

## **MRes Visual Cultures**

### **Programme Specification**

**Awarding Institution:**

University of London (Interim Exit Awards made by Goldsmiths' College)

**Teaching Institution:** Goldsmiths, University of London

**Name of Final Award and Programme Title:** MRes Visual Cultures

**Name of Interim Exit Award(s):** Not applicable

**Duration of Programme:** 1 year full-time or 2 years part-time

**UCAS Code(s):** Not applicable

**HECoS Code(s):** (100306) History of Art

**QAA Benchmark Group:** Not applicable

**FHEQ Level of Award:** Level 7

**Programme accredited by:** Not applicable

**Date Programme Specification last updated/approved:** August 2017

**Home Department:** Visual Cultures

**Department(s) which will also be involved in teaching part of the programme:**

Not applicable

## **Programme overview**

This programme is for students who have a special interest in contemporary visual culture, including those without a formal academic qualification in art history, art theory, visual cultures, or cultural studies. It offers a challenging, flexible, and advanced scheme of study which explores a range of theoretical perspectives that shape attitudes towards visual culture understood globally in the late 20th / early 21st century. Invigorated by current research, the programme encourages students to engage in an exploratory interrogation of the relationships between critical theory and visual practice understood broadly.

## **Programme entry requirements**

The standard requirement is of an upper second class BA or equivalent degree in Fine Art, History of Art and Design, Visual Culture, Cultural Studies, Philosophy, Film Studies, or in a related discipline such as Literature or Music. Above all, students should be able to demonstrate an aptitude for theorised enquiry in the field of contemporary art and critical studies, and/or in the humanities more broadly. This may be evident in candidates who do

not have the above requirements, and, depending upon assessment at interview, it may be possible for them to be admitted with knowledges and competences developed outside of academia in the world of work. If these are deemed insufficient, however, candidates may be advised to take a preparatory year of study in the Department of Visual Cultures: either the Graduate Diploma in Contemporary Art History or the MA Contemporary Art Theory. Applications are welcomed from EU students (full-time or part-time) and overseas students (full-time only). Non-English language speakers are required to have passed the International English Language Testing System (IELTS) with at least 6.5 overall.

## Aims of the programme

Through both teaching and research, this programme aims to:

1. expand students' knowledge of contemporary cultural developments and critical discourse
2. deepen their understanding of the inter- and trans-disciplinary nature of contemporary academic discourses in visual culture
3. enhance independent critical and analytical skills through research
4. encourage students' self-development by practicing skills of research and communication in written, oral, and visual domains
5. facilitate a learning environment that offers an appropriate foundation for further scholarly research in visual culture and related humanities fields

This programme will attract applicants who are interested in doing a post-graduate degree with a stronger focus on research than a normal MA Degree. This programme will produce graduates with a better preparedness for doctoral research.

## What you will be expected to achieve

Students who exit the programme with an MRes Visual Cultures will have completed one MA Special Subject module (see Programme Structure and Requirements below) and attended the MPhil-PhD Seminar. They will also have delivered a 45 minute oral presentation of their research at the MPhil-PhD seminar and have written a 20,000 word dissertation. They will demonstrate:

### Knowledge and understanding

Code	Learning outcome	Taught by the following module(s)
A1	A significant understanding of the inter- and trans- disciplinary nature of	All Modules

Code	Learning outcome	Taught by the following module(s)
	contemporary academic discourses in visual culture	
A2	A working understanding of the relations between theoretical discourse and visual culture	All Modules
A3	An in-depth knowledge of a particular problematic within the field of contemporary visual culture, drawing, as appropriate, upon the discourses of art history, performance studies, philosophy, psychoanalysis, queer theory, post-colonial studies, and museology	Special Subjects, Oral Presentation, Dissertation

## Cognitive and thinking skills

Code	Learning outcome	Taught by the following module(s)
B1	The ability to develop an independent argument that is informed by, but not wholly dependent on, authorities in the field of visual culture	All Modules
B2	The ability to critically utilise ideas and debates from a range of theoretical sources and disciplines beyond the framework of art criticism and art history more narrowly defined	All Modules

## Subject specific skills and professional behaviours and attitudes

Code	Learning outcome	Taught by the following module(s)
C1	The ability to be inventive in thinking theoretically about the novel affects, experiences and representations afforded by visual culture	All Modules

## Transferable skills

Code	Learning outcome	Taught by the following module(s)
D1	The ability to present and defend their research orally in the context according to the conventions of the academic	MPhil-PhD Seminar

Code	Learning outcome	Taught by the following module(s)
	conference paper, supporting it with relevant visual, audio-visual and/or other documentation	
D2	The ability to pursue a major research project culminating in a 20,000 word dissertation	One to One Tutorials, Dissertation

## How you will learn

Students on the MRes Visual Cultures follow a taught programme consisting of two modules:

1. The MPhil-Phd Seminar
2. One MA Special Subject

Full time students take the MPhil-PhD Seminar in the Autumn and Spring Terms and from November (immediately after Reading Week), take an MA Special Subject Module (15 Weeks). Part time students take the MPhil-PhD Seminar in the Autumn and Spring Terms during the first year and the MA Special Subject in the second year.

In the Autumn Term, the MPhil-PhD Seminar explores the practical and intellectual demands of carrying out advanced research in visual culture from a variety of perspectives, drawing both on the expertise and experience of colleagues and from key theoretical texts. Details of the MPhil Seminar curriculum is available on the VLE site for the MPhil-PhD Programme as are details of, and links to the reading materials. In the Spring term, the MPhil-PhD Seminar explores the current research of first year MPhil students. It is in this context that you will outline orally the questions, context, methodology, and structure of your future dissertation.

Students are also expected to attend the regular Visual Cultures Public Programme, which takes place on Thursday evenings throughout the terms. These give you the chance to participate in discussing the current work of different theorists, artists, curators and critics, as well as watch and discuss emergent and classic artists' films and video. This is a mandatory part of the programme. Attendance will be monitored as it is a requirement for the award of the MRes, even though there is no formal examination attached to it. The Thursday Visual Cultures Public Programme is optional for year 1 part time students but compulsory in year 2.

Both full time and part time students also have the opportunity of auditing the MA compulsory module strands (A or C and B or D) during the first five weeks of the year. The

compulsory module strands introduce you to the problematic that resides at the heart of the MA programme: how to explore the relations between critical theory and contemporary visual arts practices. Compulsory A, C and B,D present differently articulated contemporary perspectives on 'art' and 'theory' drawn from a variety of traditions (e.g. Post- structuralism, Performance Studies, Contemporary Continental Philosophy, Phenomenology, Psychoanalysis and Post-Colonial Studies). Please note that as Auditors, the MRes Students are not required to submit a diagnostic essay at the end of the compulsory modules.

The MA Special Subjects are based on the current research interests of staff and enable you to focus on an aspect of contemporary art, cultural theory or contemporary thought that particularly interests you. The MA Laboratory is one of the Special Subjects and it provides an interactive and experimental environment for engaging with a question that is central to the programme as a whole: the exploration of notions of 'Critical Practice' as these might be played out within the contexts of visual practice/theory.

## **How you will be assessed**

Students on the MRes Visual Cultures will first be required to undertake formative assessment for your Special Subject. This is outlined in the following section.

Students will then be required to deliver an oral presentation of approximately 45 minutes duration on an aspect of your MRes Dissertation topic at the MPhil-PhD Seminar. This oral presentation is expected to be a focused investigation of the dissertation topic. It should not be a simple 'report' on books read or the different ideas the students have been thinking about. It is expected that the student delivers a coherent, well argued presentation of your work-in-progress. Though tied to the dissertation the oral presentation is assessed as a separate and autonomous piece of examined work.

At the end of the year, students will need to submit their Special Subject essay(s) and/or projects. This is also outlined in the following section.

Finally, in addition to fulfilling the attendance/assessment requirements for the two main elements of the taught programme, and attending the regular Visual Cultures Public Forum, the students will also be required to submit a dissertation.

Tutorial consultation on the dissertation begins during the summer term for full-time students and during the summer term of year two for part-time students. Full-time students are required to hand in a dissertation proposal at the end of the Spring term whereas part-time students are required to hand in a dissertation proposal by the end of the Spring term in the second year.

## Marking criteria

Mark	Descriptor	Specific Marking Criteria
80-100%	Distinction (Outstanding/ Exceptional)	Overall an exceptional level of response to the set tasks. The work is rigorously researched; the conceptual coherency of the work is advanced and ideas are researched and deployed within a clearly defined contextual framework. Work demonstrates high levels of independence of thought, which might include the identification of new areas of inquiry. Research shows ample evidence of sustained academic enquiry; the work draws on a wide range of sources all of which are critically evaluated; issues are readily identified and contextualised using appropriate theoretical frameworks. Text-based work/individual & group presentations: work is exceptionally well structured. Ideas are articulated and synthesised clearly through a cogent argument. The work demonstrates a nuanced understanding of appropriate relationships between the form and the content of the argument presented. Correct scholarly procedures employed throughout with care and accuracy.
70-79%	Distinction	Overall an excellent level of response to the set tasks. The work is rigorously researched; the conceptual coherency of the work is strong and ideas are researched and deployed within a clearly defined contextual framework Work demonstrates independence of thought. Research shows ample evidence of sustained academic enquiry; the work draws on a wide range of sources all of which are critically evaluated; issues are readily identified and contextualised using appropriate theoretical frameworks. Text-based work/individual & group presentations: work is extremely well structured and ideas are articulated and synthesised clearly through a cogent argument. Correct scholarly procedures employed throughout with care and accuracy.
60-69%	Merit	Overall a very good level of response to the set tasks. Evidence of strong research; the conceptual coherency of the work is good and ideas are researched and deployed within a defined contextual framework. Research shows evidence of sustained academic enquiry; the work draws on a wide range of sources most of which are critically evaluated and synthesised within a clear

Mark	Descriptor	Specific Marking Criteria
		<p>argument/structure; most issues are identified and contextualised using appropriate theoretical frameworks.</p> <p>Text-based work/individual &amp; group presentations: work is well organised, with sound underlying structure. Ideas are articulated clearly. Correct scholarly procedures employed throughout with accuracy.</p>
50-59%	Pass	<p>Overall mainly adequate level of response to the set task; the conceptual coherency of the work is largely adequate. Ideas are researched and deployed with an inconsistent recognition of the need for a contextual framework.</p> <p>Research shows some evidence of the identification of relevant issues; limited range of sources; evidence of some analytical, contextual and critical skills but these are inconsistently employed.</p> <p>Text-based work/individual &amp; group presentations: work is structured around an argument although the focus is not always clear; largely correct scholarly procedures employed.</p>
30-49%	Fail	<p>Overall the work may not be without merit but not Masters standard. Inadequate level of response to the set task; the realisation of the concept does not utilise a sufficient range of sources and processes; level of response is not always appropriate or consistent.</p> <p>Research shows little evidence of the identification of relevant issues; limited and inadequate range of sources; little evidence of analytical, critical and contextual skills.</p> <p>Text-based work/individual &amp; group presentations: work is lacking structure and/or a sound argument; the focus is not clear; incorrect scholarly procedures, inaccurate references.</p>
10-29%	Bad fail	<p>Overall the work may not be without merit but not Masters standard. The concept is realised inappropriately or is under developed.</p> <p>Research: Range of sources is very limited; little interpretation or analysis; lacking breadth or awareness of relevant contextual frameworks.</p> <p>Text-based work/individual &amp; group presentations: Weak organisational structure lacking in discussion and commentary; unfocused or lacking coherent argument; incorrect scholarly procedures employed.</p>

Mark	Descriptor	Specific Marking Criteria
1-9%	Very bad fail	A submission that does not even attempt to address the specified learning outcomes (shall be deemed a non-valid attempt and unit must be re-sat).
0%	Non submission or plagiarised	A categorical mark representing either the failure to submit an assessment or a mark assigned for a plagiarised assessment.

## How the programme is structured

### Autumn Term First 5 Weeks:

#### Full-time

- Optional MA Compulsory Module A or C
- Optional MA Compulsory Module B or D MPhil-PhD Seminar
- Visual Cultures Public Programme

#### Part-time Year 1

- Optional MA Compulsory Module A or C

#### Part-time Year 2

- Optional MA Compulsory Course B or D Visual Cultures Public Programme

### Reading Week

### Autumn Term Final 5 Weeks:

#### Full-time

- MPhil-PhD Seminar MA Special Subject
- Visual Cultures Public Programme

#### Part-time Year 1

- MA Special Subject

#### Part-time Year 2

- MPhil-PhD Seminar

- Visual Cultures Public Programme

### Christmas Break

### Spring Term First 5 Weeks:

#### Full-time

- MPhil-PhD Seminar MA Special Subject
- Visual Cultures Public Programme

#### Part-time Year 1

- MA Special Subject

#### Part-time Year 2

- MPhil-PhD Seminar
- Visual Cultures Public Forum

### Reading Week

### Spring Term Final 5 Weeks:

#### Full-time

- MPhil-PhD Seminar MA Special Subject
- Visual Cultures Public Programme

#### Part-time Year 1

- Special Subject

#### Part-time Year 2

- MPhil-PhD Seminar
- Visual Cultures Public Programme

### Easter Break

### Summer Term: For all full-time and 2nd year part-time students

May – September: Dissertation tutorials arranged as needed between student and tutor.  
September – Dissertation submission

Module Title	Module Code	Credits	Level	Module Status	Term
MA Special Subject		30	7	Compulsory	1-2
Research Methods Presentation	HT71021A	30	7	Compulsory	1,2,3
MRes Visual Cultures Dissertation	HT71097B	120	7	Compulsory	3

## Academic support

Support for learning and wellbeing is provided in a number of ways by departments and College support services who work collaboratively to ensure students get the right help to reach their best potential both academically and personally.

All students are allocated a Personal Tutor (one in each department for joint programmes) who has overall responsibility for their individual progress and welfare. Personal Tutors meet with their student at least twice a year either face-to-face, as part of a group and/or electronically. The first meeting normally takes place within the first few weeks of the autumn term. Personal Tutors are also available to students throughout the year of study. These meetings aim to discuss progress on modules, discussion of the academic discipline and reports from previous years if available (for continuing students). This provides an opportunity for progress, attendance and assessment marks to be reviewed and an informed discussion to take place about how to strengthen individual learning and success.

All students are also allocated a Senior Tutor to enable them to speak to an experienced academic member of staff about any issues which are negatively impacting their academic study and which are beyond the normal scope of issues handled by Programme Convenors and Personal Tutors.

Students are provided with information about learning resources, the [Library](#) and information available on [Learn.gold \(VLE\)](#) so that they have access to department/programme handbooks, programme information and support related information and guidance.

Taught sessions and lectures provide overviews of themes, which students are encouraged to complement with intensive reading for presentation and discussion with peers at seminars. Assessments build on lectures and seminars so students are expected to attend all taught sessions to build knowledge and their own understanding of their chosen discipline.

All assessed work is accompanied by some form of feedback to ensure that students' work is on the right track. It may come in a variety of forms ranging from written comments on a

marked essay to oral and written feedback on developing projects and practice as they attend workshops.

Students may be referred to specialist student services by department staff or they may access support services independently. Information about support services is provided on the [Goldsmiths website](#) and for new students through new starter information and induction/Welcome Week. Any support recommendations that are made are agreed with the student and communicated to the department so that adjustments to learning and teaching are able to be implemented at a department level and students can be reassured that arrangements are in place. Opportunities are provided for students to review their support arrangements should their circumstances change. The [Disability](#) and [Wellbeing](#) Services maintain caseloads of students and provide on-going support.

The [Careers Service](#) provides central support for skills enhancement, running [The Gold Award](#) scheme and other co-curricular activities that are accredited via the Higher Education Achievement Report ([HEAR](#)).

The [Academic Skills Centre](#) works with academic departments offering bespoke academic literacy sessions. It also provides a programme of academic skills workshops and one-to-one provision for students throughout the year.

## **Links with employers, placement opportunities and career prospects**

MRes students graduating from the Visual Cultures department go on each year to undertake research degrees in art history, visual culture, cultural studies, performance studies, philosophy and related subjects both in the UK and abroad. Others find employment – again both here and abroad – in the spheres of arts administration, curating, teaching, arts journalism, community arts projects and other museums and galleries work. Some students opt to do a PGCE and go on to teach art / art history in schools and further education colleges. In this way, the department's MRes provision provides for pathways into many institutions of contemporary art and culture at various different levels.

## **The requirements of a Goldsmiths degree**

All taught postgraduate degrees have a minimum total value of 180 credits and involve one calendar year of full-time study. Some programmes may extend over more than one calendar year and, when this is the case, they have a higher total credit value. Programmes are composed of individual modules, each of which has its own credit value. Part-time students normally take modules to the value of 90 credits each year. If a programme has a

part-time pathway, the structure will be set out in the section “How the programme is structured” above. Normally, all modules are at level 7 of the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications.

More detailed information about the structure and requirements of a Goldsmiths degree is provided in the [Goldsmiths Qualifications and Credit Framework](#).

## **Modules**

Modules are defined as:

- “Optional” – which can be chosen from a group of modules
- “Compulsory” – which must be taken as part of the degree

## **Progression**

Some programmes may require students to pass specific modules prior to completion of the dissertation/major project (or equivalent). Additionally, where a programme of study extends beyond one calendar year, students may be required to pass specific modules in their first year of study before progressing to the second year. Where this is the case, these requirements will be set out in this Programme Specification.

## **Award of the degree**

In order to graduate, students must successfully complete all modules specified for the programme, as set out within the section “How the programme is structured” above.

## **Classification**

Final degree classification is calculated on the basis of a student’s mean average mark (based on credit value) across all modules on the programme.

Masters degrees are awarded with the following classifications:

Distinction – 70%+

Merit – 60-69%

Pass – 50-59%

More detail on the [calculation of the final classification](#) is on our website.

## **Interim exit awards**

Some programmes incorporate interim exit points of Postgraduate Certificate and/or Postgraduate Diploma, which may be awarded on the successful completion of modules to the minimum value of 60 credits or 120 credits respectively. The awards are made without classification.

When these awards are incorporated within the programme, the relevant learning outcomes and module requirements will be set out within the “What you will be expected to achieve” section above.

The above information is intended as a guide, with more detailed information available in the [Goldsmiths Academic Manual](#).

## **Programme-specific rules and facts**

### **General programme costs**

In addition to your tuition fees, you will be responsible for meeting standard costs associated with your study. Find out more information at [gold.ac.uk/programme-costs](http://gold.ac.uk/programme-costs).

### **Specific programme costs**

Not applicable.

## **How teaching quality will be monitored**

Goldsmiths employs a number of methods to ensure and enhance the quality of learning and teaching on its programmes.

Programmes and modules are formally approved against national standards and are monitored throughout the year, such as in departmental committees, a variety of student feedback mechanisms and through the completion of module evaluation questionnaires. Every programme has at least one External Examiner who reviews comments annually on the standards of awards and student achievement. External Examiner(s) attend Boards of Examiners meetings and submit an annual written report.

Modules, programmes and/or departments are also subject to annual and periodic review internally, as well as periodic external scrutiny.

Quality assurance processes aim to ensure Goldsmiths' academic provision remains current, that the procedures to maintain the standards of the awards are working effectively and the quality of the learning opportunities and information provided to students and applicants is appropriate.

Detailed information on all these procedures are published on the [Quality Office web pages](#).