Course Specification

MA
PHOTOGRAPHY (ONLINE)



Arts University Bournemouth

About the Course Handbook

This Handbook provides you with basic information about your course. Through the approved course specification, it provides you with the aims and outcomes of your course and outlines the content and how this will be delivered.

The course is subject to a rigorous process of quality assurance and enhancement. This may result in changes to individual units as the course develops, to ensure that the relevance and quality of the course is upheld. You will be consulted by a member of the course team before any changes are made.

Information in this Handbook should be used in conjunction with the HE Assessment Regulations. It is your responsibility to ensure that you are aware of the regulations that apply to your course and you should refer to the regulations throughout your studies. If you have any questions, you should speak to your Course Leader, or member of the course team. The Assessment Regulations can be located on the Induction section of Canvas, or https://aub.ac.uk/regulations

Important information about key policies which apply to your academic studies is available on the Induction section of Canvas. Please view this material on the Induction section of Canvas.

If you would like a copy of this Handbook in an alternative format, please contact equalities@aub.ac.uk.

ARTS UNIVERSITY BOURNEMOUTH

COURSE SPECIFICATION

The Course Specification provides a summary of the main features of the **MA Photography (Online)** course and the learning outcomes that a 'typical' student might reasonably be expected to achieve and demonstrate if they pass the course.

Further detailed information on the learning outcomes, content and teaching and learning methods of each Unit may be found in the Unit Descriptors, which forms part of the Course Handbook.

Key Course Information	
Final Award	Master of Arts
Course Title	Photography (Online)
Award Title	MA Photography
Awarding Institution	Arts University Bournemouth
Professional accreditation	None
Length of course / mode of study	2 years part-time
Level of final award (in FHEQ)	Level 7
Subject benchmark statement	QAA Master's degree characteristics
Language of study	English
Date of Validation	July 2023
Date of most recent review	Not applicable
Date course specification written/revised	March 2024

Course Description

The online MA Photography course at Arts University Bournemouth is a part-time flexible course that integrates practice and theory through intensive online study. The course offers students an opportunity to develop and realise their creative ambitions while exploring new approaches in the context of an international learning community that foregrounds peer feedback and research driven experimentation.

Throughout the course, students are encouraged to apply their thinking through practice in ways that respond to the contemporary world and question established mainstream modes of photographic practice. The experiences and knowledge that each student brings is central to the course as they dynamically expand their body of work during a series of structured creative projects, critical interrogation of practice and bespoke mentorship leading to the conceptualisation and manifestation of a final thesis project.

The course recognises and celebrates an expansive and progressive understanding and definition of photography, its audiences and the sites and contexts in which it can be presented. Students may concentrate on the creation of (including but not exclusively) documentary, fashion, street, still life, landscape or fine art or other works that emphasise innovation and a commitment to examining form and content. In conjunction with this, the course is designed to be highly flexible, utilising an online delivery mode that brings practitioners together with distinct interests and cultural perspectives. Students can maintain continuity in their professional and personal lives while refining a creative methodology and enhancing career prospects in their chosen specialism over the two-year period of study.

At the outset of the course, students explore and develop their creative point of view by reviewing earlier practice, positioning their work by understanding relevant fields or references, and establishing a reflective journal. Students then join a carousel of units, each fostering distinct processes of making, thinking, and reflecting through short practice-research projects. In the second year, students begin to work towards a final thesis project, conceptualising and communicating their intentions in a detailed proposal before carrying out the resolution during an extended period of individual tutoring and support. During each year, students will have an opportunity to join an in-person residency on-campus at AUB that brings the cohort together: details of this are to be confirmed.

Students may join the course as an active professional and/or photography graduate seeking to expand their practice through flexible part-time study. Or they may arrive as a graduate from adjacent subject areas including animation, film, fine art, or media amongst others. Regardless of their background, students might already be using photography within their creative practice and able to demonstrate a clear rationale for doing so.

Across a variety of photographic disciplines, the course encourages students to further their ideas and realise their aspirations of future employment and/or freelance careers in the creative industries. Students will be part of an international network encouraging them to develop skills in a supportive, diverse environment and critically examine the emergence of approaches that challenge orthodox practices.

Distinctive features of the course

Interdisciplinary Approach: In both popular and high art photography as a subject has always combined with other disciplines and techniques, frequently resulting in new and innovative developments. This course encourages students to challenge orthodoxies leading to the development of their own personal practice, and potentially contributing to the continued evolution of the subject.

Research Emphasis: Embedded within all units are methods which are frequently combined under the loose umbrella of Practice or Arts Based Research. These approaches form an underlying foundation for the course thus preparing students to develop their practice in this direction if they wish. The transition from taught MA to independent PhD research can be challenging for many students. This course aims to present students with opportunities to engage with a range of research approaches in preparation for progression to higher level study.

Practicality: Hands-on learning and portfolio creation ensure students gain practical experience.

Professional Development: Professional development and the introduction of relevant contemporary professional practices are embedded within and across all units of the course. The Professional Practice unit examines the preparation of students for the world of work, whilst also introducing some the key ethical debates surrounding photography's history and how that is influencing its future. Alongside these specific ideas and techniques, the course fosters relevant and highly desirable transferrable skills such as creativity, independence, visual literacy, goal-setting and effective resource management, preparing students for the professional world.

Course Industry Patron Scheme: All courses at AUB are connected formally with an industry Patron, an industry practitioner or business that acts as a critical friend to the course and course team. Many courses work with several industry partners, but the more formal Industry Patron connection offers the opportunities to collaborate and maintain close relations with industry / business. This is a unique concept that ensures AUB courses are industry relevant and maintain current practices while providing further opportunities for students to engage with industry practitioners.

AUB Strategic vision

The MA Photography (Online) fits with the university's strategic vision in several ways:

Innovative: The course responds to the changing environment within postgraduate education in which students demand challenging courses which can fit-in to busy lives alongside other commitments such as work and family.

Connected: The course builds upon Arts University Bournemouth's excellent international reputation in postgraduate arts education, by facilitating access for those students which require a more flexible learning environment without the need to relocate to Bournemouth.

Passionate: The course is designed by a small team of staff from AUB, that are not only passionate about our individual specialisms, but also about AUB as a transformative organisation which can empower our students to Learn, grow and connect.

Course Aims

The course aims to:

1. Provide a creative and intellectual environment that allows students to develop their practice through critical debate and inter-disciplinary exchange.

2. Enable students to identify and develop the artistic, research, technical and entrepreneurial skills needed to accomplish project work with a high level of professionalism.

3. Encourage students to critically reflect on achievements and evaluate them in ways that meaningfully extend their practice, or progress toward PhD study.

4. Introduce students to the broad disciplines of Arts or Practice Based Research within the framework of an interdisciplinary research approach.

5. Enable students to develop professional maturity and to understand and discuss their work in the context of their discipline as well as the social, political, and cultural spheres in which the work will be situated.

6. Develop a rich cultural community that actively engages creative practice in issues of ethics and sustainability.

Course Outcomes

By the end of the course, students will be able to:

1. Produce a high level of individual and collaborative work that acknowledges and potentially challenges current orthodoxies within photographic practice and the disciplines and communities associated with it.

2. Demonstrate advanced ability through making and thinking to research, investigate, describe, and critique issues and situations thereby providing original insights into contemporary practice.

3. Demonstrate and apply highly developed and advanced practical and conceptual understanding of photographic techniques and processes and to raise questions for further study or professional development.

4. Demonstrate an appropriately high level of relevant critical, historical and contextual understanding of the broader fields of contemporary art and photography, as well as ideas and context of specific relevance to their own practice.

5. Show acquisition of appropriate skills and acumen in communication, presentation, and autonomous learning in relation to career aspirations.

6. Develop work with respect to relevant issues of sustainability, ethics, and the cultural and political environment.

Reference Points

UK Quality Code for higher education, including:

- Subject Benchmark Statement: Master's degree characteristics
- Framework for Higher Education Qualifications (FHEQ)
- AUB Learning Teaching and Assessment Framework (LTAF)
- AUB Postgraduate Taught Assessment Regulations
- AUB Graduate Attributes

Learning, Teaching, and Assessment Strategies

A range of delivery methods are used, based around a repeating cycle of acquisition, discussion, practice, production, and enquiry. Both synchronous and asynchronous delivery are co-ordinated through Canvas; the VLE utilised by the University. Key methods are outlined below:

Lectures
Lectures are pre-recorded videos integrated with the unit content providing acquisition of knowledge around key issues, ideas, and contexts. In addition, each unit may have up to two guest lectures provided by a relevant non-AUB speaker from industry or academia to provide additional insights into the unit topics.

Seminar Activity
These are optional, online, weekly events that provide more opportunities for live discussion and interaction with tutors or fellow students. They are led by the Unit Tutor and provide an opportunity for students to share their perspectives and seek guidance or clarity on course content and assessments. Seminars do not take place in the final unit when they are replaced by individual tutorials.

Supervisory Tutorials
These are one to one tutorials that take place in the final unit where students can discuss the development and progress of their projects. They are used to air specific issues raised through the work, provide critical observation, and recommend new directions and research strategies.

Discussion Fora
These are asynchronous spaces where students can post messages, ask questions, and discuss ideas with tutors or fellow students. Students will be encouraged to engage in critical debate, share ideas or progress on their work with the wider cohort.

Online Learning Resources
These include recorded videos, texts, diagrams, images as well as reading lists and links to other online material. Technical and making skills are demonstrated through a mixture of recorded sessions and explanatory texts.

Assessment Presentations
During the preparation and delivery of presentations, students will learn to synthesise research findings, communicate complex ideas, and connect with tutors or fellow students in a professional manor. Presentations will be submitted online and may be live or recorded in advance depending on the unit aims.

Audio-visual or Written Essays
During analysis and exploration of practice, students will develop ideas and critical arguments communicated in essay form. In particular, the *research*-oriented units will culminate in an essay exploring theoretical concepts in relation to practice. Audio-visual and written approaches are seen as equivalent. Students will be given an opportunity to identify whether their essay will be written or audio-visual in nature, and to receive feedback on ideas during a formative proposal stage part-way through the unit.

Sketchbooks
Students will use sketchbooks to document and analyse work that builds throughout a unit, developing critical thinking skills and knowledge of relevant techniques. During *process*-oriented units, students will undertake a series of experiments that explore different creative approaches and connect their practice to wider theories or ideas as presented in a culminating portfolio. Similarly, students will collect documentation and evaluate work toward the thesis project in a larger sketchbook for the final unit of the course.

Reflective Writing (journal and commentary)
At the outset of the course, students will begin an online reflective journal that allows them to discuss and critically evaluate their work and development as a practitioner. Students will be encouraged to contribute to this regularly and some units will also require reflection on practical experiences as an element of assessment. The reflective journal should provide an ongoing document of developing reflective practice and will underpin all units.

Student Engagement
Student engagement is of vital importance to all courses, none more so than at postgraduate level. The range of background and experience we can expect from MA students (especially those who choose to study online) will offer a depth and range to the course which will enhance and enrich the learning experience for all participants.

Assessment

Each Unit is assessed separately, and the assessment forms part of the Unit. Assessment both provides a measure of student achievement, and also provides students with regular feedback on how their learning is developing.

For every Unit of a course, we will inform students of what they are expected to learn; what they need to submit; how their work will be assessed; and the deadline for presenting work for assessment.

Students will receive a final mark for each Unit in the form of a percentage, which will be recorded on a formal record of achievement (transcript). Each component of assessment is graded using a notched marking scale, whereby only certain marks are used within each grade. The only marks available within any ten-point band are *2, *5 and *8 (e.g. 62, 65, 68). These marks correspond to a low, mid, and high level of achievement within each grade band.

All learning outcomes must be passed to successfully complete the Unit.

On successful completion of a Masters' Degree (MA), a Merit or Distinction may be awarded. Only Units at Level 7 contribute towards the determination of a Merit of Distinction.

For further information on assessment, progression, awards, and classifications, please visit https://aub.ac.uk/regulations

Course Structure

All students are registered for the award of Master of Arts; however, exit awards are available if a student leaves the course early. If students successfully complete a level of the course, they will automatically be entitled to progress to the next level.

For the award of Postgraduate Certificate (PGCert) students must have achieved a minimum of 60 credits at Level 7; and any specific requirements of the course as outlined in the Course Handbook.

For the award of Postgraduate Diploma (PGDip), students must have achieved a minimum of 120 credits at Level 7; and any specific requirements of the course as outlined in the Course Handbook.

For the award of Master of Arts (MA), a student must have achieved 180 credits, of which a minimum of 120 credits must be at Level 7; and any specific requirements of the course as outlined in the Course Handbook. This qualification will be awarded upon successful completion of the course.

Core Values and Skills

In developing courses, the University aims to create a curriculum that reflects its values and ethos. It should prepare students for the future not only in enabling them to have a successful career, but also empower students with the knowledge, skills and passion to have a positive impact on the world and be an agent for change. AUB has drawn from the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) (https://sdgs.un.org/goals) which have informed our values of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion as well as our Graduate Attributes.

Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI)

"We are better for our diversity. We are enriched by the depth of respect we have for each other and the strength of our relationships with our people, our places and the planet. Through our commitment to working with those who are different to us, or challenge us, we grow stronger together, creating new synergies, global connections and sustainable futures." (AUB Strategy 2030)

As an organisation we have moral, social and legal obligations to fulfil in terms of EDI, and in doing so our commitment is to put EDI at the heart of every area of activity. It is not covered as a separate, stand-alone section, rather it forms an integral part of the curriculum.

Graduate Attributes (GA)

Over recent years, there has been an increasing pace of change, technological, social, environmental. This has been further impacted by the world-wide pandemic effecting significant change in the global economy and the employment market.

In this context, the University has recognised the importance of developing AUB graduates who have the attributes to be able to build their career, adapting to different circumstances and embracing changes. A suite of attributes have been defined that we feel are particularly appropriate to the creative courses that we deliver and to AUB's core values; during the

course, both curricular and extra-curricular activities will give students the opportunities to prepare for their working career.

The course will introduce students to topics which are integrated with the curriculum at every stage of learning. This will allow the student to structure their career development journey through the course and consider the following stages: Self Awareness, Opportunities, Awareness, Decision Making and Transitioning into Work. These align to the AUB Career Readiness stages: Explore, Focus, Engage and Achieve.

In practice, this means that each Unit of the course will include elements of career development, and these will be shown explicitly in Unit descriptors and outline syllabuses. Whilst students engage with these as they go through each Unit, they will all come together in the final Unit. Such an approach is designed to support students in the next steps they take after graduation, in whatever direction those may be, and is fundamental to degree studies.

Maintaining Health and Wellbeing

Throughout the course students are encouraged to reflect on their own health and wellbeing, and to develop themselves as a healthy creative practitioner. Students will consider how to develop study and work strategies and habits which maintain and promote their own wellbeing, and to manage their professional activities in a way which safeguards their mental and physical health.

Course staff have designed the course in order that, as far as is reasonably possible, health and wellbeing are promoted. Therefore, it is vital students maintain constructive communication with their colleagues and their staff throughout their time on this course.

Course Content

Progress through the course happens in three stages:

Stage 1	An introduction (15 credits)
Stage 2	A carousel of seven short projects (each is 15 credits)
Stage 3	A thesis proposition (15 credits) and a final project (45 credits)

All students begin with the **Positioning Practice** unit which serves as the course introduction, encouraging exploration and the development of a creative point of view by reviewing earlier practice, beginning to position and contextualise work by understanding relevant fields or references, and establishing a reflective journal.

The second stage of the course is a series of carousel units that foster distinct processes of making, thinking, and reflecting. These carousel units are self-contained and designed to be non-linear so they can be taken in any order as determined by the intake and time of year.

Within the carousel, the **Exploratory Practice** unit explores photographic processes, encouraging students to experiment with new creative approaches, materials, and ideas through iteration as well as rigorous self and peer critique. The **Researching Practice** and **Future/Interdisciplinary Practice** units introduce practice-based research methods while enhancing contextual and critical understanding of photography in relation to wider creative industries and visual culture. Two more practice-oriented units **Looking In** and Looking Out challenge students to question their photographic practice. Students will use these broad themes as springboards that will encourage them to experiment with their position within, or viewpoint upon the contemporary world during the creation of short projects which may also serve as test sites for the final thesis project. The remaining carousel unit **Presenting Practice (Collab)** focuses on collaboration and transferable skills, challenging and

supporting students to work with their peers to explore the dissemination of practice and presentation of work to an audience.

The third and final stage of the course revolves around the individual thesis project. In the **Thesis Proposal** unit, students undertake research and development processes that support them in conceptualising an original, innovative concept for the final project that is communicated in a detailed proposal and presentation. This is followed by the **Thesis Resolution** unit where that sees students conduct a self-initiated practice-based enquiry. During this final unit students will be provided with individual tutoring and support. Throughout the creation of the thesis project, students will keep a detailed record of their practice which is collated and critically and analytically evaluated in an accompanying **Reflective Journal**.

As part of the course, students will have the opportunity to attend an in-person residency that brings the cohort together once per year. These in-person activities are optional and not required to complete the course, instead they offer supplementary skills development and experiences that will further develop a student's learning and network.

Following the submission of the thesis project and successful completion of the course, students will also have an opportunity to participate in a graduation event that showcases their work, providing a platform to engage with industry and further strengthen their networks.

Course Units

Stage 1: Introduction

POD700 Positioning Practice (15 credits)

Stage 2: Carousel Units

POD701 Exploratory Practice: Process (15 credits)
POD702 Researching Practice: Research (15 credits)
POD703 Presenting Practice (Collab): Process (15 credits)
POD704 Professional Practice: Practice (15 credits)
POD705 Looking In: Practice (15 credits)
POD706 Future/Interdisciplinary Practice: Research (15 credits)
POD707 Looking Out: Practice (15 credits)

Stage 3: Final Project

POD708 Thesis Proposal (15 credits)
POD709 Thesis / Project Resolution (45 credits)

Course Model

The workload is balanced across a number of consecutive units which all run independently. There are three stages of study and two progression points in the course where students move from the introductory unit to the seven carousel units, and from the carousel stage to the final two project units. There is no progression within the carousel units which are designed to be taken in any order as determined by the students intake time of year. All units are a core part of the course and there are no options to select or deselect units.

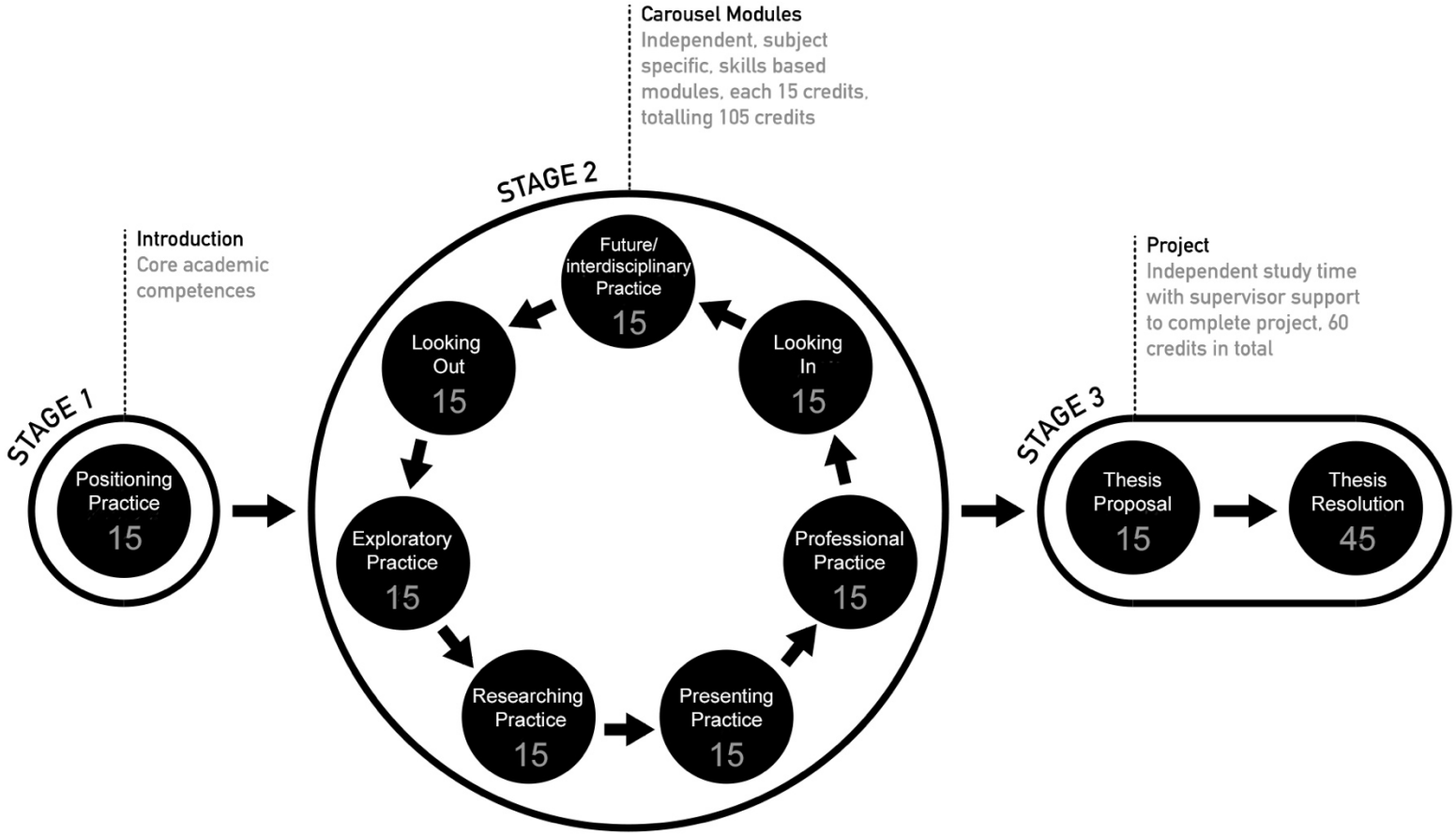


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