



Royal College of Art
Postgraduate Art & Design

ROYAL COLLEGE OF ART

JOB DESCRIPTION

- Post:** Executive Assistant to the Vice-Chancellor
- Department:** Vice-Chancellor's Office
- Grade:** 9
- Responsible to:** Vice-Chancellor
- Responsible for:** Administrative Assistant grade 4
- Work pattern:** Monday to Friday 9am to 5.30pm. The role holder will be expected to work onsite at least 4 days per week.

Background

The Royal College of Art is the UK's only entirely postgraduate institution of art and design, dedicated to teaching, research and knowledge exchange with industry. The RCA has been ranked the number one university-level institution for art and design, internationally, for the ninth consecutive year according to the QS World University Rankings by Subject, 2023.

The College currently has some 2,700 students registered for Graduate Diploma, MA, MRes, MPhil and PhD degrees, and this is set to rise to 3,300 in coming years with the introduction of the new campus at Battersea during 2022. The majority of postgraduate teaching and research supervision is delivered by the RCA's four Schools: Architecture, Arts and Humanities; Communication; Design, with each School led by a Dean of international standing, and a recognised leader in their field.

In addition, the RCA has a number of established and planned research centres: the Helen Hamlyn Centre for Design; the Material Science Research Centre (which includes the Burberry Materials Futures Research Group and the Textiles Circularity Centre); the Intelligent Mobility Design Centre, Computer Science Research Centre, and a future centre in Drawing. The RCA is also home to one of the UK's most successful university incubators, InnovationRCA.



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Our People

The RCA's Royal Visitor (Patron) is HRH Prince of Wales; its Chancellor is Sir Jony Ive, and the Pro-Chancellor and Chair of Council is Sir Peter Bazalgette. The RCA's Vice-Chancellor - the CEO of the institution - is Dr Paul Thompson. The RCA has more than 500 permanent staff, including internationally renowned artists, designers, architects, theorists and curators. These staff, together with an innovative pedagogy, world-class technical facilities and research centres, all contribute to an exceptional environment and a remarkable record of graduate employment. Generations of eminent graduates have created far-reaching impact and influence, such as Barbara Hepworth, Bridget Riley, David Hockney, Sir Ridley Scott, Sir James Dyson OM, Asif Kapadia, Thomas Heatherwick, Chris Ofili, Tracey Emin, Jake and Dinos Chapman, Christopher Bailey, Idris Khan, Chantal Joffe, Sir David Adjaye, Erdem, Philip Treacey, Monster Chetwynd, Oscar Murillo and Lina Lapelyte.

Strategic Plan 2022–2027

The RCA has developed a new strategic plan with the publication of a new Strategic Vision and Plan for the next five years, and the appointment of our new Chair of Council, Sir Peter Bazalgette.

This plan will embrace the roll out of a new model of delivery for our taught postgraduate programmes to support access and flexibility; it will underscore our commitment to being the world's most research-intensive art and design university; and it will commit to a number of Equity and Diversity goals which will lead towards the RCA becoming an anti-racist institution.

Executive Assistant to the Vice-Chancellor

Purpose of the post:

To direct and manage the Vice-Chancellor's time in the most effective and efficient manner, ensuring that the most pressing and strategic issues are prioritised above issues which should be directed to other members of the senior team. To oversee the work of the Vice-Chancellor's Office, ensuring the provision of a professional and efficient service to the executive and to external and internal stakeholders.

Main Duties and Responsibilities:

- Proactively manage the Vice-Chancellor's inbox, highlighting pressing strategic issues, survey the month and week ahead, and determine what needs to be prioritised and what can be delegated to other members of the senior management team. This will involve proactive and meticulous inbox management of the Vice Chancellor's email account. The post holder will need to become well acquainted with the organisational structure and role holders, so that they can swiftly delegate issues and actions over to the relevant party;



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- Take responsibility for the Vice-Chancellor's diary management, planning and managing their engagement schedule, scheduling often complex and demanding priorities into the week and forward planning the travel schedules for trips overseas, in conjunction with the Development & Alumni Relations and Communications & Marketing teams, and academic staff accompanying the Vice-Chancellor on such trips.
- Ensure that RCA staff provide full, thorough briefings and papers for forthcoming meetings at least 48 hours in advance, and ensure that sufficient time is devoted in the diary for the Vice-Chancellor to read and digest this information.
- Act as a conduit for instructions, information and queries upwards to Directors or Deans, taking decisions on behalf of the Vice Chancellor, where appropriate. As such, the individual speaks on behalf of the Vice Chancellor and must reflect this in an appropriate tone and authority with colleagues.
- Proofread, and draft as appropriate, the Vice-Chancellor's outgoing correspondence. Provide oversight of all correspondence and communication in and out of the Vice-Chancellor's Office..
- Take minutes - at meetings when required, in particular but not confined to, the fortnightly College Executive Group meetings, chaired by the Vice Chancellor
- Work closely with the Communications & Marketing team, particularly on the first and final drafts of internal communications from the Vice-Chancellor.
- Keep abreast of both external developments in the Higher Education and arts and design sectors and internal College activities, ensuring the Vice-Chancellor is briefed and has up to date information from the appropriate sources: this may be an external agency/consultant focussed on Public and Government Affairs; the head of international partnerships at the RCA; an academic; a member of the Universities UK team; or a member of the external comms team.
- Work closely with the Governance team (College Secretary and the Governance Officer) to ensure the effective sequencing of executive and non-executive governance committees and ensure that the Vice Chancellor is fully briefed on what papers he is required to write or present well in advance of their due date. Ensure that the papers are circulated in draft form to members of the College Executive group before finally being submitted to the Governance Officer.
- Manage the Vice-Chancellor's Office travel, hospitality, and general expenses budget.

The EA and Vice-Chancellor's Office are supported by an Administrative Assistant (Grade 4).

The EA to the Vice Chancellor will share an office space with the following core members of the VCO and Secretariat:

PA to the Deputy Vice-Chancellor
The Governance Officer
The College Secretary
The Business Operations Manager
VCO Administrative Assistant



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and will work in close coordination with them, ensuring an effective set of briefing and debriefing protocols as issues progress from working groups to committees to the executive board and then non-executive board levels

The EA and PAs cover for each other during periods of annual leave in a seamless and efficient manner. It is important that a strong relationship is built with these co-workers working in synchronised and harmonious fashion, handling and sharing highly confidential material as well as routine tasks. The EA and PAs will among themselves assign particular duties to each other regarding such issues as stationery orders, housekeeping needs, shared travel arrangements for when the Deputy Vice-Chancellor and Vice-Chancellor are travelling together, room bookings etc.

Person Profile:

This role will require a confident, highly organised and experienced individual to take control of diaries, manage workflow, action emails, and keep track of actions and deadlines to ensure the most effective use of the Vice Chancellor's time. Uppermost in their mind will be the question: *'Is this something that the Vice Chancellor really needs to see or do? Would it be better delegated by me to another member of staff?'*

The postholder will need to be unflappable when working to tight deadlines and also be able to multitask, anticipating needs and juggling competing priorities. They will need strong personal resilience and to thrive on reactive challenges. They will have excellent judgement, strong influencing and communication skills and the ability to manage competing demands. They will need to understand both the HE sector and RCA and its constituent parts, or be able to pick this up very quickly.

The postholder will be dealing with highly confidential materials, relating to HR, finance, governmental affairs, and matters relating to Council, the College's governing body. They must remain discreet and wholly professional when working with colleagues and maintain absolute confidentiality over such matters.

- A strong work ethic that takes pride and satisfaction in completing an assignment to a high standard.
- Strong team skills, working with a range of individuals across the RCA.
- A diplomatic manner that calms, reassures, and inspires confidence.
- Resilient and able to manage workload in a demanding and pressurised environment.
- Gravitas, authority, and the ability to maintain total confidentiality at all times; high degree of initiative and sound judgement
- The ability to be clear, precise - and, on occasion, firm - when conveying a particular priority either to a Director, Dean or a member of their teams to whom the EA will have delegated a task on behalf of the Vice Chancellor.
- The ability to handle administrative setbacks and problem solve in a calm and professional manner.



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- The ability to handle competing priorities and determine what must be dealt with 'now' and what can perhaps be parked or delegated, until a quieter moment.
- The ability to identify, categorise, and assign the appropriate task to the appropriate person. This will typically refer to email in-box management. The EA will have the confidence and sound judgement to determine what is a circular; what is personal; what is urgent but worthy of delegation and what really does need the VC's attention. .
- Experience of proofreading and excellent attention to detail; the ability, developed over time, to ghost write letters for the Vice-Chancellor.
- An interest to learn more about creative education and the higher education environment and an alignment to the values of a postgraduate arts and design university.

Person Specification:

Essential:

- Significant experience as a PA / EA supporting at CEO, COO, Vice Chancellor, or Deputy Vice Chancellor level with experience of the dynamics between the executive and non-executive boards. Excellent interpersonal and relationship building skills.
- The ability to communicate with people at all levels, from government officials, major donors and prominent alumni, through to lay members of Council (the RCA's governing body), foreign dignitaries, and distinguished artists, designers, patrons of the arts etc.
- The ability to pre-empt, take initiative, and to delegate or transfer tasks and requests to the appropriate department in an efficient and timely manner.
- Line management experience.
- Full digital literacy, with a knowledge of Microsoft Office and Apple programmes, InDesign, and Google Suite. Training will be provided in College systems but the post holder will be expected to arrive with a very proficient experience of using a wide range of digital systems.
- Detailed understanding of standards around managing, protecting and re-using information, including information security, GDPR best practice and data protection principles.
- Significant experience in acting as secretary to executive meetings, including taking formal minutes, tracking and chasing actions or RAG rated Action Logs in advance, and drafting papers and reports.

Desirable:

- Experience of working in Higher Education and an understanding of the UK university landscape, regulation and governance would be very beneficial for this role.

Additional Information:

- Normal hours total 35 hours per week, Monday to Friday, and there is an expectation for the post holder to work such hours as are reasonable and necessary for the proper



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performance duties and responsibilities. The post holder is required to work at least four days per week in the office, including Tuesdays.

- Days and times of work may vary due to operational needs, subject to consultation and there may be the requirement to attend evening events on occasion.
- Salary is reflective of the high workload and on-campus presence: £49,331-£55,089 per annum inclusive of London Weighting Allowance
- The successful applicant will be appointed to the first increment on the advertised pay grade. Thereafter and subject to satisfactory performance, the role holder will be eligible for an annual increment each year, normally with effect from 1 August.
- 25 days annual leave plus extended breaks at Christmas and Easter, when the College is closed.
- The Royal College of Art is a member of the Superannuation Arrangements of the University of London (SAUL) which is a contributory defined benefit pension scheme. The college will contribute a sum equal to 19% of your salary while you pay 6%.

March 2023



PAY & BENEFITS

Pension

The Royal College of Art is a member of the Superannuation Arrangements of the University of London (SAUL) which is a contributory defined benefit pension scheme. The college will contribute a sum equal to 19% of your salary while you pay 6%.

Holiday

5 weeks (25 days) paid leave a year plus bank and public holidays normally observed in England and Wales. In addition, the college is normally closed for six days a year, one day either side of Easter and the remainder between Christmas and New Year, at the discretion of the college. Part-time staff will be entitled to the pro rata equivalent.

Season ticket loans

Interest-free loans are available for staff to purchase annual season tickets.

Enhanced maternity and adoption pay

Qualifying employees are entitled to enhanced maternity/adoption pay: 26 weeks' full pay, 13 weeks Statutory Maternity/Adoption Pay. This compares to the statutory provision of 90% of average pay for 6 weeks followed by Statutory Maternity/Adoption Pay for 33 weeks.

Enhanced paternity pay

Qualifying employees are entitled to two weeks' paternity leave entitlement at full pay. This compares to the statutory provision of two weeks' pay at the statutory rate.

Enhanced sick pay

Occupational sick pay after six months' service is three months' full pay/three months' half pay.

24/7 confidential support

Staff and family members in their household have access to a free, external confidential support service for work, financial, legal, family and personal problems 24 hours a day, 365 days a year.

Occupational health

Occupational Health support for the College is provided by Imperial College's occupational health service at their South Kensington Campus.

Cycle to Work Scheme

The Royal College of Art has signed up to the Cycle to Work Scheme – part of the government's Green Transport Initiative – which allows employees to make significant savings on purchasing new bikes and safety equipment.



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Life Cover

Active members of the SAUL pension scheme automatically receive life cover. A lump sum of four times your salary together with a refund of your contributions and a 2/3 pension for your dependent/spouse is payable should you die whilst in employment.

Library

All staff are welcome to join the college library.

Events

All staff are welcome to attend exhibitions, lectures and private views held by academic schools and programmes.