

Teaching and Learning Strategy

This document has been informed by the expectations, core and common practices of the UK Quality Code for Higher Education: Learning and Teaching . This can be found at the following location and contains further guidelines, references and resources:

<https://www.qaa.ac.uk/en/quality-code/advice-and-guidance>

1. Introduction and context

The Art Academy offers an alternative to most fine art education models, focusing on the development of *both* traditional and contemporary skills fostering practical, experiential learning through the practice and application of those skills. Students develop a practical skill set by undertaking an individually tailored study programme through which they evolve their own artistic language and creative ideas. This is realised by students undertaking a series of individual term-long Elective Skills Workshop courses in technical skills aimed at underpinning their Studio Practice. Within the Studio Practice modules students develop work and critical skills in response to a series of practical briefs that foster increasingly independent learning.

This formal strategy focused on teaching, learning and assessment and specifically relates to our approach over the next five years. Its principal intention is to ensure that the Academy's academic and pedagogic principles are central to the ongoing development of our provision; we aim to provide a supportive learning experience that is characterised by the development of strong relationships with students from the very first point of contact to graduation and life as alumni. Our students experience a different approach to arts education in a stimulating and dynamic environment that will prepare them for lifelong learning, further study or life as an independent fine art practitioner.

The Art Academy is committed to developing graduates who:

- Are intellectually curious, responsive to challenges and demonstrate initiative and resilience.
- Think independently, analytically, creatively and engage imaginatively with new areas of investigation.
- Have an informed understanding of their discipline and artistic practice, and the ability to question it and challenge their own boundaries.
- Seize and shape the opportunities open to them on leaving the Academy.

2. The philosophy of Teaching and Learning at the Art Academy

2.1 Specialist learning

We champion specialist and experiential learning through practice to provide students with an individually defined practical skill set. This skill set then forms the basis of their artistic practice and enables students to develop their own artistic language and creative ideas.

Central to this approach is the teaching of technical skills, allowing students to:

- Learn through making;
- gain professional knowledge and develop technical expertise in their artwork;
- develop aesthetic judgement and critical skills;
- excel as practitioners in their field.

2.2 A student centred approach, distinguished from the standard arts educational model

All teaching, learning and assessment methodologies employed in the Art Academy are student-centred, intended to celebrate individual differences in our students and tutors. We aim to encourage, empower and facilitate each individual's creative 'voice', to support and challenge students to exceed their own expectations. The design, delivery and assessment of our programmes, modules and Elective Skills Workshop Courses aim to address the learning needs of all students through engagement with their interests and aspirations as individuals from a wide range of backgrounds.

In order to facilitate this, one to one teaching is central to our delivery, supported by group critiques, seminars, interactive lectures and workshops. We further distinguish ourselves from other providers by championing small class sizes and teaching groups (usually restricted to fifteen students per class/tutor) in order to maximise student-tutor contact time and facilitate greater student achievement. Additionally, the principle of employing active and significant practitioners as tutors is central to our ethos and institutional mission.

The Academy encourages all staff (teaching and non-contact) to take the time to get to know our students, creating a safe and respectful learning environment, where individuals are encouraged to articulate their thinking and express themselves creatively, without fear of ridicule, through the acquisition of contextualised practical skills.

2.2.1 Inclusivity

In accordance with our [Equality, Diversity & Inclusion policy](#), we believe that everyone should be treated as an individual in our approach to teaching and learning. In order to foster this we need to ensure our understanding of each student's differing needs (physical, cultural, and pastoral).

We will ensure that all teaching materials have clear content that is inclusive, avoiding stereotypes and assumptions as to what constitutes 'normal'. All materials will be made available in alternative formats appropriate to the needs of individuals where possible (for example, different paper colours for dyslexia).

All tutors are encouraged to share their personal pronouns at introductory sessions and to encourage students to do so. Our Inclusive Language Policy sets out the expected use of inclusive language across the Art Academy for all members of our community to acknowledge diversity and convey respect to all.

Please see the Inclusive Language Policy (on Moodle) for further details.

2.2.2 'Reasonable adjustments'

The Art Academy adheres to the 'reasonable adjustments' requirements of the Equality Act (2010). We will endeavour to meet the requirements of students who declare a disability or special need to eliminate any attributable disadvantage by all appropriate and lawful means, making reasonable adjustments to delivery and/or assessment methods, without compromising our expected academic standards or making students feel marginalised. We will not, however, make any adjustment to recruitment or admissions criteria, teaching or assessment which would alter or compromise our expected academic standards.

Please see the [Alternative Assessment Policy](#) for further details.

2.3 Preparation for life after Graduation

Central to the Academy's ethos is the preparation of students for life as professional artists. Such a life may entail working in a wide variety of contexts and more often in a freelance or commission-based capacity. Therefore graduates need to be flexible, resilient and confidently prepared for unpredictable and complicated careers which can involve a mixture of freelance and part-time contract work. In this regard, we aim to equip our graduates with important life skills and a thorough understanding of the art market that will enable them to continue to develop as professional artists. Along with Professional Development modules, which give students the knowledge and tools to establish and administer their professional artistic practices, students develop important transferable skills such as numeracy, literacy, IT, research, presentation and communication skills through embedded delivery and associated teaching, learning and assessment strategies.

Students are encouraged to be involved in commissions and real world art projects and undertake projects which investigate the skills and requirements of commission based practice. Through dialogue with tutors at the Art Academy all of whom are working professional artists, students gain a first-hand understanding of professional life.

3. Strategic Objectives 2024 - 2029

Five years on from our first teaching & learning strategy our organisational infrastructure has grown to effectively support the continued delivery of validated programmes. Our ambition to provide equality of access through registration with the HE regulatory body has been stymied by shifting priorities resulting from the Covid pandemic, but will be progressed in this new strategic period.

As part of this strategy, we aim to build on our distinctive approach to fine art education by enhancing the teaching and learning in the Academy under the following headings:

- Staff
- Students
- Assessment and Feedback
- Continuous reflection

3.1 Strategic Objective 1: A commitment to support staff excellence

We will continue to support teaching staff through the flexible working opportunities central to the academic staffing structure at the Academy, enabling tutors to support, continue in and excel in their own careers as professional practitioners. We intend to continue to improve the level of support we offer

to staff with particular regard to the development of their pedagogic practice and will address this through a range of initiatives.

We will improve this support during the five year period by:

- Providing clear guidance for all tutors and academic staff on all aspects of teaching and learning policy, assessment procedures and the academic regulations relevant to validation by the Open University.
- Using peer and formative observation as a tool to provide opportunities to share and develop good practice, and as well as a means of informing the development of training programmes through the identification of key themes for development
- Providing a mentoring scheme for new tutors, assessors and those with identified support needs.
- Improving digital literacy by providing professional development opportunities to become familiar with the use of technologies to enhance learning.
- Continuing to develop a programme of professional developmental training.
- Working with individuals to provide support where they have the opportunity to undertake teaching qualifications.
- Aligning capital investments with the needs of students and the learning, teaching and assessment design within the curriculum.
- Ensuring that this strategy is accessible to and understood by staff.

3.2 Strategic Objective 2: A commitment to support student excellence

We will continue to put our students at the heart of everything we do at the Academy. Over the next five years, we will build on initiatives and approaches that ensure students' learning needs are the paramount concern in the development and growth of the Academy. The aims to widen access to arts education and foster an environment where all forms of artistic expression are deemed equally relevant in contemporary society remain key aspects of our mission.

We will enhance our commitment to supporting excellence in our students during the five year period by:

- Supporting student representation at all levels of decision making.
- Upholding and enhancing equality of and access to learning for students, irrespective of their social, cultural and economic status, through access to student loans, raising funds for bursaries and scholarships, and through improvements to access to our facilities.
- Supporting processes for identifying as early as possible students with any learning issues to ensure that support is in place and any necessary adjustments are made in good time.
- Building upon support already in place for students of all types of disability and disadvantage.
- Working with students to enhance the design and delivery of the curriculum.
- Improving digital literacy in students and providing opportunities to become familiar with the use of technologies to enhance learning.
- Developing and evaluating activities aimed at nurturing a culture of belonging via pre-entry and transition activities, mentoring, personal tutoring, group and collaborative learning.
- Aligning capital investments with the needs of students and the learning, teaching and assessment design within the curriculum.
- Improving access to learning resources (physical and virtual) and information technologies.
- Investing in Moodle as a pedagogic tool and repository of information.

- Providing briefing, training and support to enable students to understand and implement relevant policy and follow procedures.
- Ensuring that this strategy is accessible to and understood by tutors and academic staff.

3.3 Strategic Objective 3: Assessment and Feedback

We believe that formative assessment and feedback is essential to student improvement and should be a continuous process and dialogue throughout a student's programme of study. Summative assessment should encourage and enable students to analyse their own progress and achievements through the use of effective feedback (and feedforward). Assessment tasks are designed to encourage student engagement. As part of our development and move towards validated programmes we aim to embed a comprehensive system of assessment and feedback throughout all programmes of study.

We will enhance our assessment and feedback provision during the five year period by:

- Providing accessible and comprehensive information and guidance relating to assessment and feedback processes and requirements for students, tutors and academic staff.
- Provide briefing, training and support to tutors and academic staff around assessment and feedback policy and good practice.
- Reviewing processes effectively in annual programme reviews, taking into account feedback from students, tutors and External Examiners
- Ensuring that the balance between formative and summative assessments and the type of assessment set, enables active learning.
- Ensuring that approaches to assessment, feedback and feedforward impact positively upon learning and result in improvements to student outcomes.
- Ensuring that assessment complies with the principles of fairness and transparency.

3.4 Strategic Objective 4: Continuous Reflection

We are committed to examining and reviewing our processes and the effectiveness of our approaches through regular reporting, involving inputs from both students and staff as part of our ongoing cycle of development and improvement.

We will improve the effectiveness of our reflective practices during the five year period by:

- Systematic evaluation and use of the information gleaned from sources such as admission, retention, ED&I monitoring and performance statistics to improve the quality of teaching and learning.
- Improving and refining the processes by which the Academy engages with student feedback.
- Continuing to use tutor surveys to complement the information gleaned from student surveys and External Examiner reports (in respect of feedback) to inform the development of policy, procedure and the pedagogic CPD plan/ schedule.
- Undertaking annual reviews at programme and institutional level.

Policies and documents that supplement and reference this document:

Quality Handbook
Staff Development strategy

Document name	Teaching and learning strategy	Document owner	Darren Nairn Director of Quality & Student Experience
Date originally created	May 2017		
Version	5	Review date	July 2024
Author of amendments	Darren Nairn	Next review date	July 2028
Changes (list sections)	Logo institution name & formatting		
Approved by	Academic Board	Date of approval	July 2024 (AQSSEC)