



National College of Art and Design  
*A Recognised College of University College Dublin*

**RESEARCH METHODS MODULE DESCRIPTOR**  
**Art in the Contemporary World**

<b>Credits</b>	10	<b>Programme</b>	MA/MFA ACW
<b>Level</b>	9	<b>School</b>	Visual Culture
		<b>Module Team</b>	Postgraduate Coordinators – Design, Education, Fine Art, Visual Culture Head of Academic Affairs
<b>Semester</b>	1	<b>Module Coordinator</b>	Dr. Declan Long/ Dr. Francis Halsall

**OBJECTIVES OF MODULE**

This module provides in its first part (Weeks 1-6) a generic introduction to a range of core research methods in the creative and visual arts for all masters’ students in NCAD and for PhD entrants. It aims to assist you in the conception, development, documentation, delivery and reporting of both your major creative projects and your dissertation activity. While the emphasis is on providing a useful toolkit of research methods and set of exemplars with application to both your practice and critical work, the module also addresses a broader set of concerns with the distinctive character of research in the visual arts. We explore how critical theory and studio and field practice might best interact within the visual arts, and how scholarship aligns with professional reflective analysis and creative impulse. We seek to enable you to more effectively plan, contextualise and report upon your individual studio or library based projects. The approach taken is an interdisciplinary one with students exposed to a range of different research approaches adopted within the visual arts and indeed across the broader field of the arts, humanities, social and natural sciences.

The second part of the module (Weeks 6-12) will address the specific research methods given priority within the School of Visual Culture and the MA and MFA Art in the Contemporary World. The primary aims of this part of the module are to develop shared understanding of established research strategies and writing conventions pertaining to critical and historical research in the areas of Visual Culture studies and contemporary art theory. Attention will be given to accepted approaches to writing, framing research and interviewing. Over the weeks, module participants will be able to test out preliminary research proposals and reflect on various research frameworks, developing their ideas with the help of staff and peer critique.

NB: This is also a core module for students enrolled in the structured PhD who follow the core programme weeks 1-6 then dedicated PhD methods provision weeks 7-11.

**What will I learn?**

On successful completion of this module students will:

1. Have a basic understanding of the challenges involved in developing a distinctive set of research methodologies for the visual arts, including practice based approaches.
2. Be aware of some of the major approaches adopted in the development of a research

tradition within the visual arts and how these relate to broader currents of research practice in other knowledge fields.

3. Have engaged with a series of examples of research practice where advanced students have sought to provide a critical context for their studio or field practice.
4. Be aware of the forms of documentation and reflective analysis employed to assist in the task of reporting and evaluating work undertaken.
5. Be able to plan their master's dissertation and/or major studio project to meet the requirements of university level graduate work.

### **How will I learn?**

	<b>HRS</b>
Lectures	10 hours
Seminar	0
Specified Learning Activities	90
Autonomous Student Learning	100
<b>Total Workload</b>	<b>200</b>

### **How will I be assessed?**

	<b>% of Final Module Grade</b>	<b>Timing</b>
1. In agreement with your tutor, define your field and scope a speculative research <u>approach</u> . Provide a 1500 word review of relevant literature and cognate creative work which might assist you in working towards developing a dissertation or major creative project, identifying and assessing of a number of key works which could support your thinking, comparing and contrasting these works and providing a clear exegesis of their main arguments and approaches and contribution to the field.	50%	30/10/15
2. Produce a speculative research <u>proposal</u> of 1,500 words, following the guidelines provided for submission of a PhD project on the NCAD website.	50%	18/12/2015

### **What happens if I fail?**

#### **Resit Opportunities**

End of Semester Exam

#### **Remediation**

If you fail this module you may repeat, resit, or substitute where permissible

### **Am I eligible to take this module?**

Pre-Requisite:

Required :

Co-Requisite:

Incompatibles: n/a

### **Prior Learning**

Requirements:

Excluded:

Recommended: Should be prepared to read extensively and participate fully in all course activities including visits

### **When and where is this module offered?**

Timetabling information is displayed only for guidance purposes, relates only to 2015/16 and is subject to change.

Harry Clarke Lecture Theatre, 9.30 – 10.30 am, each Monday (excepting Bank Holiday), Semester 1

### **RESEARCHER'S TOOL KIT:**

- Concise Oxford English Dictionary, Oxford: Oxford UP
- Roget's Thesaurus
- Raymond Williams; *Key Words: a dictionary of culture and society*. This is not a neutral review of meanings. It is an exploration of the vocabulary of a crucial area of social and cultural discussion, which has been inherited within precise historical and social conditions and which has to be made at once conscious and critical – subject to change as well as to continuity. (Raymond Williams, 1976)
- NCAD Postgraduate Student Handbook (including Style Sheet for Written Work); ([http://46.22.133.24/files/download/Postgraduate\\_Student\\_Handbook\\_2014-2015.pdf](http://46.22.133.24/files/download/Postgraduate_Student_Handbook_2014-2015.pdf))

For further details on the content of your module and teaching arrangements, consult your course handout

## Research Methods part 2: MA Art in the Contemporary World

### Week 1

Francis Halsall & Declan Long:

Research projects on MA Art in the Contemporary World: reflecting on examples of good research practice

Readings:

- Excerpts from prior MA theses
- Excerpts from Williams, Gilda, *How To Write About Contemporary Art*, London, Thames & Hudson, 2014.

### Week 2

Eleanor Flegg: Interviewing Skills (MA ACW with MA DHMC)

- when (and when not) to use interviews
- ethics and logistics
- transcribing and writing up
- whose story is it anyway?

Suggested reading:

- Thompson, Paul, 'The Voice of the Past: Oral History', *Oral History Reader*, Perks, Robert and Thomson, Alistair (eds), 2nd edition, Routledge, London and New York 2006, pp 25-42
- Portelli, Alessandro, 'What Makes Oral History Different' in OHR (see above) pp 32-42
- Yow, Valerie, 'Do I Like Them Too Much,' in OHR (see above) pp 54 – 72

### Week 3

Working towards a Research topic: Defining a field

Small group discussions on preliminary proposals: with either DL or FH

Suggesting reading:

- Excerpt from Eco, Umberto *How to Write a Thesis*, Massachusetts, MIT Press, 2015 (first published in Italian, 1977).

### Week 4

Working towards a Research topic: Finding Your Focus

One-to-one tutorials: FH and DL

## **Week 5**

Writing & Research: **Lessons from *The Textile Reader*** (Prof Jessica Hemmings) [MA ACW with MA DHMC]

- research considerations for emerging academic disciplines
- the potential of fiction as critical writing
- the academic voice and alternatives
- "writing up" haptic research
- finding models of best practice

Suggested reading:

- Hemmings, J. "Introduction" *The Textile Reader* (Berg: 2012)
- Sword, H. "The Creative Touch" *Stylish Academic Writing* (Harvard U P: 2012)
- Dillard, Annie *The Writing Life* (HarperPerennial : 1990)
- Prose, Francine *Reading Like a Writer* (HarperPerennial: 2006)
- TED talk Suzanne Gilbert "Your Illusive Creative Genius" (online)