listed on the College website. If a degree in a specific subject or field is listed as required, an application will not be considered if the student has not completed, and is not pending completion of, that award.

English Language Requirements

23. Applicants shall be expected to demonstrate that they have a reasonable level of proficiency in the English language. The College website lists the specific English language requirement for each programme and what is accepted as meeting this requirement.
24. Candidates who are not nationals of majority English-speaking countries will be required to provide evidence that, within the two years prior to enrolment, they have achieved the required English language level with an accepted English language test, such as IELTS. Selected alternative tests with equivalent scores are accepted; these are published on the College website.
25. The Head of Student Admissions may consider concessions to the above requirements where applicants make a clear case that they have the knowledge of English language required to successfully complete the programme. All concessions relating to English language ability shall be reported to the Academic Board for Concessions and Discipline. No concessions shall be applied where doing so would breach UK student visa regulations.

Application Procedure

26. Applications to all degree programmes of the RCA must be submitted via the College's online admissions portal. The application process includes completion of an online application form and submission of a digital portfolio.
27. Applicants are only permitted to register once with the portal. Creating multiple accounts in the portal is not permitted; doing so may result in the rejection of all applications submitted by that candidate. An applicant may not apply for the same programme more than once in a single admissions year. Applicants can apply for a maximum of two different programmes in a single admissions year. A separate

portfolio submission is required for each programme to which a prospective student applies. If your application is unsuccessful the College may refer your application to another suitable programme for consideration.

28. The RCA normally permits applications to be submitted only in the admissions cycle immediately preceding the intended admission date. The College will publish annually the dates (“the application deadline date”) by which applications should be submitted in order to ensure their consideration for that year; the College reserves the right, following published deadline dates, to consider individual programmes full, or to continue to accept applications, up until the first day of term.
29. The College operates a system of application rounds. All applications received by a round’s application deadline date will be considered within that round. Admissions decisions are released to all applicants from a published date at the end of the application round. Applications submitted after the deadline date for a particular round will automatically be considered in the following application round. It is the applicant’s responsibility to ensure that their application is submitted in time to make the necessary arrangements to study at the College, including completion of all steps to ensure that the student has obtained a valid visa prior to the start of the programme.
30. Applicants should be aware that, in addition to general application deadlines, there may be additional funding deadlines for both RCA and external grants, scholarships and other funding options.

Application Assessment

31. The RCA considers all aspects of each application in coming to a decision on whether or not to offer the applicant a place on one of its programmes. This may include some or all of the following elements:
 - Predicted or achieved performance in undergraduate and / or postgraduate qualifications;
 - A personal statement and application video;
 - A research proposal;
 - Up to two references;
 - Relevant work experience;
 - Evidence of English language proficiency;
 - Performance at interview;
 - Quality of portfolio;
 - The academic and geo-demographic context in which qualifications have been achieved, or are being completed;
 - Extenuating circumstances.
32. The RCA may require that applicants supply additional information as part of the

selection process, in addition to their application forms. For programmes where this is a requirement, this will be clearly indicated on the College website.

33. Programmes of the RCA require students to submit a portfolio for consideration as part of the admissions process. Detailed information on what any portfolio should contain, and the criteria which will be used in assessing the portfolio, shall be made available via the College website.
34. As PGR programmes require advanced research into very specific academic fields, successful applicants will be those whose proposed area of research aligns with the stated research expertise and themes of the relevant School or Research Centres and could be appropriately supervised according to the College's current academic expertise and supervisor availability. The appointment of any supervisor is at the College's discretion, as approved by the ABCD.

Interviews

35. Programmes of the RCA may use interviews as part of the selection process. Any interview shall normally be conducted using video conferencing with one or two designated nominees of the Admissions Tutor. Any recommendation to offer a place may only be made by a properly authorised and trained member of the School after having reviewed application forms, any interview records and the applicant portfolio.
36. Some programmes may elect to interview some applicants, while making final admission decisions to others who have not been interviewed. For example, an interview may be needed to enable decisions to be made for applicants who have not demonstrably met all of the criteria for admission from the information submitted as part of the application process. Postgraduate Research programmes shall normally interview any applicant before deciding whether to make an offer of a place.
37. Invitations to interview should give applicants sufficient time to prepare for the interview, shall make clear that the applicant is invited to attend a formal interview as part of the selection process, and shall include clear information on what the applicant should prepare and/or provide ahead of the interview.
38. The College may issue guidance to Admissions Tutors regarding the expected number or proportion of applications that may use interviews as part of the selection process, and in so doing will be clear about the purpose of the use of interviews, in addition to other admissions processes.

Offers

39. Each application is scored against the entry criteria, with an overall assessment as to whether or not the applicant would be suitable for the programme. Where there are

a greater number of suitable applicants than there are places available on a particular programme, places will be awarded to those applicants who achieve the highest score. Where multiple applicants achieve the same score, the date and time of application will serve as the tie-breaker, with the applicant(s) who applied earliest in the admission cycle receiving the offer.

40. The RCA will hold a fixed percentage of places back for prospective students who are not in a position to submit an application during the first application Round. This fixed percentage may be reviewed and adjusted from time to time.
41. Where an offer is made, any conditions associated with that offer shall be spelt out clearly in the offer notification email. Every condition must be met one month prior to the start date of the programme; where any condition of the offer is not met one month prior to the start date of the programme then the offer will normally be considered withdrawn. In such circumstances the applicant will need to re-apply in order to be considered for a future place on the programme.
42. Successful applicants must meet all of their offer conditions in sufficient time to complete registration by the date published by the RCA. This includes obtaining a Student Route visa where required. International students should be aware that applications submitted less than one month prior to the start date of the programme are unlikely to enable them to complete the necessary steps to obtain a Student Route visa before the registration date and may therefore not be considered.
43. In order to accept an offer, an applicant must complete and return all required acceptance documentation associated with the offer. Offered applicants must also pay a deposit in order to secure their place. The deposit amount will be quoted in the offer notification email and counts towards the student's tuition fee balance. Applicants must complete their acceptance - by submitting the required acceptance documents and making the deposit payment - within five weeks of the date of the offer. The deposit is non-refundable, unless an applicant exercises their right to cancel within 14 days of accepting their offer.
44. Applicants for taught postgraduate programmes shall not normally be permitted to defer entry. Offered applicants wishing to enrol the following year must decline their offer and reapply the following year. An applicant's success in gaining an offer in one academic year is not a guarantee of successful application in subsequent years.
45. Applicants for postgraduate research programmes may defer at the discretion of the Head of Research Programme, who will need to consider whether appropriate supervision will still be available the following year. All deferral requests must be submitted in writing (via email) to the Admissions Office at least one month before the date of registration.
46. If a deferral is granted, the applicant must pay a deposit to secure their place for the

following year. The College will confirm the deferral in writing at the time. Once the following recruitment cycle has commenced, deferred applicants will be sent a new offer notification email. This may include a requirement to make an additional deposit payment.

47. The Head of Student Admissions may defer offers of admission, for example when a programme is considered “full”, or where the College wishes to impose conditions of offer that could not reasonably be fulfilled before the start date of the programme.

Fraud and Plagiarism

48. It is essential that the portfolio or other material submitted as part of an application are the work of the applicant. The RCA may use similarity detection software to evaluate the originality of a piece of work.
49. Any irregularities in the personal statement or other written materials will be investigated by the Head of Student Admissions. The applicant shall be contacted and notified of the evidence to be considered as part of this investigation, and given the chance to make representations. Where an application is rejected on academic grounds, no further action will be taken with regard to any suspected plagiarism or fraud.
50. The RCA reserves the right to reject any application, or withdraw an offer, where any part of the application is identified as having been plagiarised or is otherwise fraudulent.
51. The RCA reserves the right to withdraw any offer that it issues in error. In such circumstances it will write to the applicant to apologise formally and explain the nature of the error.

Disclosure of Criminal Convictions

52. The RCA recognises its duty to protect the College community and the communities around it, and that information regarding an individual's criminal convictions may need to be taken into account when deciding whether that individual may begin or continue their studies. The application process requires applicants to disclose relevant unspent convictions.
53. Programmes involving interaction with children and/or vulnerable adults require applicants to disclose all convictions, including cautions, reprimands, final warnings, bind-over orders and spent convictions. For such programmes, where enhanced disclosure is required, the College website will give details of this requirement and instructions and guidance will be available from the Registry.

54. Applicants with declared criminal convictions are initially assessed on standard academic and non-academic selection criteria. If it is recommended that an offer be made, further investigation of the relevance of the criminal conviction(s) will be carried out before the final decision is made.

Mitigating Circumstances

55. The RCA understands circumstances beyond an applicant's control, such as illness or bereavement, may detrimentally affect their academic progress. In such instances, and for entry to RCA programmes, the College expects applicants to have taken appropriate action to ensure the relevant examination bodies have allowed for such circumstances prior to the announcement of results or following an appeal.

Disabled Applicants

56. The RCA is committed to fulfilling its obligations in accordance with the 2010 Equality Act. Applications from disabled applicants will be considered upon academic merit and potential for their chosen programme. Any support needs or required adjustments shall be considered independently of the admissions decision. Where an applicant believes that their disability has impacted detrimentally upon their academic performance to date, they should provide details in their personal statement. Student Support may provide applicants with information, advice and guidance on disability support available during the admissions process and after registration.
57. The RCA is committed to ensuring fair treatment of all applicants, including disabled applicants. The College shall, in consultation with the applicant, make reasonable adjustments during the application process to ensure that disabled applicants are treated no less favourably than other applicants. In the event that there is disagreement between an applicant and the RCA on the nature of a specific adjustment, a final decision shall be made by the Registrar.
58. The RCA is committed to providing an inclusive and accessible environment. All offers are conditional upon the College being able to implement the specific adjustments reasonably needed for an applicant to complete their programme. If an applicant requires support from the College due to a disability or long term health condition, we encourage them to notify us as early as possible in the recruitment process to enable the College to engage with the applicant and discuss individual support needs more effectively.
59. Where an applicant has a disability or long term health condition, information they have provided in connection with any additional needs will be processed by Student Support for the purposes of assessing what, if any, reasonable adjustments are required, and for implementing those adjustments should the applicant be made an

offer of a place. Information concerning an applicant's disability or long term health condition will be disclosed to other relevant staff who would reasonably need to be in possession of such information for the purposes of implementing any or all of the adjustments identified, should the applicant accept the offer. Applicants have the right to request that information about their disability or long term health condition is not disclosed to such staff, but should note that while all reasonable effort will be made to implement reasonable adjustments, the request for confidentiality may in some circumstances prevent those adjustments being made.

60. The College access Disabled Students Allowance funding, to support students with disabilities in accessing the College. The College may, at its discretion, "match" funding from its own funds to support reasonable adjustments for students with disabilities (as defined by a disability needs assessment), but will not normally provide funding over and above this amount for individual students.

Age Requirement

61. The RCA does not operate a minimum or maximum age requirement for its programmes; however, students must be able to demonstrate the maturity and personal skills, as well as academic potential required to succeed on a postgraduate higher education programme.
62. The only exception to this is where programmes require a Disclosure and Barring Service check, which may have a minimum age requirement. The College website provides details of any such requirement and additional guidance is available from the Registry.

Feedback on Unsuccessful Applications

63. The RCA receives high numbers of applications to its programmes and is unable to offer feedback on unsuccessful applications.

Appeals

64. Appeals against decisions to reject an application will only be considered on the following grounds:
- Mitigating circumstances have not been taken into account;
 - The College has made an administrative error;
 - The provisions of this Policy have not been followed.

Appeals against the academic judgement of the College will not be considered.

65. Any appeal must be submitted within 28 days of notification of the decision to reject

the application. Appeals must be made via email to the Registrar, outlining the basis of the appeal, with evidence as appropriate. The Registrar may then investigate the decision to reject the application. Following any such investigation the Registrar shall then either:

- Reject the appeal;
- Refer the application back to the School Admissions Tutor for reconsideration, with guidance;
- Refer the application to the Dean of the relevant School to request its reconsideration by an alternative member of the School.

The Registrar's decision shall be final.

Senate
June 2017

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