

MFA in Fine Art AD 426

PROGRAMME SPECIFICATIONS

Programme title	MFA in Fine Art	School	School of Fine Art
Resulting awards	Master of Fine Arts in Fine Art	Head of School	Professor Philip Napier
Level	Level 9 on the National Framework of Qualifications	ECTS credits¹	120 credits
University award	Master's degree (taught)	Programme type	Postgraduate taught master's degree delivered fulltime over two years
Programme Co-ordinator	Dr Sarah Durcan	External Examiner	Eamon O'Kane, Professor of Painting, Bergen Academy of Art & Design, Norway
Programme team	Brian Hand, Leah Hilliard, Dr Feargal Fitzpatrick, Mark O'Kelly, Catriona Leahy, Dr Helen McAllister and subject tutors		

Note: The MFA in Fine Art programme commences in either September or January (the current delivery). To allow this flexibility, in this document, the trimesters are noted as Trimester 1, 2, 3 and 4. Therefore, Trimester 1 currently refers to the Spring Trimester, but in future deliveries, Trimester 1 could be the Autumn Trimester. Contact NCAD for more information.

1. Programme Aims and Objectives: Purpose, Vision and Values

Introduction

The MFA in Fine Art within the School of Fine Art is designed as a taught programme to build upon the firm foundations established by the undergraduate programme within the School and its constituent disciplines (Painting, Sculpture, Print, Media and Applied Materials).

The programme is designed to 'dock' into the undergraduate three-year degree to provide a suite of modules and learning challenges that establishes the master's qualification as the 'new normal' for those who wish to be actively engaged within the field of fine art practice in its specialist and expanded contemporary dimensions. Students are recruited both internally from the three-year undergraduate programme and externally within Ireland and abroad as we work towards greater internationalisation of our programmes, a process supported through the alliance with UCD. The programme actively encourages applications from external applicants from a diverse range of backgrounds who wish to develop advanced art projects responsive to contemporary contexts. The programme attracts a mixture of recent graduates and mature students who are returning to practice after a career break or who wish to reboot and challenge an established practice. This programme is one of a suite of master's programme at NCAD - the others being in the Schools of Design, Education, and Visual Culture.

¹ European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System, where 60 ECTS credits equate to the workload of a full-time academic year

The MFA in Fine Art offers students the opportunity to develop their practice in fine art through a structured taught programme that enhances their skills and knowledge base and facilitates critical engagement with contemporary art contexts. Postgraduate students access research methods, ideas, reflective processes and approaches and share their learning and professional development with peers. Postgraduate study in fine art has an exploratory basis involving both intellectual enquiry and practical realisation, that requires consistent testing through diverse modes of dissemination such as presentation, exhibition and public events.

Aims

The programme supports a range of practice-based enquiry within the field of contemporary art informed by current frameworks for image-production, objects, materiality, the post-digital, moving-image, performative, participatory and emergent modes of art practice. The programme roots are in the School pathways of Painting, Sculpture and Expanded Practice, Print, Media, Applied Materials. These share a common and divergent practice-led research and professional development ethos enabled by different experiences and attitudes to the contemporary field. A module of research methods prepares students from the broadest range of undergraduate backgrounds with the practical and theoretical means to tailor their specialist area of postgraduate study. It offers students flexibility in their mode of study and interpretation of the curriculum while providing support for the development of their specialism. The programme encourages applications from graduates who want to develop advanced art projects responsive to contemporary contexts.

Successive and elective modules allow students to develop their practice, their professional, technical and organisational skills and their knowledge and application of critical contexts.

The programme has the following generic aims:

- To improve the exploration, curiosity, ambition, depth and breadth of fine art practice in a systematic and insightful manner;
- To encourage students to conceptualise and review their creative process and take decisive control over the direction of the creative process;
- To critically evaluate and engage with contemporary debates in fine art;
- To provide students with an advanced knowledge and the appropriate research and practice skills to creatively contextualise their work and imaginatively demonstrate its wider relevance;
- To encourage students to explore how best to connect their work to contemporary fields, engagements and publics.

2. Programme Outcomes

On successful completion of the programme, students will be able to:

1. Know and name the forms of knowledge they are producing in relation to practice based engagement.
2. Critically reflect on decision-making within their work.
3. Situate their activity and media within a framework of practice that informs it.

4. Account for the contemporary connections they are making between their practice and wider currents in the field.
5. Present their work in an appropriate public form across diverse modes of dissemination and engagement such as actions, events, exhibition, in online and offline contexts.
6. Complete an advanced body of reflective writing that critically contextualises their practice.
7. Demonstrate that they have significantly developed their professional practice as fine artists to postgraduate level.

Master of Fine Art graduates will have the following attributes:

- **Knowledge and understanding** of the broad field of Fine Art, including current practice and critical debate.
- **Capacity to apply knowledge and understanding** of fine art through written, spoken and visual communication means to new aspects of contemporary practice.
- **Ability to make reasoned judgements** and to display an awareness of a broad range of creative and critical choices.
- **Communications and working skills** - an ability to work in both a self-directed manner and within a team approach where appropriate in order to advance knowledge sharing, peer learning and critical dialogue in relation to the field.
- **Construction and deployment of independent learning skills** which might assist the student in their transition to doctoral study or other professional roles and employment.

Stage Outcomes

On successful completion of Year 1 of the programme, students will:

- Have constructed an intellectual platform and working environment to negotiate and advance the development of knowledge through practice.
- Have established a working momentum in relation to acquiring appropriate critical, technical and conceptual skills appropriate to the research inquiry.
- Have tested new work in the context of making it public through self/peer organised exhibition/publication/distribution.
- Have a grounded knowledge of research methodologies through a range of inputs involving discussion, discourse and experiential learning.

On successful completion of Year 2 of the programme, students will:

- Have recognised the value of creative risk taking through challenging the habits and assumptions of creative inquiry in practice and in relation to interdisciplinary perspectives.
- Have evidenced through public dissemination an advanced practice in relation to criticality, decision making and communication.
- Have developed a self-supporting range of learning, working and communication skills which will enable them to engage and prosper at a professional level.
- Be able to creatively engage with academic and professional subject fields.

3. Admission Requirements

To be considered for admission to the MFA in Fine Art, applicants must:

- Have successfully completed a BA Hons (2:2) degree in a relevant field, or
- Provide evidence of having achieved an appropriate level of professional practice in the subject field.

Students who have not been educated through English must show proof of achieving IELTS 6.5 (with a minimum of 6 in the writing section on the Academic Version) or an equivalent score in another accepted test.

Please refer to the [NCAD website](#) before submitting an application.

4. Further Educational Opportunities that may arise during or upon completion of the programme

The master's programme equips students to become advanced professional practitioners encompassing a body of publicly-disseminated and tested work. The MFA programme encompasses a range of different practice strategies which can be applied in life world contexts. The programme supports means of constructing knowledge and skills that are transferable in a society that is increasingly visually literate.

On successful completion of the MFA in Fine Art, students can apply to PhD studies.

5. Teaching and Learning Methodologies

The School of Fine Art encompasses a broad range of perspectives on art practice, which, while offering different professional and creative agendas, share many similar characteristics.

Fine art teaching and learning is supported by dedicated studio spaces and practical workshops in addition to lecture and seminar-based classes. Postgraduate fine art students develop their conceptual and critical abilities in tandem with acquiring the skills necessary to realise their ideas as tangible, material and practice-based outcomes. These outcomes may involve thematic explorations in a variety of different media. Students are encouraged to be articulate in both written and oral forms and to be able to assess the appropriate technical competencies applicable in their chosen specialism and subject matter. Teaching and Learning will be delivered in a blended approach including in studio / on line and off line.

Fine art education follows a constructivist model subscribing to the view that knowledge and understanding are not acquired passively but in an active manner through personal experience and experiential activities, that learning is based on problem setting and problem solving, and an exploration of a particular line of enquiry and active engagement with ideas.

There are ongoing debates surrounding pedagogy in fine art in relation to the creation of an environment within which creativity might thrive. Thus, there is an ongoing debate generally in art schools in relation to the value of subject learning versus an entirely open interdisciplinary landscape. A negotiation of creative dissent has been an important pillar of fine art practice and has driven forms and attitudes running counter to prevailing economic and ideological models.

Learning, teaching and assessment strategies to be employed include:

- Studio tuition
- Seminars
- Team teaching: group crits and project spaces
- Technical instruction and demonstrations
- Self-directed study: research and practice
- Study trips
- Examination via exhibition
- Field work
- Student self-evaluation
- Blended Learning
- Lectures
- Tutorials
- Student projects
- Group teaching and learning
- Interdisciplinary activities: research methods
- Placement or internship opportunities
- Group crits: one-to-one or group
- Conference, symposium, event
- Assessment as a learning method: feedback on modules

6. Methods of Assessment

Alignment of Assessment

Through aligning the assessment in relation to the learning outcomes, delivered through teaching and learning activities, students and staff can clearly identify what has been achieved and how and where improvement can be made. The transparency of an assessment strategy is very important in demonstrating to a student where improvement may be made and in the responsibility of feedback.

Assessment Procedure

Our assessment procedure aims to assist the student to understand a transparent assessment process and enables them to understand their own levels of achievement against explicit grade critical and learning outcomes and how and where they need to improve.

Individual components of the programme are assessed on a mark-allocation basis to provide students with clear feedback to promote self-evaluation and self-reflection in their own learning processes. Staff are experienced in delivering a range of marking in line with student construction of knowledge and demonstration of understanding.

The aim of the assessment procedure is to achieve the following objectives:

- Measure and grade the student's level of achievement in relation to the learning outcomes.
- Communicate: Assessments provide students with clear feedback to promote self-evaluation and self-reflection in their own learning processes.
- Illustrate that the learning outcomes and competencies required have been achieved, to allow for progression to the next level.

Assessment Methods

- **Formative Assessment:** typically involves feedback (oral or written) to students on their progress, and does not usually involve a mark. It is used to provide constructive feedback to improve

learning and understanding. Formative assessment does not form part of the student's final grade or mark.

- **Summative Assessment:** these assessment results are aggregated and used to determine whether students have fulfilled the specified learning outcomes and have met the standard required to achieve a passing grade, and so can be granted the credits for successfully completing each module.

Assessment Evidence

The evidence of assessment within a Fine Art programme may be:

- artworks
- evolved proposals
- journals
- documents
- events
- situated forms
- study visits and field trips
- collaborative forms
- site-specific engagements
- lectures
- field work
- artefacts
- notebooks
- presentations
- exhibition
- actions
- contexts
- expanded practices
- participatory practices
- experiential forms
- discursive forms

Assessment Approaches

Assessments are undertaken by a team of teachers who are examining the learning outcomes.

Assessment may occur or be required on or off campus or on line

Assessments will be timetabled well in advance. This might require specific negotiation of the 'micro' assessment timing in relation to the organisation or very specific timing of assessment evidence.

Assessments occur in two forms which depend on the year/stage: with the learner present and not present.

7. Programme Review and Evaluation

It is important to NCAD that students inform the development of teaching and learning at NCAD. The College encourage all students to communicate their concerns and their observations about their study to members of staff so that any changes can be made in a timely manner.

About two-thirds of the way through the semester, a student forum will be convened to gather students' comments about their study and the delivery of the programme. In addition, at the end of Semester 2, students have the opportunity to complete an online evaluation of their study and experience at NCAD. These evaluation events are important to current and future students, to ensure we can enhance the delivery of programmes at NCAD.

In addition, students are invited to discuss their experience on the programme with their lecturers at any point during the year. Students' comments can also be relayed to the class student representative who will communicate comments to the staff.

The Programme is subject to internal review at the end of each year following responses from students' evaluations, external examiner reports and staff responses to the delivery.

A student representative from the programme is entitled to sit on the Fine Art School Board.

The External Examiner of the programme provides written feedback about aspects of the programme consistent with UCD Guidelines.

A major external review of this programme was carried out in 2023-2024.

8. Modular Provision

Code	Module	Core, Optional, Elective	Credits
Year 1 Trimester 1			
PGVC1001	Introduction to Research Practices	C	5
PGFA1001	Practice Lab: Fine Art	C	10
PGFA1002	Art Seminars 1	C	10
PGVC1007	Contemporary Art Practices 2: Mediums of Art	C	5
Year 1 Trimester 2			
PGFA1003	Practice Pathways: Fine Art	C	20
PGFA1006	Art Seminars 3 (NEW)	O	5
PGFA1007	Critical Practice Workshop	O	5
PGFA1008	Critical Practice Seminar	O	5
PGFA1009	Art Seminars 2	O	5
Year 2 Trimester 3			
PGFA2002*	Major Practice Project: Fine Art*	C	(10)
PGFA2001	Exploring Exhibition Dimensions	O	20
PGVC1017	ACW Major Research Project/Thesis	O	20
Year 2 Trimester 4			
PGFA2002*	Major Practice Project: Fine Art*	C	(25)
PGFA2003	Professional Development of the Artist	C	5

*PGFA2002 Major Practice Project: Fine Art is a 35-credit module studied over Trimester 3 and 4. It will be summatively assessed at the end of Trimester 3 for 30 % of its total weighting.

In common with other postgraduate deliveries, it is intended that Trimester 1 & 2 will commence in Jan / Feb and run through the summer adding Semester 3 and 4 running from September to June.

Creative Futures Academy

With prior arrangement with the Head of Programme, students may be able to complete comparable modules provided through Creative Futures Academy, in place of modules included in the MFA programme.

9. Programme Structure

Trimester 1			
PGVC1001 Introduction to Research Practices 5 credits	PGFA1001 Practice Lab: Fine Art 10 credits	PGFA1002 MFA Art Seminars 1 10 credits	PGACW 7 Contemporary Art Practices 2: Mediums of Art 5 credits
Trimester 2			
PGFA1003 Practice Pathways: Fine Art 20 credits		PGFA1009 Art Seminars 2 (O) 5 credits	PGFA1007 Critical Practice Workshop (O) 5 credits
		PGFA1006 Art Seminars 3 (O) 5 credits	PGFA1008 Critical Practice Seminar (O) 5 credits
Any TWO			
Trimester 3		Both Trimesters 3 & 4	
OR PGFA2001 Exploring Exhibition Dimensions 20 credits (O)			
PGVC1017 ACW Major Research Project/Thesis 20 credits (O)			
Trimester 4			
PGFA2003 Professional Development of the Artist 5 credits	PGFA2002 Major Practice Project: Fine Art 35 credits		

10. Progression, Exit Points and Credit Requirements

Students will only be admitted to Year 2 on completion of 60 credits in Year 1. There is no allowance for credits to be carried over.

11. Final Award Calculation

The award of MFA in Fine Art will be granted to those students successfully completing 60 credits in Year 2 of the programme.

12. Resources

Staffing

	Name	Role
Teaching Staff	Dr Sarah Durcan (acting)	Programme Leader
	Mark O'Kelly	Painting

	Catriona Leahy	Print
	Brian Hand Louise Walsh	Sculpture
	Dr Feargal Fitzpatrick Leah Hilliard Cliona Harmey	Media
	Dr Helen McAllister	Applied Materials
	Dr Declan Long Dr Francis Halsall Dr Sarah Pierce	Visual Culture
Admin Staff	Hazel Crowley	MFA administrator
Technical Support Staff	Brendan Begley Mark Ferguson Michelle Byrne Iulian Bocancea Liam Gough Denise Beck Mark Jones Julia Kemperman Mickey Smyth	Sculpture Sculpture Sculpture Painting Print Media Media Media Media

Space

Core programme activities*

Monday	10-11.30am fortnightly	Research Methods
Monday	11.00-1pm. fortnightly	Contemporary Art Practices
Monday	2:00 – 3.30	Practice Critical Seminar series
Tuesday	10-11.30am	MFA Art Seminars 1
Wednesday	5:30pm	School Lecture Series
Monday-Friday	MFA Postgraduate Studios, Thomas St/The Annex, James St	Studio Practice

*Teaching locations and timing TBC

The MFA operates a pathways approach with some teaching located in other Schools/Partner locations.

Facilities

Subject areas provide resources in:

- Sculpture
- Painting
- Print
- Media
- Applied Materials

Each Subject Area is the centre of its own resources in terms of, workshop activity, bookable equipment, cameras projectors, and technical support.

IT resources are provided by each subject area.

Studio spaces are provided both on Thomas St campus or in The Annex studios, James St or in proximity to the Thomas St campus.

The NCAD Gallery

The Edward Murphy Library

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For further information on this programme contact:

Programme Leader	Dr Sarah Durcan	durcans@staff.ncad.ie
Head of School	Professor Philip Napier	napierp@staff.ncad.ie
MFA administrator, School Secretary	Hazel Crowley	crowleyh@staff.ncad.ie