# Programme specification

## 1. Overview/ factual information

| | |
|---|---|
| **Programme/award title(s)** | MA by Research |
| **Teaching Institution** | Arts University Plymouth |
| **Awarding Institution** | Arts University Plymouth |
| **Date of first validation** | 24th October 2019 |
| **Date of latest (re)validation** | |
| **Next revalidation** | |
| **Credit points for the award** | 180 |
| **UCAS Code** | |
| **Programme start date** | October 2020 |
| **Underpinning QAA subject benchmark(s)** | Art and Design; Communication, Media, Film & Cultural Studies |
| **Other external and internal reference points used to inform programme outcomes** | |
| **Professional/statutory recognition** | n/a |
| **Mode(s) of Study (PT, FT)** | PT/FT |
| **Duration of the programme for each mode of study** | FT: 1 year; PT: 2 years |
| **Dual accreditation (if applicable)** | |
| **Date of production/revision of this specification** | December 2019 |

## 2.1 Educational aims and objectives

**For all Masters programmes:**

1. To equip students with a value set that encourages continuous professional development, self- direction and originality, that enables positive contribution to business and society at large.
2. To place practice within the dynamically changing context of the contemporary art, design and media world.
3. To promote critical thinking and communication of critical thought at an advanced level.
4. To enable the development of students' critical self-awareness and ability to identify and address strengths and weaknesses.
5. To facilitate a forum for trans, inter, multi-disciplinary and cross-disciplinary discourse, enquiry and collaboration at an advanced level.
6. To support students with an ethical and philosophical framework that enables them to deal with, and contribute to, changing complex contemporary social, cultural, environmental, economic and local/global issues.
7. To encourage students to look beyond the locus of their current research practice, in order to imagine and extend their 'ways of knowing' and potential to frame, recognise and exploit opportunities.
8. To enable students to utilise and build upon appropriate new and prior experience.
9. To provide a context for the development of independent, theoretically informed and innovative practice, through student-led research.
10. To enable development of high standards in technique and creativity.
11. To demand intellectual rigour in terms of pace and depth of research, planning and practices.

**Additionally for MA by Research:**

1. To enable systematic understanding of knowledge, and a critical awareness of current problems and/or new insights, much of which is at, or informed by, the forefront of their academic discipline or field of study.
2. To foster the ability to critically evaluate current research and advanced scholarship in their discipline

## 2.2 Relationship to other programmes and awards

**(Where the award is part of a hierarchy of awards/programmes, this section describes the articulation between them, opportunities for progression upon completion of the programme, and arrangements for bridging modules or induction)**

This award forms a progression opportunity from the College's group of undergraduate awards for students.

In order to attract students of all ages within the widening participation agenda, applicants can be assessed for Accredited Prior Learning (APL) and Accredited Prior Experiential Learning (APEL) in order to ascertain whether their overall academic and professional learning experiences equip them for studying at postgraduate level, Level 7.

Students who successfully complete the Masters award may apply to progress to the Master of Fine Art (MFA) award at the University.

| 2.3 List of all exit awards |
|---|
| 60 credits at level 7 - Postgraduate Certificate PGCert<br>120 credits at level 7 - Postgraduate Diploma PGDip<br>180 credits at level 7 - Masters MA |

### 3. Programme learning outcomes

<table>
<tr><td colspan="2" align="center"><strong>3A. Knowledge and understanding</strong></td></tr>
<tr><td><strong>Learning outcomes:</strong></td><td><strong>Learning and teaching strategy/ assessment methods</strong></td></tr>
<tr>
<td>
<strong>Award specific attributes for MA by Research including Certificate, Diploma, MA</strong>
<br><br>
<strong>Students will be able to demonstrate:</strong>
<br><br>
<strong>A1</strong>.  The ability to communicate the research paradigm for their project.
<br>
<strong>A2</strong>.  A comprehensive understanding of the current debates, issues and ideologies in their field of research.
<br>
<strong>A3</strong>. The ability to apply appropriate advanced research and knowledge to their chosen discipline.
<br>
<strong>A4</strong>.  Understanding of how established techniques of research and learning are used to create and interpret knowledge in their field.
<br>
<strong>A5</strong>. The application of experimental and speculative enquiry in their field of research.
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<td>
<strong>Learning & Teaching strategy</strong><br>
The academic and industry skills agenda<br>
Module Delivery<br><br>
Module Assignments<br>
Peer Interaction, Independent Learning and Directed study-time<br>
Research Proposals<br><br>
<strong>Assessment strategy</strong><br>
Formative Tutor Assessment<br>
Formative Peer Assessment<br>
Summative Assessment Module Assignments<br><br>
Group Work (supporting peer interaction)<br>
Research Proposals and Professional Development Plans
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| 3B. Cognitive skills | |
|---|---|
| **Learning outcomes:** | **Learning and teaching strategy/ assessment methods** |
| **Award specific attributes for all Masters programme including Certificate, Diploma, MA**<br><br>**Students will be able to:**<br><br>**B1.** Analyse, critically evaluate and articulate their work in the wider contexts of current research, practice and debate.<br><br>**B2.** Identify and select management tools and theories appropriate to their chosen field.<br><br>**B3.** Formulate a research question that contextualises their research and addresses their conceptual understanding developed during the module.<br><br>**B4.** Situate a research project so that it can be understood in relation to an existing disciplinary or cross-disciplinary field.<br><br>**B5.** Analyse and critically evaluate the ethical dimensions that affect research in their chosen field.<br><br><br><br>. | **Learning & Teaching strategy**<br>The academic and industry skills agenda<br>Module Delivery<br>Module Assignments<br>Peer Interaction, Independent Learning and Directed study-time<br>Research Proposals<br><br>**Assessment strategy**<br>Formative Tutor Assessment<br>Formative Peer Assessment<br>Summative Assessment<br>Module Assignments<br>Group Work (supporting peer interaction)<br>Research Proposals and Professional Development Plans |

| 3C. Practical and professional skills | |
|---|---|
| **Learning outcomes:** | **Learning and teaching strategy/ assessment methods** |
| **Award specific attributes for all Masters programme including Certificate, Diploma, MA**<br><br>**Students will be able to:**<br><br>**C1.** Apply research skills appropriately to chosen ideas, concepts and areas of research.<br><br>**C2**. Work independently and organise own work efficiently and effectively.<br><br>**C3**. Identify and select appropriate planning and project management tools and theories appropriate to their chosen field.<br><br>**C4**. Demonstrate a competence around Intellectual Property issues in relation to their research or enterprise.<br><br>**C5**. Communicate the core concerns of the research project to a non-specialist audience.<br><br>**C6**. Demonstrate engagement with professional opportunities, including research networks, conferences or other opportunities relevant to their stated professional goals. | **Learning & Teaching strategy**<br>The academic and industry skills agenda Module Delivery<br>Module Assignments<br>Peer Interaction, Independent Learning and Directed study-time<br>Research Proposals<br><br>**Assessment strategy**<br>Formative Tutor Assessment<br>Formative Peer Assessment<br>Formative Employer/External Partner Assessment<br>Summative Assessment Module Assignments<br>Group Work (supporting peer interaction)<br>Research Proposals and Professional Development Plans |

| 3D. Key/transferable skills | |
|---|---|
| **Learning outcomes:** | **Learning and teaching strategy/ assessment methods** |
| **Award specific attributes for all Masters programme including Certificate, Diploma, MA**<br><br>**Students will be able to:**<br><br>**D1**. Demonstrate a flexible approach to problem solving skills, to exercise initiative, personal responsibility and accountability.<br>**D2.** Demonstrate competence in the use of ICT, relevant written,research skills and academic conventions, in work that shows a high standard of presentation.<br>**D3**. Demonstrate decision-making through the detailed planning of a self-initiated research project.<br>**D4**. Demonstrate considered and highly professional presentation skills in the display and / or dissemination of a self-initiated research project. | **Learning & Teaching strategy**<br>The academic and industry skills agenda<br>Module Delivery<br>Module Assignments<br>Peer Interaction, Independent Learning and Directed study-time<br>Research Proposals<br><br>**Assessment strategy**<br>Formative Tutor Assessment<br>Formative Peer Assessment<br>Formative Employer/External Partner Assessment<br>Summative Assessment Module Assignments<br>Group Work (supporting peer interaction)<br>Research Proposals and Professional Development Plans |

**4. Indicative Programme Structure – Full-time**

| Full-Time | Year 1 | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | **Teaching block 1** | **Teaching block 2** | **Teaching block 3** |
| | 101 - 60 Credits | 201 - 60 Credits | 301 - 60 Credits |

| Part-time year 1 | Year 1 | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | **Teaching block 1** | **Teaching block 2** | **Teaching block 3** |
| | 101 - 60 Credits | | 201 - 60 Credits |

| Part-time year 2 | Year 2 | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | **Teaching block 1** | **Teaching block 2** | **Teaching block 3** |
| | 201 - 60 Credits | 301 - 60 Credits | |

## 5. Distinctive features of the programme structure

The distinctive features of the MA programmes at Arts University Plymouth are their discursive, interdisciplinary and pro-active combination of generic and programme specific delivery. The MA by Research allows students to negotiate this spectrum of delivery in response to the needs of their research project. This structure has been informed by experiences on the existing MAs, where a broad demographic in terms of academic and professional expertise and subject disciplines is found in the diverse creative practitioner communities of the Creative and Cultural Industries. This has specifically been driven by the need to:

*Covered in Module 101*
- Refresh, enliven and embed key research skills and capability.
- Give licence to experiment and go beyond normal/comfortable modes of research enquiry.
- Provide a framework for the development of a cogent research proposal and research question.

*Covered in Module 201*
- Encourage students to explore within and/or beyond their subject areas.
- Encourage students to contextualise, frame and implement their work in relation to a 'Test' project, real or speculative, providing an environment within which to rigorously test and apply their academic and management skills.
- Deepen students' knowledge and understanding, cognitive skills, research and professional skills in their specific subject area(s) in order to maximise their key/transferable skills and to develop an outline proposal for a Final MA Project.

*Covered in Module 301*
- Ensure that students' personal and professional journeys equip and offer an opportunity to transform themselves and their practice in order to strengthen their opportunities for employment within or beyond the Creative and Cultural Industries.

The programme structure allows high transference of interdisciplinary practice and perspectives across the modules (101, 201, 301) that will generate a healthy environment of knowledge transfer between disciplines, encourage fruitful hybridisation of disciplines and stimulate inter- and trans-disciplinary research in Art, Media and Design disciplines.

MA by Research students' research will culminate in a written dissertation or negotiated equivalent of 10,000 words in the final Module 301.

The overarching ambition, ethos and philosophy of these Masters programmes is to transform and activate postgraduate students so they themselves become transformative change agents in their chosen field(s).

## Annex 1 - Curriculum Map

This table indicates which study units assume responsibility for delivering and assessing particular programme learning outcomes.

### Knowledge and Understanding

| Module | A1 | A2 | A3 | A4 | A5 |
|--------|----|----|----|----|----|
| MARS101 |  |  |  | √ | √ |
| MARS201 | √ | √ |  |  |  |
| MARS301 |  | √ | √ |  |  |

### Cognitive Skills

| Module | B1 | B2 | B3 | B4 | B5 |
|--------|----|----|----|----|----|
| MARS101 |  | √ | √ |  |  |
| MARS201 |  |  |  | √ | √ |
| MARS301 | √ |  |  |  | √ |

### Practical and professional skills

| Module | C1 | C2 | C3 | C4 | C5 | C6 |
|--------|----|----|----|----|----|----|
| MARS101 |  |  | √ |  |  | √ |
| MARS201 |  |  |  | √ | √ |  |
| MARS301 | √ | √ |  |  |  |  |

### Key/Transferable skills

| Module | D1 | D2 | D3 | D4 |
|--------|----|----|----|----|
| MARS101 | √ |  | √ |  |
| MARS201 |  | √ |  |  |
| MARS301 |  |  | √ | √ |

## Annex 2

**Masters Programmes – Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy**

The Learning and Teaching strategy developed for the MFA, MA, Postgraduate Certificate and Diploma has been designed to address the needs for a project-led programme that incorporates significant elements of critical cultural study, and/or sustainability study, and/or practical business management and entrepreneurial, industry focused knowledge. Creative practice development is seen as synergistic to these key needs by engaging the student in the acquisition of a range of creative, intellectual and professional practice related practical skills.

As the programme progresses, we increasingly expect students to be testing themselves and what they have learned by operating as practitioners. As part of this modus-operandi the students themselves are encouraged to play an active role in ensuring that their newly developed knowledge, including that derived from taught sessions, research, project-based initiatives, internships and work-related experiences, is relevant to their research and practice needs and future career aspirations. The programme assists them in this requirement to continually reflect on the inter-relationship between aspiration, programme content and practice, through a variety of methods and requirements; for example, Statements of Intent, PDPs, written proposals and assignments, collaborative work, presentations, tutorials and critiques, etc.(see list below)

It is intended that professional practitioners and potential employers will take part in the design, delivery and Formative Assessments (see below) alongside University academic staff.

**Module Delivery:**

The modules will be delivered in two distinct ways. Generic elements of modules involving core research skills and other shared elements will be delivered through a combination of whole group taught lectures, group workshops, small projects, presentations and seminars, resulting in students applying this knowledge to their field of research. The core curricula areas will be supplemented by programme specific modules which will employ a similar range of methods, including lectures, seminars, workshops, projects and presentations.

Theoretical and research development elements will initially be taught through lectures and workshops to underpin the essential masters level research, contextualisation, reflection, analysis and synthesis skills, but will increasingly become more student-led with the cohort expected to facilitate seminars, presentations, conferences, exhibitions and discussions around topics and themes relevant to their evolving research.

Of particular value at postgraduate level within inter- and transi-disciplinary practitioners is the peer-to-peer discussion, knowledge exchange and critique, which we refer to as 'mutual learning'. This type of learning is encouraged throughout the life of the programme. See below – 'peer interaction'.

Across the whole programme, delivery will be in the form of lectures; seminars; group/individual tutorials; set and individually tailored reading; group critiques and discussions; the production of research essays; the giving of presentations; the concise communication of concepts and research outputs, symposia and other appropriate teaching and learning approaches.

The whole Programme will be underpinned by the core sessions that further embed advanced research skills and appropriate postgraduate study skills. These sessions will be delivered in workshops, seminars, tutorials and online through the University's VLE. Other online resources are used as appropriate to reinforce skill building, meeting Learning Outcomes and building networking skills, such as wikis, nings, websites and blogs.

**Support for development of Research project**

Development of research skills is supported using the basic framework and shared terminology indicated in this section.

Students are understood to be undertaking activities during the MA programme which we refer to as representing their 'research process'. The direction set for this process is termed the 'research trajectory.'

In module 101 students will establish a **research proposal** which establishes the design of their research project, the research question(s) involved and the key methodological approaches and theoretical frameworks involved.

In module 201, this research proposal is developed through a literature review which both clarifies the inter- and trans-disciplinary scope of the project and the 'research paradigm' informing the choice of methodology and theoretical framework.

In module 301, the research proposal and research question are refined at the formative stage, and the final written research project is produced for summative assessment.

Throughout the programme students and tutors will record the negotiated direction of the project and planned engagement with AUP academic and technical resources on a **research plan.** This document establishes an ongoing research agreement with each student and a framework for the students autonomous engagement with the programme.

**Peer interaction, independent learning and directed study-time:**
Students need independent time to develop, deploy, reflect upon and consolidate knowledge structures. Similarly, inter-student interaction to discuss and negotiate ideas and methods is a compelling way of learning – referred to above as 'mutual learning'. For these reasons peer interaction, independent learning and Directed study-time are all considered key components in the learning strategy and are reflected throughout the Programme - from the overall structuring of the Programme Levels, through individual modules, to specific assignments which direct and establish outcomes that lend structure to these activities on a daily basis. Students will also be expected to continue these discussions through setting up and running seminars, utilising group online forums and by inviting specific speakers and visiting artists to make presentations on topics relevant to common themes.

**The Research Plan:**
Critical reflection and self-evaluation are essential elements of these Masters level programmes, thus encouraging and enabling the selection of, and discrimination between, appropriate actions and outcomes. For this reason critical reflection and self-evaluation are embedded across the programme.

The Research Plan is updated throughout the postgraduate programme to enable the student and supervisor/tutor to negotiate modes of working and outcomes that both satisfy the learning outcomes whilst challenging and supporting a student's developing practice. At the end of each module, students will be asked to reflect on their learning, examine what has been achieved to date and to look to the next module and the future to identify development needs.

**Assessment strategy**
Assessment is entirely by coursework and relates directly to the intended learning outcomes as stated in the definitive module records and assignments. It is the University's intention that assessment should not merely be the submission of finished work for grading but an active learning opportunity. Additionally in this Programme it is vital that the work required supports the individual's practice and development needs.

**Formative Tutor Assessment:**
Extensive use is made of formative assessment and feedback to support student progress and evaluate knowledge and understanding throughout the Programme. All the activities

identified under 'Module Delivery' in the Teaching and Learning Strategy (see above) constitute formats for providing formative feedback, as do the PDP's and Statements of Intent. Formative Assessments at the half-way point in assignments prove invaluable to students' understanding of their progress and things to address for the Summative Assessment – this is achieved by tutors and peers providing verbal and written feedback to oral presentations by students of their work.

**Formative Peer Assessment**
Peer assessment requires the student to place themselves in the role of the assessor and make judgments, based on the assessment criteria, about the strength and validity of their own and others' work. It not only helps the student to develop more than just a surface understanding of others' work and develops critical and evaluative skills it also helps to foster a supportively critical studio/workshop environment.

Peer assessment usually takes place in group critiques. The assessment is structured around discussion followed by anonymously completed peer assessment feedback sheets. These written sheets are collected by the tutor and are either copied directly to the students or useful comments are collated by the tutor for feedback to the student in tutorials.

**Summative Assessment**
Summative assessment generally takes place upon completion of a module assignment and includes the assessing and grading of the outcomes. These outcomes will include: research and preparatory work, artefacts (where appropriate to the research), group work (where this forms an important and necessary part of the Assignment), structured verbal discourses, presentations, seminars, conferences, essays and reports. For practical assignments the usual model will be presentation to at least two tutors and in a group critique situation. Summative assessment decisions and grades are made entirely by the supervisor/tutor assessors.

**Module Assignments:**
Information relating to the requirements for the presentation of completed assignment work and its assessment will be specified within each assignment. It will include a description of the assessment protocol for group work where such work forms an important and necessary part of the assignment.

**Group Work (supporting peer interaction):**
Where group work forms an important and necessary part of an assignment the performance of the group will be an element within the summative assessment of that assignment. However, students will be expected to keep thorough records and critical reflections on their own and their peers activities and performance, which will be used to define an individual's grades.

**Glossary of terms**
- Cross Disciplinary: viewing one discipline from the perspective of another.
- Multidisciplinary: people from different disciplines working together, each drawing on their disciplinary knowledge.
- Interdisciplinary: integrating knowledge and methods from different disciplines, using a synthesis of approaches.
- Transdisciplinary: creating a unity of intellectual frameworks beyond the disciplinary perspectives.