

BA in Visual Culture

AD215

PROGRAMME SPECIFICATIONS

Programme title	BA in Visual Culture	School	School of Visual Culture
Resulting awards	BA in Visual Culture University Certificate in Visual Culture (exit award only)	Head of School	Professor David Crowley
Level	8	ECTS credits¹	180 or 240 if a student takes Visual Culture Plus
University award	Honours bachelor's degree (major award)	Programme type	Full time undergraduate programme over 3 years (or 4 years if a student takes Visual Culture Plus)
Programme Co-ordinator	Dr Emma Mahony	External Examiner	Dr Niamh Ann Kelly, Lecturer, Dublin School of Creative Arts, TU Dublin
Programme team	Dr R O'Dwyer, Dr L Godson, Dr F. Halsall, Professor D Crowley, Dr D Long, Dr A Moran, H O'Kelly, D Kehoe, H O'Kelly, F. Loughnane, Dr S Loeffler		

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

The BA (Hons) in Visual Culture provides an opportunity for the critical study of the history and theory of art and design practice in a creative arts setting and facilitates the application of this knowledge through various professional settings. This new degree path provides pertinent and unique learning opportunities in the visual arts and their related professional fields. The first cohort of BA Visual Culture degree students graduated in 2016.

As a field of study, Visual Culture encompasses a wide range of subjects from Impressionist painting to mass advertising and from Bollywood cinema to underground fashion. It examines the ways in which artworks, moving and still images, spaces and objects of all kinds are shaped by society and, in turn, have marked effects on the societies that produce them.

Visual Culture is open to the study of different historical periods, but at NCAD we focus on the last two centuries, an era marked by rapid social, cultural and technical change. Visual Culture Studies has been engaged with trying to expand our understanding of diversity in the world, as well as exploring the effects of globalisation. It is very open to the future, asking questions, for instance, about the impact of digital tools like smart phones on how the world is represented and by whom.

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

Visual Culture Studies has been enlivened by a deep engagement with theory: gender studies, psychoanalysis, as well as language-based theories like deconstruction as well as a fascination with materiality have all had a major impact on the way that we can understand and critique our image-saturated world

This course also capitalises on the context of the College's studio based teaching provision and builds on the existing strengths of the members of the School of Visual Culture who deliver the theoretical and critical curriculum content to all existing NCAD studio-based degrees. It recognises and values the forms of practical knowledge which are central to the culture of making in an art and design school in specialist introductory modules. Visual Culture BA students have opportunities to study alongside studio-based students. Practically orientated classes – offered as part of our Professional Practice modules – offer undergraduate students to experience the responsibilities of curation, image and text based publishing and project management alongside collaborative engagement with the studio practices of NCAD undergraduates.

In addition, students may choose to undertake Visual Culture Plus. The programme is an optional additional year of study between the second and final year of study that offers students the opportunity to combine accredited work and/or study placements, allowing students build a bespoke learning experience to suit an individual's particular skills and ambitions.

Visual Culture Plus is a 60 credit year after year 2 of the existing BA programme which will allow students to gain practical work experience, study abroad and/or connect with art and design studios, venues and businesses across Dublin and the wider global NCAD creative network.

The aims of the programme are to:

- Provide a broad and inclusive engagement with the concepts and practices of the evolving field of Visual Culture studies;
- Provide stimulating opportunities for students to fully engage with current Visual Culture practices including the activities of artists and designers, public and private institutions and the media;
- Engage our students deeply in the life of the College, thereby providing unique opportunities to work with our gallery and archive, as well as other taught programmes;
- Develop high-level research in our students, writing and analytical skills that will equip them for successful careers in a wide range of fields;
- Foster through our teaching empathetic and informed understanding of the lives and cultures of others;
- Develop practical skills in our students, including those in digital technologies which will enhance their understanding of the field and their future prospects on graduation;
- Encourage the capacity and understanding of our students to act positively in the face of future social and environmental challenges.

2. Programme Outcomes

Upon successful completion of the BA (Hons) in Visual Culture students will possess:

1. A sophisticated understanding of the histories and theories of visual culture at a level appropriate for undergraduate study;
2. Written, spoken and visual communication skills appropriate to the critical interpretation and dissemination of Visual Culture to both public and academic audiences;
3. An understanding of the professional contexts in which a knowledge of Visual Culture is pertinent, and the ability to reflect critically on the potentials and limitations of these contexts;
4. A keen understanding of the contemporary practices, structures and interests of art and design.

Graduates of the programme will have the skills in writing, research, presentation and communication as well as the understanding of Visual Culture (including knowledge of the operations and interests of cultural institutions, the media, as well as the contemporary practice of art and design) to pursue successful careers in the arts. The writing, communication, research and critical thinking skills that they develop on the programme will be transferable to other professional contexts. They will have the critical perspectives and understanding of contemporary social and cultural issues that will serve their lives now and in the future.

3. Stage Outcomes

Year 1

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

- **RESEARCH/UNDERSTAND:** Understand how to investigate diverse sources, and subject them to critical analysis. Hold a clear understanding of the ways in which different institutions (archives, museums, libraries, etc.) support research into Visual Culture. Successfully navigate the cultural resources of Dublin and utilise these for study purposes. Employ an appropriate range of key definitions and concepts used in the field of Visual Culture as well as allied disciplines of History of Art and History of Design in their written and other assignments.
- **ANALYSE:** Engage in critical analysis of different expressions of Visual Culture by employing key concepts and theories. Understand how different factors such as economic arrangements and politics affect the production and consumption of Visual Culture.
- **COMMUNICATE:** Develop effective command of academic conventions. Explore different forms of writing to understand how ideas can be conveyed in appropriately structured and coherent ways.

Year 2

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

- **RESEARCH:** Possess an understanding of historiography and the genealogy of key ideas and methods in Visual Culture and the methodologies of other related academic fields. Conduct research in fields of their own choosing. Discover and then analyse primary material such as that found in archives. Make informed decisions about the merits and limits of different sources. Demonstrate a critical understanding of several key areas of contemporary practice in Visual Culture studies.
- **ANALYSE:** Develop sophisticated analytical skills and understanding of how and when to deploy them effectively. Acquire an informed understanding of the impact and uses of digital tools in both the expression and the analysis of Visual Culture. Possess an informed understanding of the operations of different media today and in the past, as well as the critiques which have been made of their various roles and effects.
- **COMMUNICATE/PLAN/ORGANISE:** Successfully communicate research and analysis in coherent and relevant textual and other forms. Develop the capacity to address audiences in a targeted, strategic manner. Develop the ability to work in a self-directed manner and contribute to team and collaborative projects.

Final Year

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

- **RESEARCH:** Design and undertake a major research project which requires critical engagement with a wide range of sources. This requires independence and confidence. Exercise informed critical judgments about the appropriate use of critical and theoretical tools.
- **ANALYSE:** Use textual and visual analysis tools to construct compelling arguments about aspects of Visual Culture. Draw on and test different types of sources and concepts to understand the production, reception and effects of Visual Culture. Understand and make informed arguments about the limits of models and practices within the field of Visual Culture.
- **COMMUNICATE/ORGANISE:** Select and employ an appropriate mode of expression to communicate an extended body of self-directed research. Manage a long-term project which has key stages and targets. Organise complex research materials using appropriate means. Produce work which meets high academic standards and engages diverse publics and, importantly, to know and have tested the appropriate forms and expressions of both. Collaborate with other practitioners of various kinds including artist and designers to achieve public expression of ideas and research.

4. Admission Requirements

All first year applications through the Central Applications Office (CAO). Offers made on a competitive basis to applicants who meet the minimum academic entry requirements through the Irish Leaving Certificate Page 3 of 8 examination (6 passes, 2 at Higher Level, passes to include Irish, English and Art or a third language) or equivalent result in other country school leaving certificate

examinations (www.nui.ie). Offers also made on a competitive basis to holders of FETAC awards with a minimum qualification of 5 distinctions from a full award in a cognate area of study. College RPL policy applies for mature and other non-standard applicants. Applicants with prior academic qualifications and/or academic credits may enter directly into the second or final year of the programme.

5. Further Educational Opportunities

Transition to Masters level study on Art in the Contemporary World (MA ACW) or Design History and Material Culture (MA DHMC) is possible for those undergraduates who achieve the requisite skills and competences.

Careers and skills

NCAD offers a broad approach to the study of Visual Culture, focusing on the past, present and future of images and objects. It not only addresses works of art and design but also the ways in which they are represented in the media and through institutions like galleries and museums. As such, Visual Culture BA students acquire a broad understanding of the workings of contemporary culture.

The programme offers professional practice modules in each year of study as well as meaningful opportunities to undertake placements and 'live' projects with public institutions and other partners.

As a consequence, Visual Culture graduates have a wide range of local and international opportunities open to them, including: arts administration (in contemporary and heritage contexts); publishing, journalism, critical writing; work in museums and private galleries; or pure art and design historical research and lecturing.

6. Teaching and Learning

Student work presented for assessment takes a variety of forms:

- Presentations: develop public speaking skills, refined oral communication.
- Portfolio of Writing Samples: develop flexibility and confidence in a range of writing practices and styles, including but not limited to, the academic.
- Illustrated Essay: refine understanding of importance of communication via image and text.
- Research Essay: propose, plan and execute an extended body of self-directed research.

7. Methods of Assessment

Assessment for all modules is delivered as written feedback. All feedback conforms to the College's published assessment criteria and grading system. Particular consideration is given to the development of students over the period of study (later phase assessment places greater value on independence and depth of research). Assessment on the BA programme takes both formative and summative forms.

8. Programme Review and Evaluation

It is important to NCAD that students inform the development of teaching and learning at NCAD. We 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 year, 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 trimester 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 your experience on the module with their lecturers at any point during the year. Students can also relay comments to the class student representative who will communicate them to the staff.

A review of this programme was carried out in January 23 academic year. An external panel of experts reviewed the existing programme in terms of its academic coherence and ambition as well as student experience and graduate achievements, and were consulted about proposed changes. The feedback from the external panel was very positive and the Visual Culture BA programme was approved for the maximum period, a sign of its academic quality and good health.

New changes – endorsed by the panel and then agreed by NCAD's Academic Council - were proposed in the light of staff, student, graduate and stakeholder feedback. The main changes – which are incorporated in this version of the programme specification – concern the organisation of modules. They are as follows:

- i. The first year on the programme has been reshaped to include content such as the *Situations of Visual Culture* module which is well suited to helping new students orientate to NCAD, Dublin as a site of creative economy and the field of Visual Culture studies.
- ii. The final year of the programme has been substantially changed by the introduction of *Visual Culture Special Subject* module. This has been introduced to allow students to reflect critically on and employ methods, approaches and theories that they have studied in the earlier phases of the programme. The content of the *Special Subject* module will reflect emerging or current matters of concern in the field of Visual Culture studies and particular emphasis will be placed on working with primary source materials such as those found in NIVAL or elsewhere. The second major change is the introduction of a new module, *Making Visual Culture Public*, which is designed to allow students to develop excellent communication skills and to have the opportunity, enjoyed by all NCAD graduating students, to make their work public by means of exhibition, presentation or publication. Other, relatively minor final year changes have been introduced to improve the balance and timing of modules in ways that reflect student concerns and our wish to ensure that the programme is a rich and satisfying educational experience.

In addition, the staff team have considered how the programme supports the acquisition of professional and technical skills – our graduates, in particular, have given use excellent feedback about the value of these skills and from 2023 onwards and where appropriate BA VC modules will embrace a wider range of assignments designed to support professional and communication skills.

Students will also be given encouragement and training to develop technical and digital skills not least through the use of LinkedIN Learning.

9. Modular Provision

Module	Credits	Core, Option or Elective	Trimester
Year 1			
VC1-1 Introduction to Key Concepts in Art & Design 1A	5	C	1
VC1-6 Technologies of Visual Culture	10	C	1
VC1001 Introduction to Visual Culture	10	C	1
VC1002 Professional Practice: Mediation	5	C	1
VC1-2 Introduction to Key Concepts in Art & Design 1B	5	C	2
VC1003 Histories of Art & Design	10	C	2
VC1004 Materials, Techniques & Processes	10	C	2
VC1005 Situations of Visual Culture	5	C	2
Year 2			
VC2-1 Contemporary Theories & Practices 2A	5	C	1
VC2-2 Histories of Art & Design 2	10	C	1
VC2-3 Professional Practice: Institutions	10	C	1
VC2-4 Contemporary Theories and Practices 2B	5	C	1
VC2-5 Contemporary Theories and Practices 2C	5	C	2
VC2-6 Understanding Digital Cultures	10	C	2
VC2-8 Contemporary Theories and Practices 2D	5	C	2
VC2-10 Professional Practice: Exhibitions	10	C	2
Visual Culture Plus (optional)			
DES+ 003 Creative Internship Minor	15	O	1 or 2
DES+004 Creative Internship Major	30	O	1 or 2
Studio modules	25	E	1 or 2
CFAD+001 Creative Futures 1	5	O	1 or 2
CFAD+002 Creative Futures 2	5	O	1 or 2
CODE Trinity Elective	5	E	1 or 2
Critical Cultures elective	5	E	1 or 2
International Study (Erasmus)	30	O	1 or 2
FA+001 Art Practice Situations 1	10	O	1 or 2
FA+002 Art Practice Situations 2	10	O	1 or 2
FA+003 Art Practice Futures 1	15	O	1 or 2
FA+004 Art Practice Futures 2	15	O	1 or 2
DES+007 Design Positions Minor	10	O	1 or 2
DES+008 Design Positions Major	10	O	1 or 2
Final Year			
VC3-1 Economies of Visual Culture	10	C	1
VC3002 Collaborative Practices	5	C	1
VC3-4 Contemporary Theories & Practices 3A	5	O	1
VC3-3 Visual Culture Placement	5	O	1 or 2
VC3-12 Research Practices	20	C	1 and 2
VC3003 Making Visual Culture Public	5	C	2
VC3004 Visual Culture Special Subject	10	C	2
VC3-8 Contemporary Theories & Practices 3B	5	O	2

10. Programme Structure

Year 1: Autumn Trimester			
VC1-1 Introduction to Key Concepts in Art & Design 5 credits	VC1002 Professional Practice: Mediation 5 credits	VC1001 Introduction to Visual Culture 10 credits	VC1-6 Technologies of Visual Culture 10 credits
Year 1: Spring Trimester			
VC1-2 Introduction to Key Concepts in Art & Design 1B 5 credits	VC1003 Histories of Art & Design 10 credits	VC1004 Materials, Techniques & Processes 10 credits	VC1005 Situations of Visual Culture 5 credits
Year 2: Autumn Trimester			
VC2-1 Contemporary Theories & Practices 2 5 credits	VC2-2 Histories of Art & Design 10 credits	VC2-3 Professional Practice: Institutions 10 credits	VC2-4 Contemporary Theories and Practices 2B 5 credits
Year 2: Spring Trimester			
VC2-5 Contemporary Theories and Practices 2C 5 credits	VC2-6 Understanding Digital Cultures 10 credits	VC2-8 Contemporary Theories and Practices 2D 5 credits	VC2-10 Professional Practice: Exhibitions 10 credits
Visual Culture Plus Year (option): Each trimester includes one of the following possibilities (30 credits):			
Creative Internship Major (30)			
Studio Modules (25) plus Creative Futures 1 or 2 (5) or Trinity Elective (5) or Critical Cultures elective (5)			
International Study (Erasmus) (30)			
Art Practice Futures 1 or 2 (15) and Art Practice Situations 1 or 2 (10) and Creative Futures 1 or 2 (5) or Trinity Elective (5) or Critical Cultures elective (5)			
Creative Internship Minor (15) and Design Positions Minor or Major (10) and Creative Futures 1 or 2 (5) or Trinity Elective (5) or Critical Cultures elective (5)			
Final Year: Autumn Trimester			Final Year: Both trimesters
VC3-1 Economies of Visual Culture 10 credits	VC3002 Collaborative Practices 5 credits	VC3-4 Contemporary Theories & Practices 3A OR VC3-3 Visual Culture Placement 5 credits	VC3-12 Research Practices 20 credits
Final Year: Spring Trimester			
VC3003 Making Visual Culture Public 5 credits	VC3004 Visual Culture Special Subject 10 credits	VC3-8 Contemporary Theories & Practices 3B OR VC3-3 Visual Culture Placement 5 credits	

11.Exit Points and Credit Requirements

University Certificate in Visual Culture

Students who exit the programme having successfully completed at least 30 credits from Year 1 of the programme may submit for a University Certificate in Visual Culture (30 credits, level 8).

The University Certificate is calculated using credits achieved from First Year of the programme.

Final Award Calculation

Students awarded the BA (Hons) in Visual Culture will have completed 180 credits (or 240 credits if taking the Visual Culture Plus year). The final award is calculated on the basis of the performance of the student in the final year of study. No grades from years 1 and 2 are used to calculate the basis of the final award, but students need to have passed all modules in years 1 and 2 in order to progress.

12.Resources

Staffing

Name	Title/Role
Teaching Staff	
Dr Emma Mahony	Programme Leader
Dr Lisa Godson	The staff indicated all contribute to modules on the BA Visual Culture
Dr Francis Halsall	
Denis Kehoe	
Dr Silvia Loeffler	
Dr Declan Long	
Fiona Loughnane	
Hilary O'Kelly	
Dr Rachel O'Dwyer	
Dr Sarah Pierce	
Dr Anna Moran	
David Crowley	
Administrative Staff	
Neasa Travers	School Secretary

Space

Teaching occurs in a range of seminar and lecture theatres at the College's Thomas Street site. Classes often take place in those galleries and museums which support the programme (such as the ESB Centre for the Study of Irish Art at the National Gallery). The library is a key facility for student research and study, as is NIVAL. Students have access to their own study space in Room 111 HCH.

Facilities

No special facilities are attached the programme. Students make extensive use of College facilities such as the library and NIVAL. All modules are supported by a range of digital resources delivered via Google Classroom.

For further information on this programme,
contact Programme Leader Dr Emma Mahony: mahonye@staff.ncad.ie