RCA

Project Officer: Robotics & AI
May 2025

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Photo: Richard Haughton

WELCOME TO THE RCA

Photo: Iwan Baan

· Founded in 1837, the Royal College of Art is the world's largest community of postgraduate art and design students. It is also the oldest art and design university in continuous operation and has been ranked as the world's number one art and design university for a remarkable eleven consecutive years, according to the QS World University Rankings by Subject 2025 – the worldwide survey of academic and industry opinion.

The RCA is research-led and recognised in the UK-wide REF (Research Excellence Framework) as the UK's most research-intensive institution – with an increased proportion of the College's outputs classed as 'internationally excellent' and 'world-leading' in the most recent REF assessment of 2021.

Studying at the RCA is the starting point for the world's creative leaders. With more than 25,000 RCA alumni across the globe, the RCA's graduates form a unique international network of artists, designers, creators, and innovators. Every year, RCA alumni are recognised as leaders in their discipline, making national and international headlines for their work, which shapes the world we live in. Its graduate start-up incubator, InnovationRCA, is one of the most successful in the country with a high proportion of female start-up founders and a high 'survival' percentage after five years of trading.

More than 2,800 students are spread across four schools and research and academic departments, studying at Graduate Diploma, MA, MFA, MDes, MArch, MEd, MRes, MPhil and PhD levels. The College's mix of professionalism and creative freedom, together with its renowned academic community and rigorous academic framework provides the ecosystem in which students flourish and achieve their highest potential.

Photo: Richard Haughton

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 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.

The RCA espouses a hybrid approach, supporting 'traditional' making and technical skills in fine and applied art and design alongside the foundational sciences, engineering and technology which underpin designers' ability to solve today's global challenges. The RCA champions the value of interdisciplinary learning and was the first art and design university in the world to implement a STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Art and Design and Mathematics) academic vision, with investment in new faculty posts in Materials Science; Computer Science and Robotics alongside art and design disciplines. By applying creative insights to evidence-based science, its staff, students, researchers and start-ups are addressing major global challenges such as rapid urbanisation and transport; loss of biodiversity; ageing populations; unsustainable consumption and production; and the rise of AI.

Our Strategy

The RCA's strategic vision is to increase its influence on the world stage of globally ranked universities, punching significantly above its weight, and attracting, supporting and convening the world's most talented faculty, students, artists, designers and creative leaders. For more information on The RCA's Strategic Plan 2022–27, please click on this link: Strategic Plan 2022–27.

Photo: Richard Haughton

The role of Royal Visitor to the RCA was taken on by The former Prince of Wales – now His Majesty The King – in 2018. The announcement of HM The King's retained Patronage of the RCA marks the first anniversary of Their Majesties' Coronation. As part of the official Coronation Concert in May 2023, the Royal College of Art along with The Royal Ballet, The Royal Opera, the Royal Shakespeare Company, and the Royal College of Music came together for the first time ever to create a spectacular one-off performance, with a striking visual backdrop of specially-designed artworks contributed by students from the Royal College of Art.

The RCA's Chancellor is Sir Jony Ive, and the Pro-Chancellor and Chair of Council is Sir Peter Bazalgette (please see link to Council independent members' biographies). The RCA's President & Vice-Chancellor – the CEO of the institution – is Professor Christoph Lindner who joined the College in April 2024.

The RCA's academic faculty bring world-leading expertise and industry knowledge to the practice-based model of teaching. There is a core academic and research workforce of 196 FTE, supported by around 215 Associate Lecturers and a wide range of Guest Lecturers who bring 'live' industry experience into the taught curriculum – for example, Amin Taha of GrantOn design, whose work was twice shortlisted for the RIBA Stirling Prize, in 2017 and 2021, teaches in the School of Architecture; and Yao Yingjia, who is Vice President and Chief Designer at Lenovo teaches in the School of Design.

The RCA combines contemporary and industry-focused teaching perspectives. It also employs a team of 95 highly skilled technicians, many of whom themselves have postgraduate qualifications in their fields of specialism, which range from rapid prototyping and subtractive manufacturing to film and sound engineering, and from digital modelling to metal fabrication and jewellery making.

Our Values

Photo: Shaun James

The RCA community operates in line with four agreed values:

Curiosity

We have a tenacious commitment to innovation and openness to change. We positively interrogate ideas, assumptions and plans and welcome the honest scrutiny that is alive in a learning community.

Inclusion

We celebrate diversity and embrace difference as a source of strength. We strive for an inclusive RCA community, removing barriers and challenging exclusionary and discriminatory practices.

Collaboration

We value what happens together and we help and support each other to achieve our collective goals. We work in partnership with our students, staff, alumni, institutions and communities across the globe to make a lasting difference.
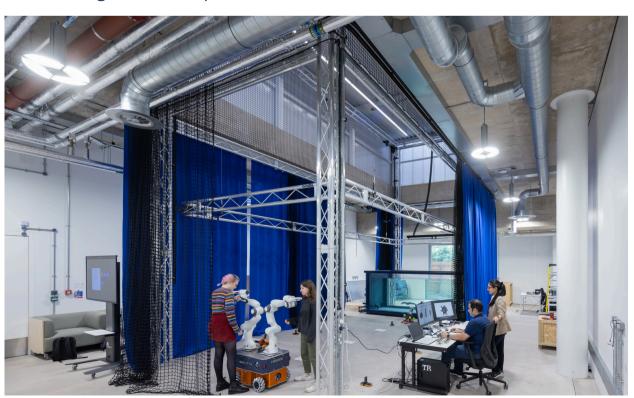
Integrity

We are always willing to listen, we offer constructive feedback and we promote accountability, building relationships of mutual trust and respect. We are resilient in the face of challenges, pursuing outcomes with individual, cultural, societal and economic impact.

School of Design

The School of Design at the RCA offers programmes that engage with a broad spectrum of design, ranging from industry-focused projects and collaborations with engineering and science to experimental and theoretical explorations. With a strong culture of innovation, experimentation, and debate, the School also offers research degrees at MPhil and PhD levels, enabling researchers to undertake deep exploration and develop a comprehensive understanding of topics such as industrial design, service design, systems thinking, sustainable production, and robotics. Through these programmes, researchers and students are equipped to address complex technological and societal issues with innovative, industry-relevant solutions. The School also offers a range of renowned MA programmes, including the MA/MSc in Innovation Design Engineering, delivered in partnership with Imperial College London. These programmes attract students from diverse academic and professional backgrounds, fostering a collaborative environment for tackling complex global challenges through design and engineering.

RCA Robotics Laboratory:

Established in 2017, the RCA Robotics Laboratory is a leading research hub at the Royal College of Art, dedicated to advancing robotics through interdisciplinary collaboration across design, engineering, and experimental sciences. Led by the College's Academic Leader in Robotics, the lab's mission is to develop advanced robotic systems that enhance human safety, accessibility, and efficiency in industrial and challenging environments while promoting environmental sustainability. Located on the Battersea campus in central London, the lab features state-of-the-art facilities for designing, prototyping, and testing a diverse portfolio of robotic systems, from aerial robots and ground-based platforms to underwater robots.

Drawing inspiration from both natural and artistic realms, the lab adopts a unique, design-led approach to robotics, integrating creative insights with cutting-edge scientific methodologies. This approach not only drives technological sophistication but also ensures that robotic solutions are environmentally friendly and human-centric, addressing complex operational needs in diverse settings.

The lab has secured substantial funding for several high-impact projects as PI or Co-I, including the £4 million Innovate UK-funded MIMRee project, which developed intelligent robotic systems for offshore wind turbine blade maintenance; the EPSRC-funded Getting a Grip, advancing anchoring systems for robot mobility and manipulation; and the Interoperability in Robotics and Autonomous Systems Proving Ground, focused on advancing robotics standards and enhancing system integration. Other notable initiatives include Haptic Illusion and Topographies of Pain, supported by MedTech SuperConnector, and Artificial Intelligence in Design Lab, a collaboration with Hong Kong Polytechnic University.

A new initiative is the Circular Robot 5.0 project, an EPSRC-funded project that leverages AI-driven predictive maintenance, blockchain traceability, and comprehensive life-cycle assessments to promote a circular economy in industrial robotics.

Through these projects, the RCA Robotics Laboratory continues to push the boundaries of what is possible in design-led robotics, shaping the future of intelligent systems and contributing to a safer, more accessible, and sustainable world.

Project Description: Circular Robot 5.0: Circular Robot 5.0: Industry-Wide Data-Driven Circular Economy of Industrial Robots is a £1.9 million EPSRC-funded research project led by the RCA Robotics Laboratory in collaboration with co-investigators from Loughborough University, King's College London, UCL, and the Manufacturing Technology Centre (MTC), and industry partners such as NVIDIA, OMRON, ASTM International, Katlas Technology, Wootzano, and Inovo Robotics. The project aims to extend the lifespan of industrial robots through the integration of AI, blockchain, and intelligent lifecycle management.

The UK is set to dramatically increase the deployment of industrial robots (IRs), with a projected 40% annual growth in the sector from 2020 to 2030. This presents both an opportunity and a challenge as the rapid scaling of robotic systems could result in substantial waste and resource depletion, due to frequent decommissioning. Circular Robot 5.0 addresses these challenges by:

1. Prolonging the operational life of IRs, thereby reducing the need for repairs or replacements.
2. Facilitating remanufacturing and circular use of critical raw materials.
3. Developing a digitally-enabled end-of-life management system for IRs. This system aims to predict future IR failure scenarios, promote industry-wide collaboration, and enhance operational efficiency and resilience.
4. Implementing a proactive, data-driven lifecycle maintenance approach that is cost-efficient, optimizes equipment performance, and ensures environmental sustainability.
5. Ensuring early intervention and informed decisions regarding IR recovery processes using real-time metrics and Life Cycle data.

Project Officer: Robotics and AI

A highly talented and experienced professional is sought for a Project Officer position on the project to closely work with the Academic Leader, projects researchers and other members of Circular Robot 5.0 consortium, as well as RCA Robotics Lab's existing and new PhD students and staff. The lab provides a design-led disruptive research environment for the development of new approaches to innovation in robotics. The Project officer will form a key research role within the Circular Robot 5.0 consortium and the RCA Robotics Laboratory, supporting timely delivery of project milestones and the overall outcomes.

Purpose of the Post:

The Project Officer will be an enthusiastic professional with experience in supporting and managing consortium research project in HEI's or industry; ideally with background and experience in robotics and artificial intelligence.

The postholder will work closely with the Project Lead (Dr Sina Sareh) and assist him to lead and manage the project. This will require coordinating and managing the project consortium to ensure delivery of the overall project outcomes within the budget and schedule. The postholder will contribute to research activities to support the project in creating impact. The postholder will support the lead in promoting and disseminating the project and developing new partnerships and preparing new funding proposals.

Main Duties and Responsibilities:

- The postholder will support the Project Lead in managing the project by developing detailed activity plans, project schedules (e.g., Gantt charts), and monitoring progress to ensure that all project outcomes are delivered on time and within budget, with a clear focus on maximizing research impact.
- Use project management tools, processes and procedures, to ensure that project decisions made are well-informed and justified.
- Provide proactive and efficient project support and coordination to all members of the consortium.
- Perform administrative tasks and co-ordination amongst the project consortium and with RCA's supporting team (finance, admin, research office etc.).
- Organise, coordinate and facilitate meetings and events for the consortium, including consortium and regular team meetings. This may include venue and catering arrangements, speaker and attendee liaison, preparation and distribution of papers, and reproduction of materials.
- Monitor project progress against the requirements of the award.
- Liaise with project partners to ensure effective communication.
- Report on project progress, status and issues on a regular basis to the project consortium.
- Manage and co-ordinate outsourced activities to ensure compliance with award requirements.
- Assist the Project Lead to prepare project reports, grant applications and presentations.
- Coordinate marketing communication, project promotion and dissemination.
- Supporting the Project Lead to actively promote the project at events and contribute to project visibility through engaging updates on social media.
- Support research activities, e.g. the facilitation of workshops, interviews, user research, prototyping and community engagement.

Main Duties and Responsibilities (cont)

- Ensure appropriate College procedures and protocols are in place and followed. Conduct all financial matters associated with the role in accordance with the RCA's policies and procedures, as laid down in the financial regulations.
- Providing support and tutorials to relevant student projects that contribute to the delivery of the overall project outcomes.
- Communicate effectively with and develop strong professional relationships with relevant staff across the College and with external stakeholders.
- Assist with overseeing and mentoring staff engaged in the project, ensuring they are equipped to contribute effectively to the project and deliver agreed outputs within agreed timescales, and are undertaking work at an appropriate level.
- Monitor project evaluation and risks with the PI to ensure outcomes are being met and risks managed.
- Work closely with project partners which may require traveling to partner locations.
- Maintain confidentiality of all data during and after the project end date and adhere to data protection regulations throughout the research process; respect the confidentiality of data in accordance with the Data Protection Act and RCA policies.
- Ensure that all research activities comply with health and safety regulations and guidelines.
- Foster a research culture that upholds best practices in research ethics, integrity, and data management, ensuring compliance with funding body processes and RCA guidelines.

Person Specification

Essential experience and skills:

- A good first degree (or equivalent) in a relevant subject area to the project, or have equivalent experience in a relevant subject area, with evidence of strong intellectual and analytical skills.
- Experience working at a relevant level in project management or officer or coordinator capacity, or similar, using project management principles.
- Knowledge of Robotics and Artificial Intelligence.
- Experience working with funded research projects (or similar), preferably involving HE/industry collaborations in a relevant field, including understanding award requirements and ensuring compliance with funding terms and conditions.
- Proven interpersonal and communication skills with a high degree of tact and diplomacy, able to deal with internal and external contacts, as well as senior academic staff, appropriately.
- Be aware of the risks in the work environment and the relevant Health & Safety issues.
- Willingness to travel to partner locations for joint workshops or meetings or other events within the UK
- Experience of working across different disciplines and knowledge of broad practice of research and innovation.
- Experience with marketing planning for print, website, social media and internal systems.
- High level of digital literacy and IT skills including productivity suites (Microsoft Office, Google for work), Web/Internet use and project management systems.
- Detailed understanding of standards around managing, protecting and reusing information, including information security best practice and data protection principles.
- Ability to be creative and innovative, using initiative and work as part of a team.
- Ability to deal positively and constructively with change and to juggle conflicting priorities.
- Demonstrable commitment to diversity and equality of opportunity with the ability to work harmoniously with colleagues and students of all cultures and backgrounds.
- Experience of influencing and collaborating constructively with colleagues at all levels.

Photo: Iwan Baan

Person Specification

Desirable experience and skills:

- PhD or an equivalent industrial experience in robotics, artificial intelligence, or a relevant area.
- Experience and relevant subject knowledge in intelligent sensing, cloud computing, hardware and software integration, testing and validation of results.
- Experience of publishing research outputs in credible journals of engineering, or within high impact interdisciplinary journals.

Pay & Benefits

Additional Information:

- Responsible to: Academic Leader in Robotics
- Full time salary: Grade 7 - £44,059 - £47,586 per annum including London Allowance.
- 0.2 FTE, 7 hours per week, fixed term until 31 March 2028.
- 27 days annual leave plus extended breaks at Christmas and Easter, at the discretion of the College. Pro rata for part time employees
- A contributory defined benefit pension scheme and interest-free season ticket loan are available
- Location: Battersea, London, UK
- Department: School of Design, Robotics

Application Process:

To apply, please submit a CV, cover letter, and two recent publications through the RCA recruitment portal. For informal enquiries, please contact the Academic Leader in Robotics, Dr. Sina Sareh, at [sina.sareh@rca.ac.uk].

Photo: Philip Vale

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 16% of your salary while you pay 6%.

Holiday
27 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 on either side of Easter and the remainder between Christmas and New Year. 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 six weeks' paternity leave entitlement at full pay.

Enhanced sick pay
Occupational sick pay after three 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.

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.

<u>Equality, diversity and inclusion - Disability and neurodiversity</u>
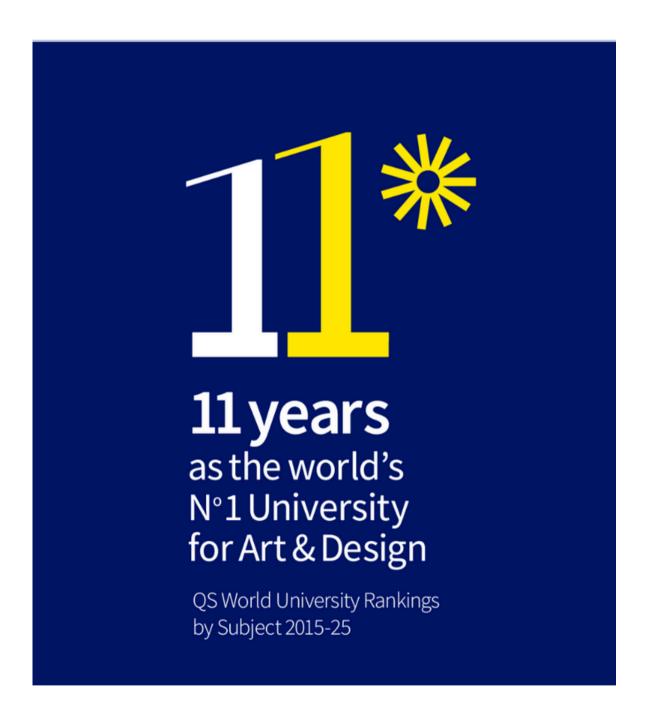
Disability Confident

RCA is a Disability Confident Committed employer. You may recognise the logo from our job adverts.

Disability Confident is a government scheme designed to encourage employers to recruit, retain, and develop disabled people. RCA was originally awarded the Disability Confident certificate in October 2022, which broadens and deepens our existing commitment as an employer.

As a Disability Confident Committed employer, we commit to the below core activities:
- ensure our recruitment process is inclusive and accessible
- communicating and promoting vacancies
- offering an interview to disabled people who meet the minimum criteria for the job
- anticipating and providing reasonable adjustments as required
- supporting any existing employee who acquires a disability or long-term health condition, enabling them to stay in work
- at least one activity that will make a difference for disabled people

11*

11 years
as the world's
N°1 University
for Art & Design

QS World University Rankings
by Subject 2015-25

Together, the RCA community can generate change now for a sustainable future everywhere.