

Professional Practice Policy

1 Relationship to the Learning & Teaching Strategy

The Art School's Learning & Teaching Strategy identifies the focus to: *'prepare our students for professional practice or further study in their chosen field. Our intention is to equip students to meet the current and future challenges of employment, self-employment and continuous professional and academic development in a context of uncertainty and change.'*

2 Terminology

Professional Practice (PP) is the shorthand term used in the Art School for the wide range of activities that our students are engaged in that specifically prepare them for their future careers as practitioners in the arts and crafts.

3 Intent

- 3.1 The Art School sets out to both enhance our students' employability in their chosen field and to prepare them for the challenging nature of employment in the arts. We aim to enable our students to analyse and critically reflect on the professional context of their subject and recognise how best to navigate this individually.
- 3.2 PP is currently embedded in all of the Art School's courses with some strong practice building on the institution's commitment to employing active practitioners as tutors and the vocational emphasis of the majority of our courses. The PP policy reinforces and builds upon current good practice and offers guidelines for curriculum development, revalidation and any future course developments. It places a greater emphasis and awareness on the values of PP teaching across the Art School's courses and intends to raise its profile among staff and students. It aims to promote student understanding of the value of such curriculum elements and with this to enhance student engagement in PP.

3.3 **Scope**

The Art School's courses range from developmental and diagnostic (Foundation) to highly vocational in relation to niche areas of specialist practice (Historic Carving and Conservation) to developmental in relation to a wide range of potential applications (Fine Art).

3.3.1 *Foundation /Level 3*

For Foundation Diploma in Art and Design students PP relates either to future employment in art and/or design or, more commonly, to making applications for the next level of study on an art and/or design course. Documentation, writing applications and portfolio preparation are therefore integral and embedded in the curriculum and are strongly linked with creative practice and critical reflection. These activities are also frequently required for employment in art and design. Where students intend to directly progress to employment individual tutorials will support preparation for specific applications. Personal development planning complements both the intensively taught and more self-directed aspects of the curriculum and enables students to identify their strengths and areas for further development.

3.3.2 *General Higher Education provision*

For UG and PG level courses, while the subjects are specific and discrete there is considerable overlap in the skills required for professionals in each of the three fields of practice. The majority of graduates will need to develop considerable entrepreneurial skills as well as the skills required for working individually and as part of a team. Therefore group and individual projects explore these aspects from the early stages of each course. External projects or working to commission are features of all UG and PG level courses and students are supported to take increasing responsibility for their own learning as courses progress by for example writing project reports, curating external projects, organising materials and managing their own learning through personal development planning.

3.3.3 *Fine Art (HE)*

For Fine Art students PP activities form the interface between creative studio work and the different professional art world contexts and can demand a highly creative approach. Therefore alongside a developing understanding of 'good' professional practice, students will need to develop a research approach to each opportunity and at times build their own bespoke solutions. A focus on skills that are integral to life as a professional artist: such as project management; writing statements, press releases, applications and project reports; managing budgets; sourcing materials; documentation and making presentations will enable students to develop important transferable skills that

equip them for a range of other employment and self-employment contexts.

3.3.4 *Historic Carving*

For Historic Carving students there is some overlap of skillsets with Fine Art, particularly in relation to self-employment. The nature of employment and commission in this specialist subject has its own culture that Historic Carving students must be sensitive too. The course provides opportunities through live commissions and prizes, case studies and taught elements for students to develop knowledge and skills in the particularities of pitching for, negotiating and managing commissions within a heritage context. The management of projects, timescales and budgets is core to PP at both diploma and postgraduate diploma levels and shared teaching is appropriate, offering useful peer group interaction and shared learning.

3.3.5 *Conservation*

The nature of employment for Conservators has changed significantly in recent years with a decrease in Conservation Departments in the Museum sector and greater reliance upon freelance conservators or small-scale conservation practices. The course curriculum is sensitive to these developments and has responded by putting in place activities that support students to navigate the complexities of working to private commission as well as working within, and privately for, Museums and Collections. Activities such as writing treatment proposals and reports, giving presentations on research findings, poster presentations and meetings with clients are all integral to professional working for conservators and teaching by the range of specialist professionals supports students to progressively develop the necessary knowledge, experience and skills they will need for this specialist area of practice.

4 **Professional Practice Policy**

4.1 ***Occurrence***

The relationships between professional practice, creative practice and critical thinking should be a focus of enquiry and discussion at all levels.

4.2 ***Equality & Diversity***

PP activities should be designed and delivered in a way that is accessible to all students no matter what their learning style is or their educational or social background. Where for example a student is not able to participate in an organised live project, a simulated equivalent should be designed to offer an equivalent opportunity for learning.

- 4.3 ***Specificity***
Due to the range of courses, Professional Practice curriculum elements and activities must be sensitive to the individual, the level of study, the nature and range of professional practices related to the subject as well as more generic transferable skills.
- 4.4 ***Visibility***
PP should be both embedded and explicit in the curriculum, clearly mapped for each level with a rationale given so that students can understand the relevance of the activity and make note of their own progress setting goals and targets for themselves.
- 4.5 ***Opportunities***
Preparation for all taught sessions should consider any opportunities for PP elements. For example: A guest practitioner's talk on their own work could include a PP case study or 'top tips' . An off site visit could include discussion about the way that the organisation manages its commissioning process.
- 4.6 ***Iterative***
PP should be iterative – as students progress through their studies, aspects of PP will be revisited. As with any area of skill development and critical development PP activities need to be tested, reviewed and re-tested.
- 4.7 ***Personal development planning***
PP activities should support and compliment students' personal development planning (PDP). PDP and PP should be clearly linked and students should be required to evaluate and update their PDP on a termly basis clearly referencing PP activities and how they plan to build upon their experiences.
- 4.8 ***Live working***
Placements and live projects are recognised as hugely valuable to students at all levels, offering an opportunity for first hand experience and knowledge of PP and providing valuable evidence of professional experience for their resumes. The Art School sets out to support off site projects with explicit guidance and briefing including safe working practices and risk assessment to ensure that students understand their responsibilities to themselves, any co-workers and the wider public.
- 4.9 ***Team work***
PP should encompass team-working to enable students to evaluate their own strengths and particular skills set as part of a team and to test out their own preferred roles within a team, developing team-working skills such as negotiation and communication.

4.10 ***Self-reflection & critique***

PP activities should offer students an opportunity to reflect upon their own learning through for example project report writing or verbal presentations. Reflection is crucial to the learning process, meanwhile project reports of some form are a requirement for many professional and/or funding bodies related to the subjects studied at the art school.

4.11 ***Professional conduct***

PP should introduce students to the professional pace of work. While it is important at a developmental stage that students are given the time to explore, test and learn, it is equally important that on completion of the course they are able to tackle the likely challenges of study at a higher level or the fast pace of work required by commissioner or employer. Time management and self-organisation skills are crucial in the highly competitive context of our subjects.

4.12 ***Financial skills***

PP projects and activities should enable students to develop numeracy, adaptability and budget management skills that will enable them to plan and cost projects realistically and manage their finances effectively.

4.13 ***Learning resources***

PP activities should be complimented by learning resources that students can access in their own time to support their learning, examples include: case studies; guidelines; examples of contracts, budgets, project proposals and reports, risk assessments and project timelines.

4.14 ***Teacher-practitioners***

The Art School's continuing commitment to employ professional practitioners is core to ensuring the richness and currency of our curricula. Our tutors' awareness of the PP policy and its purpose is key to its successful implementation.

5 **Professional Practice Policy Review**

This Policy will be formally reviewed by Academic Board every 5 years. In order to incorporate any changes to national and /or institutional requirements in the interim, it will additionally be reviewed annually by the Principal on behalf of the Academic Board, and any updates reported to Academic Board for formal approval.

NB. The policy was first approved in August 2016 and due to Covid-19 its review has been delayed to academic year 2021/22

