

POST 16 SUBJECT OVERVIEW

Name of subject - AQA A Level Photography

The course is designed to develop personal responses to observations, experiences, environments, and cultures, celebrating their individuality and strengths. It encourages personal learning through inquiry into photography and enjoyment of its application in the real world, along with the acquisition of lifelong learning and creative thinking skills. This is done through careful guidance and individual target-setting.

Students will develop technical skills in digital and traditional photography. They will develop the skills and knowledge to use editing software, darkrooms, pinhole cameras, and a range of physical manipulation techniques that they will be able to apply to their own practice.

Which examination specification is studied for this course?

AQA A Level Art & Design (Photography)

Why should I study this course?

The course is dynamic and extremely exciting. Students have the opportunity to express their individual interests, views, specialisms, and opinions throughout their work and create a portfolio of work that is personal to them.

Students will have the opportunity to be immersed in the creative world of the arts and view photography firsthand in some of our country's most prestigious galleries. We believe it is important for students to experience what it would be like to be a practising photographer, and we therefore aim to take students to visit galleries three times during the course of their A Level. In previous years, we have taken students to places such as London Art Galleries, the Yorkshire Sculpture Park, Chesterfield College and Chatsworth.

When visiting Chesterfield College, students are able to use the darkroom and develop their understanding of traditional photographic processes. They will use film-based cameras to process their own negative images themselves and develop these photographs using a range of traditional techniques. We organise speakers from different creative fields to discuss with students their career pathways and develop students' knowledge of how to gain a career in their chosen specialism.

We also enter students' work for local and national competitions to enable them to work on live briefs and gain experience of what it would be like to work as a practicing photographer. This is a fantastic opportunity for students to get their work exhibited outside of the academy setting and out into the public domain.

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Who is suitable to study this course?

What GCSE qualifications support the study of this course?

Creatively minded individuals with a passion for the arts. You should be enthusiastic about creative thinking and be willing to push your own boundaries of expression.

You must be eagerly prepared to really explore an idea or concept and be able to work with determination and perseverance. You will have timetabled lessons but you will also be expected to develop your work and craft outside of these hours. You will be encouraged to use the art department and its resources to develop your work during your study periods.

Obtaining a GCSE in Fine Art or Photography would be a good foundation for embarking on this course, but it is not essential.

Careers that the study of photography supports include:

Illustrator, branding designer, web design, town planning, teaching, animator, game designer, online content creator, film maker, photographer, cartographer, fashion photographer, graphic designer, architect.

There are far too many careers to list here!

What are the qualification requirements for this course?

GCSE Fine Art or Photography would be a good foundation for embarking on this course, but it is not essential.

Students can gain a place of entry to A Level photography, without studying it at GCSE level, by undergoing a meeting with the head of department. This will be a discussion about your reasoning for why you would like to join the course, what your interests and passions are, and an opportunity for you to share any work that you think could be relevant to the course.

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How is the course delivered?

Students have 5 hours of timetabled lessons with specialist art and photography teachers. In addition to this, students are required to complete 4 hours of personal study time, and are encouraged to do this within the art department to make the best use of resources, materials and teacher support.

Year 1 - Initially, students will undertake specialist workshops in pinhole photography and digital photography. Students will gain knowledge and confidence in how to use the formal elements, digital editing techniques and physical manipulation of images. Students will be taught how to develop a portfolio of work by developing an extended project with coherent studies and an appropriate conclusion that is personal and meaningful to them.

Students may use some work to support their year 2 portfolios, but year 1 is purely about building skills, confidence and understanding in preparation for year 2.

There is no formal qualification gained at the end of this year.

Year 2 - Students will develop an extended project (Personal investigation) with coherent preparatory studies leading to an appropriate conclusion. Students are able to use this as an opportunity to really creatively explore an area of interest and create a portfolio of work that is personal to them.

They will be expected to write 3000 words supporting written study and all work is marked internally and externally moderated.

Exam - Paper issued 1st of February. There will be an initial preparatory period of about 8 weeks where students will develop a portfolio of work, and this will be followed by a 15 hour exam where students will create a final outcome to their project. The exam will span over the course of 3 days (15 hours) and is again marked internally and then externally moderated.

In both year 1 and 2, students will be expected to curate their own exhibition in the gallery space in school in readiness for assessment.

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Subject Overview		
Half Term	Year 12	Year 13
Autumn 1	Specialist workshops	Reviewing year 12 work and identifying strengths and passions. Research ideas for personal investigation.
Autumn 2	Specialist workshops	Embarking on an individual practical response for the personal investigation.
Spring 1	Development of individual themes - Starting from 'What it means to be human?'	Development of practical exploration and experimentation of personal investigation and written elements.
Spring 2	Development of individual themes - Starting from 'What it means to be human?'	Externally set exam paper - Starts 1st February. Students choose and develop from a starting point on the paper. The minimum 8 week preparatory period.
Summer 1	Planning and creating a final outcome.	Externally set exam paper continues and students plan then create a final response in a 15 hour exam period. Students produce a final exhibition of their work.
Summer 2	Gallery exhibition and researching ideas for year 13 personal investigation.	Centre marks are submitted by 31st May and external moderation of centre after this.

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How is the course assessed?

Students are internally assessed at regular intervals throughout the year, which informs their Praising Stars data. They develop knowledge and understanding of the year 2, AQA assessment criteria in readiness for external moderation.

AQA Assessment criteria/Assessment Objectives.

The 4 key assessment objectives in art and photography are:

AO1 – Develop ideas through investigations, demonstrating critical understanding of sources

AO2 – Refine work by exploring ideas, selecting and experimenting with appropriate media, materials, techniques and processes

AO3 – Record ideas, observations and insights relevant to intentions as work progresses

AO4 – Present a personal and meaningful response that realises intentions and demonstrates understanding of visual language

Key dates for assessment.

Year 2 - During March/April year 13 Internal and external assessment, and moderation of personal investigation takes place.

Exam - During March/April year 13 internal and external moderation takes place.

What is our recommended subject reading list to support your study?

We recommend virtual gallery visits if not able to visit in person. A few suggestions could be the Tate Modern and Tate Britain, The Saatchi Gallery, The National Portrait Gallery, The Photographers' Gallery or The V & A Museum.