

A level Art & Design (Photography Pathway)

Why study Photography?

This course allows learners to develop their photography skills in a number of diverse and experimental ways. This is a creative course, with the emphasis on practical project work, supported by analytical and written elements throughout. You will learn digital photography techniques, digital editing skills in programmes such as Photoshop and learn how to use the photography studio as well as a range of experimental image making techniques.

Why study Photography at Solihull Sixth Form College?

- Learners have gone on to study on some fantastic courses such as Marine and Natural History Photography at Falmouth University, Visual Communication at Hereford College of Arts, Graphic Design at Nottingham Trent University and Media & Communications at University of the Arts, London.
- You will have the opportunity to collaborate on a live brief with a client from the commercial industry, working with a professional photographer, gaining invaluable vocational experience. Recent briefs have come from Mr Simms Olde Sweet Shoppe and Fleur de Lis florists.
- Gallery visits will help inform your contextual investigation and support your ideas generation. In previous years, learners have visited places such as Tate Modern and The Photographer's Gallery. An overseas trip to visit galleries and museums in a major European city is also open to all Visual Arts students.
- Several internal and international competitions will give you the chance to showcase your work throughout the course. Your end of Year 12 and Year 13 final outcomes will be exhibited in the department's end of year exhibition. You will be supported in developing a portfolio of your work throughout the year which will aid your progression to both HE and/or employment.



Case Study

Among the recent successful learners to have taken this course is **Joe Pearce**. He joined the College from Wheelers Lane Technology College and achieved an A* grade in Photography. He has progressed to Falmouth University to study Marine & Natural History Photography.



“The Art block provided a place with a real sense of community. The trips I went on, especially the London two-day field trip, was a lot of fun and provided good experiences. My teacher helped me with the critical thinking side of A level Photography, as I didn't do the subject at GCSE and I had a lot to learn on this aspect of the course.”- student Joe Pearce



Course Outline

Year 12

The specification allows for an introductory, skills based period where learners' work will not be externally assessed.

This is a time for experiencing the opportunity of working with a wide and exciting range of materials, media and processes. You will develop a foundation of skills such as use of a DSLR camera (shutter speed, aperture, DoF, ISO etc.), use of Photoshop (layers, image manipulation techniques etc.) as well as industry based programmes such as Lightroom. You will be supported by your teachers, who will be preparing you for the challenge of the personal investigation project, which you will start later on in the year and continue with in Year 13. You will be introduced to a range of contextual inspirations and will develop skills in research and analysis in order to support your practical investigation.

Year 13

The second year is split into two components; the personal investigation project that will be completed by January, and the externally-set assignment, which runs from the start of February to the handing-in day in the middle of May. Both of these projects will be an opportunity for you to follow a personal direction, building on your individual strengths, interests and future progression goals.

Personal Investigation: The personal investigation project, which is practical by nature, leads to a final piece(s) and is supported by a compulsory written element that links the work of other practitioners to the project. In this component you are in charge and with our support you will produce a portfolio of work that

reflects your strengths and interests. You will be encouraged to work in a variety of ways, exploring fully the subject you have chosen. This component will require you to work within 2 areas of study e.g. Photography with Graphics or Photography with Textiles.

The Externally Set Assignment: Similar to the last component, but working from a series of starting points set by AQA, you will produce a portfolio of work that leads to a final piece(s), produced in exam conditions. This work will be personal to you and can be produced using techniques and materials that you have chosen. Students, by this stage, are independent learners who work alongside the teachers in the department to realise their ambitions and be given support with their chosen progression pathway.

You will be expected to develop your work both during formal lessons and in your own time. The department operates an open door policy, encouraging learners to return during private study time and work independently in the studios. This course can be tailored to your needs and aspirations, providing a first rate grounding for progression to university and/or employment. You will work within just one area of study for this component (Photography).

Assessment

The Personal Investigation (Coursework) - 60%

Externally Set Assignment (Exam) - 40%

Examining Board - AQA

Special Entry Requirements

A GCSE or equivalent qualification at grade 4 or above in Art, Photography, Graphics, Textiles, Design and Technology or Media is essential. However, it is not essential to have studied Photography before. Creative iMedia is not accepted. Learners must be prepared to work hard and have a passion for this subject. A personal approach is encouraged throughout the course and it is expected that learners will work in their own time to independently develop their projects. In addition, standard A level entry requirements apply - www.solihullsf.ac.uk/courses/entry-requirements.

Prohibited Options

Learners can only study on one pathway (Graphics & 3D Design, Photography or Fine Art). For this reason, students interested in 2 or more pathways would be best suited to the BTEC Art & Design Practice course.

What do our learners go on to do?

Learners wishing to go onto an Art or Design career, can progress straight on to specialist degree level courses or in some cases take an Art Foundation course for one year. We are very successful at placing our learners on these courses. We also aim to provide students with relevant employability skills to support progression in the work place. Through the year, ex-students visit to share their experiences of progression both at HE and in employment. We also host a wide range of talks from universities and professionals.

Cost Implications

The College supplies most materials that you will need during your lessons, including DSLR cameras that can also be borrowed outside of lesson time. However, learners will need to buy their own quality inkjet paper, specialist pens and sketchbooks. A Photography Starter Pack is available to buy from the technician which will include some of the items above at cost price. Learners are expected to top up their printer credit regularly, this can be actioned on ParentPay. In both Y12 and Y13, learners are required to attend a compulsory local visit. This ensures all learners are able to experience a gallery/museum setting to develop their practical and contextual understanding. Trips and visits usually cost between £20 and £30. An overseas trip to visit galleries and museums in a major European city is also open to all Visual Arts learners – we have visited many cities including Barcelona, Paris, Madrid and Rome & Florence. This usually costs about £650.

Complementary Subjects or Enrichment Courses

Year 12 learners can join the College's Visual Arts Academy, which is a Qualification Enrichment. This course allows you to focus your Extended Project Qualification (EPQ) on an area of study that is not covered in the A level. Other enrichment options that complement Visual Arts courses include the Student Magazine and the Stretch & Challenge programme.

Examination Results

In the past two years, this course has seen high levels of achievement:

Year	Pass Rate A*-E%	A*-C%
2023	100%	100%
2024	100%	100%

Contact

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