Introduction to Research Methods for Art & Design
PGCFAV1005

MODULE DESCRIPTOR

ECTS credits[1]	5	Programmes	MLitt, MRes and PhD Professional Certificate in Art & Design Research Professional Diploma in Art & Design Research
NQF level	Level 9	School	School of Visual Culture
Stage	1	Module Co-ordinator	Dr Lisa Godson
Trimester	1	Module Team	School of Visual Culture staff
Contact	Neasa Travers, School Secretary: visualculture@staff.ncad.ie		
Responsibility	The NCAD Academic Council and School of Visual Culture Board have responsibility for this module.		

1. Introduction

Participants in this module will explore key and current issues in relation to research for art and design practice. By undertaking this module, they will achieve a sophisticated understanding of the skills and understanding necessary to undertake research for and through art and design. This module is introductory in character and is designed to support the participants to critically determine and articulate a method in relation to a future or ongoing research project.

Increased reflexivity in thinking in relation to research, will encourage participants to become reflective and responsible practitioners who can position their work with greater confidence and communicate about it to the creative arts and industries.

Particular emphasis is placed not only on the development of a critical understanding of different research methods: the module supports the communicating of research.

Indicative Content

Research Fundamentals

At this session, participants will participate in a guided discussion of their current understanding of research, focussing on how and what they research. They will then be introduced to the typical paradigms of research, focussing initially on the OECD Frascati Manual definition [ie, Research and experimental development (R&D) comprise creative and systematic work undertaken in order to increase the stock of knowledge – including knowledge of humankind, culture and society – and to devise new applications of available knowledge] and interrogate how this relates to prevailing methods and outcomes of the frequently quoted *research into*, *research through*, *research for* art and design (Frayling).

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[1] European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System, where 60 ECTS credits equate to the workload of a full-time academic year (two trimesters)

In this session, we will explore a series of case studies of research across different creative domains with a focus on art and design practice. We will explore current thinking on the ways arts-based practice is understood and evaluated, and future trajectories. In advance of this session, participants will be allocated particular 'exegeses' writings associated with specific practice-based research projects. These may be drawn for example from https://www.researchcatalogue.net (An International Database for Artistic Research).

Developing a Vocabulary of Research Methods for Art and Design

Most fields of enquiry or academic disciplines have particular ways of describing method in relation to research, sometimes taken to mean following a reproducible procedure or (more generally) 'following a path' (the original meaning of *methodos*). In this session, participants will explore the ways different research methods are conceived and described, and how they relate to art and design. This will include the tension between quantitative, qualitative, hermeneutic, experiment-based, case-study, real-world research, collaborative research, action-research, grounded theory and then practice-based, practice-led, artistic research and design research.

Assessing the 'state of the art'

The 'state of the art' usually describes current research and thinking about a specific topic. Within humanities or scientific research, demonstrating knowledge of the state of the art is usually conveyed through a literature review which surveys written works on a specific topic. In this session we will explore how, for art and design, being able to assess the state of the art involves the critical context within which your work sits. This can mean being able to survey a range of material that might include written, exhibited or made work including academic writing, artworks, design projects, exhibitions, patents, policy documents, critical reviews and curricula. Such material might focus not only on work that ostensibly focuses on the same topic but across competing ways of working, surveys of a larger field and the tracking of the genealogy of a concept.

Working with different sources

In this session we will explore how to work with different kinds of sources. We start with specific information-gathering methods that we can use to find out more about particular topics including digital research tools such as Algolia Python, then focus on different kinds of primary material such as archival records, periodicals, artworks and artefacts. Finally, we will explore different creative practices that work with and through different kinds of sources.

Praxis: Practice/Theory

This session will focus specifically on praxis. In the most straightforward way, as a concept or term 'praxis' is usually understood as theoretically inflected action, but it has acquired particular nuances when associated with the fields of art and design research. A central concern of the session will be exploring the aesthetic claims and uncertainty inherent in praxis, particularly when understood in relation to practice and theory, as practice (what we do) is often treated as distinct from theory (what we think or say), and the etymological and philosophical roots of both tend to emphasise that theory is fixed whereas practice is contingent. We will also explore the 'reflective practitioner', an aspirational ideal usually configured within educational settings, with reference to key texts on ways of knowing through practice.

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Crit

The final session in the series of classes will take the form of a peer-review exercise in which participants share and comment on each other's statements outlining their actual / proposed approach to research method.

Indicative Readings

- Butt, D (2017) Artistic Research in the Future Academy 'Chapter 3 Artistic Research: Defining the Field', Intellect, Bristol

- Candy and Edmonds (2018) 'Practice-Based Research in the Creative Arts' LEONARDO, Vol. 51, No. 1, pp. 63–69

- Collins, M. & Sullivan, G. (2020). ARTISTIC RESEARCH AS PRAXIS AND PEDAGOGY. In R. Mateus-Berr & R. Jochum (Ed.), Teaching Artistic Research: Conversations Across Cultures (pp. 29-42). Berlin, Boston: De Gruyter.

- Frayling, C., (1993), Research in Art and Design, Royal College of Art Research paper 1, London: RCA

- Koskinen IK. (2011) Design Research through Practice : From the Lab, Field, and Showroom. Waltham, MA: Morgan Kaufmann

- Leavy P. (2009) Method Meets Art : Arts-Based Research Practice. New York: Guilford Press;

- R. Lyle Skains (2018) Creative Practice as Research: Discourse on Methodology, Media Practice and Education, 19:1, 82-97,

- Vienna Declaration on Artistic Research (2020) – available here

- Visse, M., Hansen, F., and Leget C. (2019) 'The Unsayable in Arts-Based Research: on the Praxis of Life Itself' International Journal of Qualitative Methods vol. 18: 1-13.

- Wilson and van Ruiten (eds.) SHARE Handbook for Artistic Research Education, in particular Chapter 10, 'Questions of Methods'

2.   What will I learn?

On successful completion of this module students will have achieved the following:

1. UNDERSTANDING of different current approaches to art and design research

2. CRITICAL ASSESSMENT of different methods of research in relation to their own needs and interests

3. COMMUNICATION of actual / proposed research method

3.   How will I learn?

This module will be taught in six 3-hour sessions. Students will prepare for these classes by reading set texts in advance.

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Learning tool	Hours
Tutorial Support	18
Specified Learning Activities	18
Autonomous Student Learning	64
Total Workload	**100**

4. What learning supports are provided?

Students will have access to a suite of workshops and tutorials provided by Linked-In Learning; the full facilities of the library; and a dedicated Canvas classroom.

5. Am I eligible to take this module?

In the case of MRes students, this module can constitute one of the three 5-credit modules required to be awarded the degree.

In the case of PhD students, this module can constitute one of the six 5-credit modules required as part of the structured PhD at NCAD.

Module Requisites and Incompatibles

Pre-requisites	None
Co-requisites	None
Incompatibles	None
Prior learning	None
Recommended	None

6. How will I be assessed?

Assessment tool	% of final grade	Timing
Research Methods statement	100%	At the end of the module
Total	**100%**	

Assessment tool	Learning outcomes assessed
Research Methods statement	All learning outcomes

7. Feedback, results and grading

The assignment which constitutes this module will be assessed on a Pass/Fail basis. Peer feedback will be given in the crit, after which the participant will revise the text for submission by the module tutor.

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8.   What happens if I fail?

Resit Opportunities

Students will be given resit opportunities at the next available opportunity (typically the next trimester).

9.   When and where is this module offered?

The programme is delivered in Visual Culture lecture and seminar rooms, and online, during Trimester 1 (September to January).

10. How will I have the chance to evaluate the module?

It is important to NCAD that students inform the development of teaching and learning at 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, you are invited to discuss your experience on the module with your lecturers at any point during the year. You can also relay your comments to the class student representative who will communicate your comments to the staff.

**For further details on the content of your module and teaching arrangements,
consult your Programme or Module Handbook**