



Art & Design (3D, Fine Art, Photography, Textiles) Curriculum Overview

AQA - GCSE & A'Level

This overview document details what students will be studying in this subject area over the course of their time with us and the skills and knowledge they will be covering. Students will be formally assessed across the year and their progress and ATL (Attitude to Learning) will be reported home at the end of each term. Assessments will aim to assess the knowledge and skills a student has covered up to that point in their education, including the curriculum covered in the previous year/s.

All KS4/5 courses are similar in that they are all 'titles' or specialisms from the AQA Art & Design Specifications. Students learn the knowledge & understanding and skills that are specific to the specialism they have chosen. Teaching and learning through mini projects, sustained projects, skills building exercises, and externally set assignments ensure that students produce work that meets the assessment objectives - as below.

KS4 60% Portfolio, 40% Externally Set Assignment - 10 Hour Practical Exam

AO1: Develop ideas through investigations, demonstrating critical understanding of sources.

AO2: Refine work by exploring ideas, selecting and experimenting with appropriate media, materials, techniques and processes.

AO3: Record ideas, observations and insights relevant to intentions as work progresses.

AO4: Present a personal and meaningful response that realises intentions and demonstrates understanding of visual language.

KS5 60% Personal Investigation (Including 1000 - 3000 Word Essay), 40% Externally Set Assignment - 15 Hour Practical Exam

AO1: Develop ideas through sustained and focused investigations informed by contextual and other sources, demonstrating analytical and critical understanding.

AO2: Explore and select appropriate resources, media, materials, techniques and processes, reviewing and refining ideas as work develops.

AO3: Record ideas, observations and insights relevant to intentions, reflecting critically on work and progress.

AO4: Present a personal and meaningful response that realises intentions and, where appropriate, makes connections between visual and other elements.

| Half term | 02.09.25 - 23.10.25 | 03.11.25 - 19.12.25 | 05.01.26 - 13.02.26 | 23.02.26 - 26.03.26 | 13.04.26 - 22.05.26 | 01.06.26 - 17.07.26 |
|---|---|--|---|---------------------|--|---|
| | Autumn 1 - 8 weeks | Autumn 2 - 7 weeks | Spring 1 - 6 weeks | Spring 2 - 5 weeks | Summer 1 - 5 weeks | Summer 2 - 7 weeks |
| Year 10 GCSE 3D Design | Component 1 (60%) Introductory project investigating the work of Anthony Caro. Students build multiple wooden 3D structures developing their own visual language. They use their 3D forms as the basis for developing 3D sketching. Students also begin to develop CAD skills using onshape 3D CAD software. | Component 1 - Portfolio (60%) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A sustained project based around the idea of a 'Hanger', to hold or hang whatever is chosen, e.g. coat, headphones. Students investigate designers working in metals - Art Nouveau, Mid 20th Century and Contemporary - gathering images and making drawings to develop initial ideas. Students experiment with cutting and forming, heating and joining metals helping them to explore materials. Ideas are modelled in card to explore and refine form. Students realise their final design/personal response by imaginatively reforming steel tubing - to create their own metal hanger. Further development of the 'hanger' into a sculptural structure takes place. Using the lines/shapes/forms from the metalwork and pushing them further. Experimenting with corrugated card modelling. Initial skills building exercises in cutting, shaping, joining is followed by larger scale model making in corrugated card. | | | Component 1 (60%) Carrying out precise marking, measuring and cutting - skills that will be applied to creative work further into the term. Precision working by hand - making traditional wood joints - cross halving, lap, mortice & tenon, housing, finger joints. Precision working using machine tools. Using the lathe, mortising machine and milling machine. | Component 1 (60%) A sustained project based on an Automata. A project combining the precision required to make a functioning mechanism with the creativity required to make it visually interesting. Students investigate a range of Automata Designer/Makers and mechanisms - and record their findings in images and annotation. |
| Year 11 GCSE 3D Design | Component 1 - Portfolio (60%) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Automata sustained project continues from Y10. Students begin to construct their automata frame, applying skills learned at the end of Y10. Practical building and testing of suitable mechanisms takes place - using modelling materials. The experimentation is documented as part of the project. Students develop a design theme, choose suitable mechanisms and combine as part of their realised idea - completing a final working design model. Students plan to complete a significant part of their Automata as part of a 5 hour mock practical exam. Final finishing of the Automata takes place applying surface finishes. | | Component 2 - Externally Set Assignment (40%) January - students choose one starting point from those set by AQA. Work is produced to meet all assessment objectives. Students sit a 10 Hour Practical exam around the end of April. Students apply the skills they have learned throughout the first part of the course to their ESA. AO1: Investigation of starting points, other designers, materials etc. AO2: Refining ideas through experimenting, testing, sampling, modelling AO3: Recording their findings - photos, drawings, annotation AO4: Realising their own personal response - demonstrating their journey | | | AQA external moderator visits to view samples Component 1 (Portfolio) and Component 2 (Externally Set Assignment) |

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| Year 12 A'Level 3D Design | Skills and Knowledge Building Exercises: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 3D sketching and CAD design using 2D design and onshape 3D software - these essential skills are developed and refined for proficiency. Students learn to use the laser cutter independently alongside using 2D Design. Thermoforming plastics - exercises in line bending, drape forming, press forming and associated mould making. Model making using corrugated card - being creative within constraints - consideration of form & surface. Drawing with wire - modelling to define line, shape and form. Experimenting with surface finish on woods and metals. Investigation of design movements with a particular focus on what it looks like when done well for AO1. Setting the AO1 standard for the Personal Investigation to follow. | | | Personal Investigation Students select their own starting point after reviewing the options with staff and referring to AQA exemplars. Students write a statement of intent. Final skills building exercises. Using software to manipulate photos. | Component 1 - Personal Investigation (60%) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students apply skills, investigating a number of designers/artists gathering images, drawing and modelling based on others' work. Looking for a cohesive response. Students begin to push their own ideas using initial investigation as starting points. Students apply skills from the first part of the course. As all work progresses, students make notes in a journal documenting thoughts and actions taken. Notes to be used for the essay demonstrating analytical thinking. | |
| Year 13 A'Level 3D Design | Component 1 - Personal Investigation (60%) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Initial draft of essay due - based on work to date. Students experiment with materials & processes with purpose - developing their own 3D visual language, based on initial investigation around their chosen theme. Reflective practice to be the norm - making, reflecting, refining to advance the work. Students continue to make notes in their journal - justifying decisions taken - with regard to working practices and how it links to their chosen theme. Development of a final design concept for a single or number of related works. Realisation/making of a coherent personal response to the starting theme. Final draft of essay due. | | | Component 2 - ExternallySet Assignment (40%) February - students choose one starting point from those set by AQA. Work is produced to meet all assessment objectives. Students sit a 15 Hour Practical exam around the end of April. Students apply the skills they have learned throughout the first part of the course to their ESA. AO1: Focused investigation, informed by context AO2: Exploring and selecting, reviewing and refining AO3: Recording their findings - photos, drawings, annotation AO4: Realising their own personal and meaningful response | | AQA external moderator visits to view samples Component 1 (Personal Investigation) and Component 2 (ExternallySet Assignment) |

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| Year 10 GCSE Fine Art | Portfolio 60% Introductory self portraiture project. Students generate primary sources and explore different drawing, printing and painting techniques. Students are taught to research, analyse and respond to artist stimulus. Students develop their own visual language. Some of the work will form part of their personal project. | Component 1, Portfolio 60% <ul style="list-style-type: none">Students begin to develop their personal project, using their observational drawing from the last half term to build from.Students will research, analyse and create art in response to a range of artists that explore portraiture, landscape or pattern. This generates evidence for all four assessment objectives but with specific focus on ; AO1: Developing ideas from a critical understanding of sources. AO3: Recording using drawing, painting, sculpting, photography and written annotations. | | Component 1, Portfolio 60% Students further develop their ideas in response to their research so far. Students should have begun to establish their own theme within the title portraiture. This can be through mixing materials, reference images, compositions, scale, changing and adapting colour schemes etc. Students refine their ideas and exploration in preparation for creating a final outcome. This generates evidence for all four assessment objectives but with a specific focus on: AO2: Exploring appropriate media and materials, selecting, reviewing and refining AO3: Recording using drawing, painting, sculpting, photography and written annotations. | | Component 1, Portfolio 60% Students finish final areas of research and development and will create a final outcome that resolves all that they have researched. Students work towards a mock exam in which their final outcome will be created. The main assessment focus here is AO4 |
| Year 11 GCSE Fine Art | Component 1, Portfolio 60% Students use this time to prepare for component 2. Students will be given time to develop ideas more quickly from given stimulus in workshop style lessons to develop their skills and adapt techniques to working to a shorter timescale. This experimental work will form the supporting evidence for their portfolio- 60% . Students may also be given time to work back into their personal project if required. | | Component 2 - Externally Set Assignment (40%) January - students choose one starting point from those set by AQA. Work is produced to meet all assessment objectives. Students sit a 10 Hour Practical exam around the end of April. Students apply the skills they have learned throughout the first part of the course to their ESA. AO1: Developing ideas from a critical understanding of sources. AO2: Refining ideas through experimenting, testing, sampling, modelling AO3: Recording their findings - photos, drawings, annotation AO4: Realising their own personal response - demonstrating their journey | | | AQA external moderator visits to view samples Component 1 (Personal Investigation) and Component 2 (Externally Set Assignment) |

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| Year 12 A'Level Fine Art | <p>Exploratory work to be completed to prepare students for their personal investigation.</p> <p>Students will build upon drawing, painting and modelling techniques to develop their knowledge, trial new ways of working and build their tool kit.</p> <p>Students will also complete more in depth analysis to build skills for their essay.</p> <p>Students will engage in class discussion and group critique in order to further understand analysis and to think metacognitively about their work.</p> | <p>Component 1, Personal Investigation -60%</p> <p>Students to choose their own start point after reviewing the options with staff input. Looking at previous starting points. They begin by generating source photos, observational drawings, paintings or sculptures.</p> <p>Students write a statement of intent-forming part of their essay.</p> | <p>Component 1, Personal Investigation -60%</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">Students apply skills, investigating artists appropriate to their intentions, drawing and modelling based on others' work.Students begin to push their own ideas using initial investigation as starting points. Application of skills from the first part of the course.As all work progresses, students record their ideas, analysis and photos in an ongoing essay. <p>Students apply the skills they have learned throughout the first part of the course to their Personal investigation.</p> <p>AO1: Focused investigation, informed by context</p> <p>AO2: Exploring and selecting, reviewing and refining</p> <p>AO3: Recording their findings - photos, drawings, annotation</p> <p>AO4: Realising their own personal and meaningful response.</p> | | | |
| Year 13 A'Level Fine Art | <p>Component 1 - Personal Investigation (60%)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">Students experiment with materials & processes with purpose - developing their own visual language, based on initial investigation around their chosen theme.Reflective practice - making, reflecting, refining to advance the work.Students continue to make notes in their journal - justifying decisions taken - with regard to working practices and how it links to their chosen theme.Development of a final design concept for a single or number of related works.Realisation/making of a coherent personal response to the starting theme, part completed in a mock exam.Final draft of essay due. | | | <p>Component 2 - Externally Set Assignment (40%)</p> <p>February - students choose one starting point from those set by AQA. Work is produced to meet all assessment objectives. Students sit a 15 Hour Practical exam around the end of April.</p> <p>Students apply the skills they have learned throughout the first part of the course to their ESA.</p> <p>AO1: Focused investigation, informed by context</p> <p>AO2: Exploring and selecting, reviewing and refining</p> <p>AO3: Recording their findings - photos, drawings, annotation</p> <p>AO4: Realising their own personal and meaningful response</p> | | <p>AQA external moderator visits to view samples</p> <p>Component 1 (Personal Investigation) and Component 2 (Externally Set Assignment)</p> |

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| Year 10 GCSE Photography | Introducing Skills and building a Portfolio Focus: Photography Fundamentals. Students are introduced to the core technical aspects of photography. Developing an understanding of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Camera functions including shutter speed, aperture, ISO, and depth of field. • Photography theory and terminology to build subject-specific vocabulary. • Practical workshops to explore composition, lighting, focus, and point of view. • Introduction to Adobe Photoshop for basic digital editing and manipulation. | | Researching Artists Focus: Artist Mini Study Students explore the work of 2-4 photographers.: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Analyse photographic work • Recreate key elements of an artist's style. • Reflect critically. Evidence for: AO1, AO2, and AO3 | Component 1 (Portfolio 60%) Students begin their personal project. Students will research, analyse and complete their own photoshoots with editing in response to a range of artists that explores the area of focus. The component 1 is a sustained project that will include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students select relevant photographers to study. • Develop practical and conceptual responses through experimentation. • Apply editing, digital manipulation, and presentation skills. • Begin to develop a final outcome This work will address all assessment objectives: AO1, AO2, AO3, AO4 | | |
| Year 11 GCSE Photography | Component 1 (Portfolio 60%) Focus: Completing the Portfolio <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Refining experiments and ideas. • Completing final edits, shoots, and presentation of outcomes. • Producing a final piece that communicates a clear creative journey. Focus on: AO4: Presenting a personal and meaningful response. | | Component 2 - Externally Set Assignment (40%) January - students choose one starting point from those set by AQA. Work is produced to meet all assessment objectives. Students sit a 10 Hour Practical exam around the end of April. Students apply the skills they have learned throughout the first part of the course to their ESA. AO1: Investigation of starting points, other designers, materials etc. AO2: Refining ideas through experimenting, testing, sampling, modelling AO3: Recording their findings - photos, drawings, annotation AO4: Realising their own personal response - demonstrating their journey | | | AQA external moderator visits to view samples Component 1 (Portfolio) and Component 2 (Externally Set Assignment) |

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| Year 12 A'Level Photography | <p>Exploratory work to be completed to prepare students for their personal investigation.</p> <p>Students will build upon camera skills to develop their knowledge, trial new ways of using the camera and build their tool kit.</p> <p>Students will also complete more in depth analysis to build skills for their essay.</p> <p>Students will engage in class discussion and group critique in order to further understand analysis and to think metacognitively about their work.</p> | <p>Component 1, Personal Investigation -60%</p> <p>Students choose their own start point after reviewing the options with staff input. Looking at previous starting points. They look at inspirational Photographers, analysing their work and re-creating versions using the skills they have built on.</p> <p>Students write a statement of intent- forming part of their essay.</p> | <p>Component 1, Personal Investigation -60%</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students apply skills, investigating photographers appropriate to their intentions, taking photos and manipulating them. Students begin to push their own ideas using initial investigation as starting points. Application of skills from the first part of the course. As all work progresses, students record their ideas, analysis and photos in an ongoing essay. <p>Students apply the skills they have learned throughout the first part of the course to their Personal investigation.</p> <p>AO1: Focused investigation, informed by context</p> <p>AO2: Exploring and selecting, reviewing and refining</p> <p>AO3: Recording their findings - photos, manipulations, digital and by hand.</p> <p>AO4: Realising their own personal and meaningful response.</p> | | | |
| Year 13 A'Level Photography | <p>Component 1 - Personal Investigation (60%)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students experiment with photography & processes with purpose - developing their own visual language, based on initial investigation around their chosen theme. Reflective practice - making, reflecting, refining to advance the work. Students continue to make notes in their sketchbook or Powerpoint - justifying decisions taken - selecting photos with regard to working practices and how it links to their chosen theme. Development of a final design concept for a single or number of related works. Realisation/making of a coherent personal response to the starting theme, part completed in a mock exam. Final draft of essay due. | | | <p>Component 2 - Externally Set Assignment (40%)</p> <p>February - students choose one starting point from those set by AQA. Work is produced to meet all assessment objectives. Students sit a 15 Hour Practical exam around the end of April.</p> <p>Students apply the skills they have learned throughout the first part of the course to their ESA.</p> <p>AO1: Focused investigation, informed by context</p> <p>AO2: Exploring and selecting, reviewing and refining</p> <p>AO3: Recording their findings - photos, drawings, annotation</p> <p>AO4: Realising their own personal and meaningful response</p> | | <p>AQA external moderator visits to view samples</p> <p>Component 1 (Personal Investigation) and</p> <p>Component 2 (Externally Set Assignment)</p> |

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| Year 10 GCSE Textiles | <p>Component 1 - Portfolio (60%)</p> <p>An introductory project explores the theme of 'Surfaces' - and establishes a strong foundation. Students experiment with various techniques focused on texture, layering, and material manipulation. Including free and hand embroidery, couching, devoré, fabric slashing, burning, bonding, and distressing. These processes build technical skills and encourage students to take creative risks.</p> <p>Students also research contemporary textile artists to develop skills in analysis, reflection, and using inspiration to inform their own work.</p> | | <p>Component 1 - Portfolio (60%)</p> <p>Students develop a personal project focused on the theme of seasons. They begin by using observational drawings from the previous term as a starting point. Students address AO1 analysing a variety of artists who work with portraiture, landscape, and pattern, exploring how these themes relate to seasonal changes.</p> <p>Students experiment with textile techniques to express different seasonal qualities. They select and refine media, materials, and processes to suit their personal response, addressing AO2. This stage encourages students to take creative risks and adapt their work by mixing materials, adjusting scale, composition, and colour.</p> <p>Throughout the project, students record their ideas, observations, and developments using drawing, painting, photography, sculpting, and written annotations. Building a clear creative journey, focusing on AO3.</p> <p>Students begin to refine their ideas and prepare for a final outcome that resolves their intentions around the seasonal theme.</p> | | | <p>Component 1 - Portfolio (60%)</p> <p>Students will complete their remaining research and development before creating a final outcome that fully reflects their investigation and creative progress.</p> <p>Students work towards a mock exam. Generating evidence for all four assessment objectives, with a particular focus on AO4</p> |
| Year 11 GCSE Textiles | <p>Students focus on preparing for Component 2. They take part in workshop-style lessons that encourage rapid idea development in response to a given stimulus. These sessions are designed to help students refine their skills and adapt techniques while working within a shorter time frame. Outcomes produced will contribute to the supporting evidence for their portfolio, which accounts for 60% of their final grade.</p> <p>Students may also be given the opportunity to revisit and develop work from their personal project if needed.</p> | | <p>Component 2 - Externally Set Assignment (40%)</p> <p>January - students choose one starting point from those set by AQA. Work is produced to meet all assessment objectives. Students sit a 10 Hour Practical exam around the end of April.</p> <p>Students apply the skills they have learned throughout the first part of the course to their ESA.</p> <p>AO1: Developing ideas from a critical understanding of sources. AO2: Refining ideas through experimenting, testing, sampling, modelling AO3: Recording their findings - photos, drawings, annotation AO4: Realising their own personal response - demonstrating their journey</p> | | | <p>AQA external moderator visits to view samples from Component 1 (Personal Investigation) and Component 2 (Externally Set Assignment)</p> |

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| Year 12 A'Level Textiles | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students begin with an exploratory skills project. As some students may be new to Textiles, this ensures everyone develops a strong foundation. Students explore a range of processes building confidence and expanding their creative toolkit. Alongside practical work, they begin developing analytical skills through artist research, helping to prepare for the written element of the course. Group critiques and discussion support reflective thinking and encourage students to engage more deeply with their ideas and outcomes. | | Component 1 - Personal Investigation (60%) Students select their own starting point from a range of options, with guidance and feedback from staff. They generate their own source material, including photographs and observational studies through drawing, painting or textile-based construction. Students write a statement of intent, outlining their initial ideas and direction. | Component 1 - Personal Investigation (60%) Students apply skills from earlier in the course. They research relevant artists and textile practitioners, using this to inform their own drawing, sampling, and material experimentation. Ideas are developed and refined through ongoing practical work, with students recording their progress through photographs, sketches, annotation, and reflection. This supports the development of their Personal Study essay. Work is guided by the AQA Assessment Objectives: AO1: Contextual research and focused investigation AO2: Exploration and refinement of ideas and techniques AO3: Recording through drawing, annotation, and photography AO4: Creation of a personal and meaningful outcome | | |
| Year 13 A'Level Textiles | Component 1 - Personal Investigation (60%) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students experiment with materials, techniques and processes with purpose, developing a personal visual language in response to their chosen theme. Ongoing reflective practice supports the development of ideas, with students making, reviewing, and refining their work to strengthen outcomes. Students continue to document their thinking through journals and sketchbooks, justifying creative decisions and linking processes to their investigation. A final design concept is developed – this may be a single resolved piece or a series of related works. The realisation of their final outcome begins during the mock exam, allowing time for focus and consolidation. The final draft of the Personal Study essay is completed, supporting the practical work. | | | Component 2 - Externally Set Assignment (40%) February - students choose one starting point from those set by AQA. Work is produced to meet all assessment objectives. Students sit a 15 Hour Practical exam around the end of April. Students apply the skills they have learned throughout the first part of the course to their ESA. AO1: Focused investigation, informed by context AO2: Exploring and selecting, reviewing and refining AO3: Recording their findings - photos, drawings, annotation AO4: Realising their own personal and meaningful response | | AQA external moderator visits to view samples for Component 1 (Personal Investigation) and Component 2 (Externally Set Assignment) |

