1. General Information

Award	Programme Title	Duration	Mode of Study
MA (RCA)	Design Products	2 Years	Full-time

Awarding Institution	Royal College of Art
Teaching Institution	Royal College of Art
Professional Accreditation	N/A
Qualifications Framework Level	7
Credit Value	240 UK credits
Date of most recent validation	October 2010
Programme Specification Date	2014/15

2. Philosophy of the Programme

The Design Products programme is about *creativity for purpose* - educating students to be design-thinkers who address real world challenges through balancing high levels of creativity and technical capability with contextual insight. The programme takes a pluralistic approach to product design by exploring it through a number of *design cultures* – 'Design through Making', 'Design for Manufacture', 'Object Mediated Interactions', 'Design as Catalyst', 'Exploring Emergent Futures' – which are underpinned by a set of contextual themes. This structure provides a platform for students to conceptualise and validate ideas by canvassing, provoking, challenging, and questioning people, places and things through crafted artefacts. Through team and individual projects involving external partners and tutored by practising designers and design researchers, students determine their own personal *design culture* whilst building a portfolio of work that will locate them in their desired professional context. Graduates are creative catalysts and visionaries who go on to lead in design consultancies and to set up their own design studios.

3. Educational Aims of the Programme

The Design Products programme aims to provide an environment for learning where students can develop their abilities in depth. Successful students will be able to demonstrate:

- Independent motivation, willingness and ability to produce high quality design work in response to an intelligent, articulate brief.
- Comprehensive understanding of the techniques applicable and the technical knowledge and practical skills appropriate to their main method of work.
- Knowledge of the historical, social and cultural context of design and conceptual understanding sufficient to enable critical evaluation of design in contemporary context.
- The ability to form an objective view of their work in the context of contemporary practice and critical discourse.

In addition, it is expected that successful students will have transferable skills appropriate to employment or practice:

- The exercise of initiative and personal responsibility
- Decision making in complex and unpredictable situations
- Independent learning ability necessary for continuing professional

4. Intended Learning Outcomes of the Programme

Able to:	**A. Intellectual Engagement**
A1.	Develop innovative ideas and proposals that challenge your understanding of your practice and discipline in the context of *design products*.
A2.	Engage in intellectual and creative research in order to develop an awareness of functional, aesthetic, commercial and critical perspectives on *design products*.
A3.	Identify how your work is positioned within a larger design context.
A4.	Demonstrate understanding of the social, ethical and economic impact of your design.
A5.	Bring a design perspective to contemporary debate on technology, consumerism, economics, people and society.

Able to:	**B. Technical Skills**
B1.	Produce work at an advanced level that integrates thought, creativity and technique.
B2.	Develop and evaluate design ideas through drawing, modelmaking and prototyping, and through engagement with users.
B3.	Identify and exploit the aesthetic and functional possibilities of different materials, processes and technologies.
B4.	Demonstrate an understanding of different manufacturing techniques and systems.
B5.	Present your designs using the appropriate visual, organisational and auditory tools.

Able to:	**C. Professionalism**
C1.	Develop an individual design approach appropriate to the client industry in which you practice.
C2.	Take responsibility for developing project briefs and managing time and resources effectively.

Able to:	**C. Professionalism**
C3.	Demonstrate the ability to work effectively in a team to assign roles, delegate tasks and communicate the outcomes of a group project.
C4.	Identify when and how to access outside expertise in realising your design ambitions and manage ongoing relationships with collaborators.
C5.	Present your work clearly and engagingly, in ways that are appropriate to your audience.

5. Programme Structure and Curriculum

MA Programme Description
The MA programme provides students who have already acquired knowledge and skills in various areas of design with an academic framework in which to continue to develop their own professional direction. The course takes a pluralistic view of the students' ideas and interests and there is an atmosphere that encourages experimental, groundbreaking work, encouraging a critical approach and a questioning of accepted practices. The programme has a matrix structure comprised of horizontal teaching units, called Platforms, and a set of vertical Themes, which cut across the Platforms. In the first year, students undergo a diagnostic period in the first two terms, experiencing the different design perspectives of the Platforms and the different Themes through a set of project briefs. In the third term, students elect a Platform to follow for the remainder of their studies, underpinned by one of the Themes (or a theme of their own choosing). Each Platform is led by two Tutors (who are practicing designers), and each Theme is led by either a Senior Tutor or the Head of Programme, who work together to choose the content and area of focus they wish to concentrate on for the Autumn and Spring terms, and engage with the students through assigning briefs, and meeting with them on a weekly basis. In addition, students are taught a set of methods and tools, such a critical thinking, user-facing methods, that will underpin their work. Second year students are expected to produce a minimum of two graduation projects. While the Tutors' primary focus is the students in their Platform, their knowledge and expertise is available to the entire programme; the Head of Programme and Senior Tutors teach across the programme. In addition, students benefit from Visiting Professors and visiting lecturers who are practicing designers and experts in their fields. Students are expected to use the Programme's Themes and their Platform's approach to design as the basis for their work. There is a progress review at the end of the Autumn and Spring terms for year 2 students.
Critical & Historical Studies
The RCA provides a unique environment for postgraduate art and design students to reflect upon their own practice, and to engage with students from their own and other disciplines. The role of Critical & Historical Studies (CHS) is to support the studio programmes in enabling these critical engagements to take place. The courses offered by CHS to first year studio-based MA students propose an intellectual framework within which they can begin to establish a coherent relationship between theory and practice. The Design Culture Senior Tutor will be responsible for bridging the CHS programme with studio teaching. In the autumn and spring terms there are a series of College-wide seminars and lectures.

The autumn term series will relate to your particular discipline (though it is possible to elect to join a series being offered to students on other programmes) whereas the spring term series will be more broad-based and cross-disciplinary in nature.

In the spring and summer terms, a CHS tutor will give you individual tutorials to support the development of a dissertation which is submitted at the start of the second year. The dissertation should be between 6,000 – 10,000 words in length – this is a major piece of work and you will be not be able to submit for the Final Examination until you have passed this assessment.

6. Learning and Teaching Methods

Projects

Design projects are the core learning and teaching element of the MA programme around which tutorials, workshops, crits, group debates and technical instruction take place. Projects will vary in length and format depending on the different Platforms' approach to design. The content will explore a whole range of issues related to the Themes of the Programme . Some projects may be 'real world' projects giving the opportunity to locate work in a specific context. Projects may be carried out with commercial and industrial organisations who are 'friends' of Design Products, offering their time, expertise or financial support. Projects may be individual or group.

The five Platforms include:

Platform 22. Design Through Making
Making and experimentation is central to the discovery of new possibilities, whether through materials, process, techniques, technologies, cultures or locations. This Platform has a hands-on approach to the creation of things encompassing the practices of designer-makers to material technologists.
Keywords: Designer makers / experimentation / devising new materials and processes / iterative making

Platform 23. Design for Manufacture
This Platform seeks to explore mass cultural, aesthetic and utilitarian desires and needs, combined with the manufacturing technologies that can deliver products at different levels of volume. It takes into account more traditional high volume manufacturing models alongside emergent opportunities of mass-customisation and digital fabrication.
Keywords: Mass Production / mass market / consumer products / industrial design

Platform 24. Object Mediated Interactions
This platform explores a broad range of interactive objects, from consumer electronics to

the "Internet of Things", exhibition design and installations. There is a strong focus on both enabling technologies and the experience of interaction.
Keywords: Consumer electronics / Internet of things / Installations / physical computing

Platform 25. Design as Catalyst
Objects are inherently political, from the mass produced goods that fill hypermarket shelves to bespoke custom designs and objects created for exhibitions; they express the politics, economics, opinions, aspirations, values, viewpoints and society of those that commission them, design them, manufacture them and use them. This platform looks at design as an agitator, instigator and agent of change and asks questions about what kinds of changes students want to see and who will benefit from them.
Keywords: Design activism / change maker

Platform 26. Exploring Emergent Futures
The future is ever changing; fiction writers and technologists are constantly dreaming it up and engineers and designers are making it the present. This Platform explores and plays with tomorrow's present, making manifest the ideas and theories of others as well as adding our own, through experimentation, prototyping, possible products and object oriented narratives.
Keywords: Design futures / design fiction / concepts and proposals

The five Themes include:
Theme 1. Networked design
Whether engaged in communities on a local level or in an international movement, designers within networks are playing an ever-increasing role in the design and development of the made world. This space explores new links between producer and consumer, opportunities for custom product creation at all scales of manufacture, intelligent and networked objects, the creation of "Open Designs" and the potential for ad hoc networks to create and develop products.

Theme 2. The making of things:
Product in the vernacular of design normally denotes a physical object. This theme is concerned with the information, processes, methods, materials, tools and spaces that can be used to make physical products. Key to this is learning through experimentation, making things to make things, understanding the properties and meaning of materials while pushing the potential of manufacturing processes or the creation of new ways of making.

Theme 3. Designing things better:
From the extraction of virgin resources, the processing of materials, the transportation of goods and the inevitable end of a product's useful life there can be significant negative

consequences to a wide range of ecosystems. This theme attempts to tackle the challenge of what can be done to make better things or make things better, whether that be through design for disassembly, design for repair, design of more meaningful products, the selection or creation of better materials, or the creation of systems that keep hold of valuable materials for future generations.

Theme 4. Human culture:
The relationships people have with objects can be very complex as objects can speak to us of culture, status, gender, class, location, ability, capability and personal identity. This theme is focussed on understanding people, their needs, desires and aspirations. As well as the context that products operate in and the significance and value they hold.

Theme 5. New notions & actions from new technology:
Questioning and exploring new applications of current technology as well as developing rich and engaging visions of future technological products. This theme embraces the new by pushing beyond the imagined future to one that can be designed. Outcomes can be at all scales from a singular specific context or global application.

Integrated into first year projects will be a set of **methods and tools**, which will form a creativity tool box which students can apply to the remainder of their studies; these include:

Workshop equipment and tools (to prototype / represent industrial processes).

Interaction prototyping (physical computing, Arduino, Raspberry Pi, coding, html, electronics, etc.).

Design process methods (structuring a project or challenge & write a brief; to articulate personal design process).

Critical thinking methods (generating a range of design ideas that span multiple scenarios as well as developing an understanding of how others perceive your work).

User-engagement methods (to learn how to work with people to generate & test ideas)

Research methods (understanding the difference between formal and informal research. Tools and techniques of investigation, analysis and synthesis).

Design communication methods (developing an understand how a design is perceived or read as well as learning to use a variety of presentation methods / media).

Lectures

Designers' Talks
The programme runs a series of practice-related lectures and illustrated talks by visiting lecturers and staff members. In recent years the lecturers have included Sam Hecht/Industry Facility, Jim Reeves/Therefore, Joep van Lisehout, Tim Parsons, John Small (Fosters & Partners), Arash & Kelly and Russell Pinch, Sydney Levinson (Rhodes &

Rhodes) and Louise-Anne Comeau.

Project conferences
A mini conference will mark the start of each project during the diagnostic period in the first year, at which experts in the field will deliver lectures related to the topic of each project.

Lectures on other Programmes
Students are encouraged to attend lectures organised by other programmes.

Design in Business
Lectures covering aspects of professional practice and talks by recent graduates about life after College is offered during the second term.

Design Competitions

There are a large number of competitions available to students both within and outside the College and where appropriate these may become the subject of project briefs. Students should discuss and agree with their tutors any such projects before they start and are advised not to take on any additional work that could be considered detrimental to their studies.

Instructions Courses

Basic Electronics and Engineering for Designers
These will provide a basic introduction on how these are integrated into design and support for project work

Computer Software
Introductions to 3D modeling, Rhino and SolidWorks will be provided.

7. Assessment

General

Regulations for assessment and progression can be found in the College Regulations, sections 2.7 – 2.10.

Interim Examination

Towards the end of the first year there is a formal examination for all students, conducted by the programme staff. Students are allocated 30 minutes to present their portfolio of work.

Final Examination
The Final Examination is held in the summer of students' second year and involves the participation of two External Examiners. The External Examiners are invited to meet the students for a preview of the work to be submitted – usually to coincide with the Work in Progress show. The Final review takes place, usually, in mid-June, a few weeks before the Show. Prior to the Final Review, during May each student submits a design report detailing the projects which have been agreed with the programme team to be presented for examination.

8. Admissions

Cross-College Requirements
Refer to the College Prospectus for details of cross-College entrance and portfolio requirements for the MA Entrance Examination. Candidates for all MA courses are assessed on their existing qualities as demonstrated in their work and in their interview, as well as on their potential to benefit from the course and to achieve MA standards overall. The assessment will consider: creativity, imagination and innovation evident in the work; ability to articulate the intentions of the work; intellectual engagement in relevant areas; appropriate technical skills; overall interview performance, including oral use of English.
Programme-Specific Requirements
For MA Design Products, you should have a good undergraduate degree or equivalent in an area of design, and proficient written and spoken English. Several years of professional experience, either before or after a first degree, is a benefit. Applications are welcomed from candidates from related backgrounds, such as art, engineering. **Portfolio**: • This should describe your abilities in design and presentation. It should include representative samples of drawings, model-making and any other work-up material at investigative or exploratory stages of the design process as well as presentation of finished pieces. • It should also contain samples of any written work, technical studies or additional work carried out in conjunction with the design projects. • The portfolio should show the range and variety of skills and experience but should emphasise your knowledge of the subject for which you are applying. Please note: - Sketchbooks and notebooks should be included (extracts submitted digitally are acceptable at application stage, and if invited for interview, you should bring

sketchbooks with you) .
- Physical /actual objects should be represented by photographs and can be brought to interview should you be selected.
- Working drawings and photographs of finished work should be dated and have attached a brief written explanation .
- All work submitted should be correctly titled and clearly marked with your name.
- Joint project work or collaborative projects must be clearly described as such. You must indicate clearly the exact role that you played in the creation of the work submitted.
- Where it can be shown that you have submitted work which is not your own, as if it was your own, or it transpires that the level of your involvement in joint work has been seriously exaggerated, or where false statements have been made on an application form or other document considered by an admissions board, you may be disqualified.

If you are invited for an interview:
- Any work carried out after the submission of the portfolio or any work in progress can be brought to the interview.
- You should bring sketch books to your interview.
- You are expected to be able to talk confidently and objectively about your own work, and about your personal ambitions for future work at the College.

Candidates who do not speak English as their first language are required to produce evidence that within the previous two years they have achieved at least 93 in the TOEFL internet test with an additional writing test score of TWE 24 or an IELTS exam score of 6.5 with 6 in writing.

9. Quality Indicators

Refer to the RCA Quality Handbook for more details of the College's quality and standards procedures.

- All academic programmes at the Royal College of Art are revalidated on a six-yearly cycle. Revalidations involve external subject experts and internal panel members appointed by the College's Academic Standards Committee (ASC).
- Programmes are required to submit an annual Review, the primary purpose of which is to evaluate the experience of students enrolled on both its MA and MPhil / PhD courses.
- External Examiners are appointed for a maximum of three years to ensure that:
  - the academic standard for each award is set and maintained at an appropriate level and that student performance is properly judged against this;
  - the standards of awards are comparable with those of other UK higher education

institutions;
- the process of assessment and examination is fair and has been fairly conducted.

- An Internal Moderator is appointed by the Senate on the recommendation of ASC to ensure that there are appropriate mechanisms in place for the objective assessment of student work and to ensure comparability of examination practices between programmes within the College.
- Students have the opportunity to provide feedback through regular programme-level meetings (at least one each year considers the delivery of the MA programme and the External Examiner report); and through an annual College-wide MA student survey. A Student Representative Council brings forward issues from Course Forums and programme-level meetings to the President and Vice-President of the Students' Union who then, where appropriate, present these issues at College committees or to the Senior Management of the College.