ART ACADEMY
LONDON

Research and Scholarship 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. Overview & Context

As a Higher Education provider, Art Academy London complies with The Quality Code for Higher Education. The expectations for Teaching and Learning in the Code requires institutions to promote an academic culture and learning ethos, drawing on scholarship, research and professional activity to facilitate student learning. It is expected that doing this will add value to the students' learning opportunities, enhance the overall quality of teaching and learning, raise academic standards and help to create an innovative curriculum that meets employer needs whilst maintaining the currency of staff subject knowledge.

Drawing upon the QAA guidance, the Academy has begun to develop its Research, Scholarship and Ethics strategy, to support the creation of an HE culture which will in turn enhance the student experience and support student learning and development.

1.2 Definitions

Quality Code Expectations for Teaching and Learning

The UK Quality Code Advice and Guidance: Learning and Teaching says that:

'Effective learning and teaching occurs when staff display a sound understanding and up-to-date knowledge of their subject, pedagogies and/or professional practice and bring this to a variety of appropriately-designed learning and teaching activities'.

It further states that:

'Providers consider the extent to which staff have:

- *appropriate and current practitioner knowledge and an understanding of the subject they teach (which may be demonstrated by an academic qualification and any relevant professional or industry qualification or recognition), and*

- *an understanding of the disciplinary scholarship appropriate to the academic level of the students they are teaching the necessary knowledge, skills and experience to facilitate learning using processes and approaches grounded in sound learning and teaching scholarship and practice'.*

The Code refers to scholarship, research and professional activity, with a wide definition of research including *'conventional research (discovery of new knowledge), innovative application or integration and synthesis of existing knowledge (for example, in professional practice), or the study of learning and teaching processes and practices (pedagogic development)'.*

2. Art Academy London's Approach

Whilst the Academy shares some characteristics with other colleges offering Higher Education, it is unique in that all its tutors are practising artists, many of them eminent in their fields. In fact, the majority of them hold undergraduate degrees, and many of them also hold postgraduate degrees, but the expertise they bring is derived from their practice and experience as artists.

In developing its Research, Scholarship and Ethics strategy , the Academy will build upon this expertise, and the developmental research work undertaken by its tutors in their art practices. The Academy's curriculum is subject to continual review. It has been devised in the light of fundamental techniques across fine art disciplines and current practice in the application of those techniques, together with contemporary thinking around fine art and other relevant discourses. Core tutors involved in curriculum enhancement and development draw upon their knowledge and expertise in these areas. Capturing and developing this understanding further, to inform the Academy's curriculum and thereby enhance the student experience at the Academy, will form the heart of its strategy. The strategy will work in tandem with the Academy's CPD programme, through which Academy tutors are encouraged to engage with opportunities to develop, extend and reflect upon their pedagogic practice.

2.1 Research, Scholarship and Ethics Committee

Art Academy London's Academic Board has established a RSE Committee to oversee and support its Research and Scholarship Activity. Chaired by the Critical and Contextual Studies Department Leader, membership of the Committee comprises:

2.1.1 Membership

Critical and Contextual Studies Department Leader
Critical and Contextual Studies tutors
BA Programme Leader,
BA Contemporary Portraiture Programme Leader,
Professional Development Department Leader,
Foundation Programme Leader
Sculpture Lead

2.1.2 Attendance

The quorum shall be four voting members. The Director of Academic Quality, Standards and Student Experience and Director of Programmes shall attend meetings of the RSE Committee from time to time as non-voting members.

2.1.3 Frequency of Meetings

The RSE Committee shall meet at least twice a year but usually once a term. Applications for funding will be invited in time for the summer term meeting. This meeting will be planned to precede the Academic Board meeting, at which Board members will consider the applications for funding and determine how the Academy's annual research funds will be allocated.

2.1.4 Reporting

Minutes of RSE Committee meetings shall be shared with the Academic Board.

2.1.5 Terms of Reference

The role of the Committee is to be a driving force for the Academy's research activity. It will:

A. Establish the terms of the Academy's Research and Scholarship programme;
B. create a framework for the allocation of funds and manage an annual bidding round to support small-scale research or scholarship activities;
C. Seek alternative sources of funding for research connected to AAL;

D. hold responsibility for ethical considerations relating to any research undertaken within the Academy;
E. oversee the publication of research undertaken as part of the programme, as appropriate;
F. consider other appropriate methods for disseminating research findings to the Academy community and beyond;
G. set up and oversee other relevant activities to support and enhance a culture of research and scholarship with the Academy;
H. consider student engagement with the Academy's RASA.

2.2 Funding

Art Academy London will make available a small amount of funding annually to support research activity (to be determined as part of its annual budgeting process). AAL will aim to grow the funding available for research. The development of AAL's research programme forms part of the Academy's five year plan, with funding for research featuring as part of its fundraising strategy.

The Academy will also consider other means by which it can support research projects, through, for example, access to its facilities (including its gallery space), marketing support and access to personnel from the Academy's staff group or student body to help with research activities where possible and appropriate. The value of such support will be quantified where possible.

The RSE Committee will establish a framework for the allocation of funds, which might include:

- consideration of the number of projects it wishes to support,
- the maximum amount to be allocated to an individual project,
- whether applicants for funding should have sought additional funding elsewhere
- opportunities for tutors to work collaboratively.

This framework may be subject to variation annually, depending upon the level of funding available.

Applicants for funding will be required to complete an application stating the purpose for which funding will be used, the availability of any funding from elsewhere and the benefits to AAL from the research undertaken. Applications will be considered by the Academic Board, which will have the final say on how funds will be allocated.

2.3 Approach to Research Activity

Research by Denis Feather (*'Oh to be a scholar – an HE in FE perspective'*, 2012, published in the Journal of Further and Higher Education) states that:

'the field of scholarship should not be forced upon a person, as this is likely to disillusion and demotivate that person....Individuals need to be allowed to select their preferred field of study, to be given the time and resources to explore that field, and to interact with other like-minded people'.

The Academy's approach to research activity will be to support tutors in pursuing research topics that are of interest to them. These may or may not relate directly to the Academy's curriculum, but will enhance learning and academic understanding within the Academy. On occasion, there may be an area of study identified by the Academy where it would like research undertaken. In this instance, the Academy may propose the topic for research to the RSE Committee and tutors invited to bid to undertake the work should they be interested in doing so.

Research activity may take the form of original research. It may also be:

- Subject specific research – this might include, for eg, support to learn a new technique relating to the discipline being taught by the tutor;
- attending conferences, symposia or workshops relating to the tutor's area of interest;

- research work centred around one of the relevant professional bodies;
- research around curriculum development or teaching strategies and approaches.

The Academy will also consider ways in which it might support tutors to study for further degrees or teaching qualifications, although funding is currently limited.

In considering which research proposals to support in any given year, the RSE Committee will aim to ensure that collectively the research projects it supports will achieve one or more of the following objectives:

- Cover a range of topics;
- Relate to current or future priorities for teaching and learning at the Academy;
- Encompass a range of research activities (which might include any of those listed above);
- Contribute to the continuing professional development of Academy tutors;
- Provide networking opportunities for Academy tutors and/or staff (in addition to another of the objectives listed here).

2.4 Developing Research 'themes'

The RSE will undertake scoping research to determine broad themes for AAL's research activity over a given period. The initial research will be undertaken during 2023 to determine the themes for the first three years of the research programme.

The overarching theme(s) for the research programme will be drawn from the current research activity of core tutors in their art and/or research practices. To determine the theme(s), interviews will be undertaken with core tutors, by the Critical and Contextual Studies (CCS) Department Leader (and Chair of the RSE Committee). Consideration will be given to sharing this initial research with members of the AAL community, including students. From this scoping research, the CCS Department Leader, in consultation with the RSE Committee, will identify some key areas of interest, which will broadly shape the Academy's research programme over a three year period. Tutors will then be invited to submit applications for proposals falling under the themes agreed. Proposals for collaborative research, involving two or more members of the AAL community, will be encouraged.

2.5 Delivery of Research Findings

Any tutor in receipt of funding from the Academy will be expected to deliver their research findings within an agreed timescale. The method(s) for disseminating the findings will be determined by the RSE Committee on the award of the funding, and may include publication (on-line or physically) and one or more workshops, lectures, seminars or symposia. Where the research activity has taken the form of attendance at a conference or workshop, the attendee will be expected to report back, either through a written report, or through a practical demonstration of the skill or information learnt.

2.6 Copyright

The RSE Committee will agree a policy around the copyright of research findings, although this may be agreed on a case by case basis upon the award of funds for each individual research project.

2.7 Ethics

Art Academy London has a [Code of Practice on Research and Ethics](#) which anyone in receipt of funding for research from the Academy is expected to adhere to. It has also produced [Guidance for Research Ethics Approval.](#)

2.8 Research Outputs

The RSE Committee will consider ways in which findings from the research undertaken each year can be disseminated, both amongst the AAL community and more widely. Consideration will be given to online publications, research symposiums or newsletters etc.

2.9 Other Activities

The RSE Committee will consider other activities it might support to promote a culture of research and scholarship within the Academy. This might include a reading or discussion group, either amongst tutors or to include both tutors and students. It might include a series of talks or seminars around issues relevant to the Academy research theme(s) or related to the Academy's pedagogical approach, for example.

2.10 Student Engagement

The findings from research undertaken will be shared with students as appropriate, either in written form, or through workshops, lectures or symposia. Some research may be used to enhance the curriculum or teaching strategies, so students will engage more indirectly with those research findings. Once the RSE strategy is successfully up and running, the RSE Committee will consider ways in which students may be further involved. Consideration will be given to the publication of student work. There may be potential to encourage students to submit research papers for publication, for eg, perhaps drawing upon their research work undertaken for their extended research projects in Level 6. A student reading group might be established, either as part of, or alongside, the tutor group.

Policies and documents that supplement and reference this document:

Code of Practice on Research and Ethics
Guidance for Research Ethics Approval
Teaching and Learning Strategy
Staff Development Strategy.
QA Handbook

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