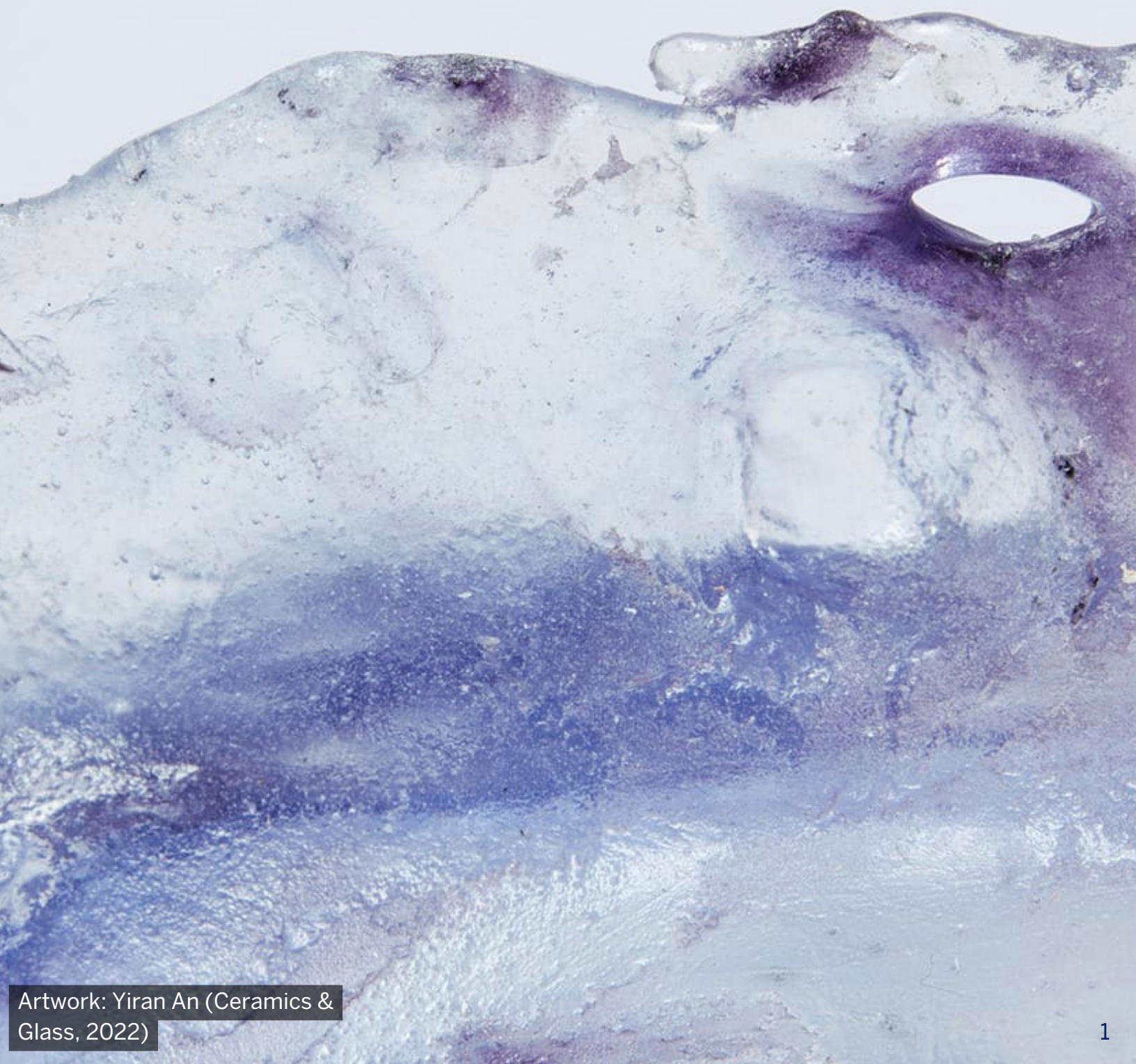


RCA

Postdoctoral Researcher September 2026



Artwork: Yiran An (Ceramics & Glass, 2022)

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Photo: Richard Haughton

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WELCOME TO THE RCA



Photo: Iwan Baan

Founded in 1837, the Royal College of Art is the world's largest postgraduate-only community of art and design students. It has been ranked number one in the world 12 consecutive years (QS World University Rankings by Subject 2015-2026).

Studying at the RCA is the starting point for UK and global creative leaders. With more than 30,000 RCA alumni all over the world, the College's graduates form a diverse international network of artists, designers, creators and innovators.

Around 2,500 students are spread across three schools – Architecture, Arts & Humanities, Communication & Design - and in the RCA's Research Centres. The College creates an environment that champions exploration, collaboration and interdisciplinary learning - using art and design to reframe the possibilities of the humanities, technology, and ethics; and equipping graduates for new futures and opportunities

Research is at the heart of the RCA's impact. In active discussion with the world, the College brings interdisciplinary researchers and partners together in vital areas such as climate and sustainability, technology and society, and leads the field in practice-based research. As a result, the RCA is ranked as one of the most research-intensive specialist art and design universities in the UK [under the Research Excellence Framework 2014 and 2021].



Photo: Richard Haughton

The RCA champions exploration, collaboration and interdisciplinary learning - using art and design to reframe the possibilities of the humanities, technology, and ethics. We experiment, question and discover, putting research and practice at our heart, to equip students for new futures and opportunities and build on current knowledge.

Current 'real world' practices of our disciplines are fully integrated into our teaching delivery and student learning. The RCA model also consciously uses both the high research active levels of faculty, and the absence of undergraduate provision, to provide concentration and focus, in order to use research to creatively 'disrupt' the learning experience.

Our People



Photo: Richard Haughton

The strength of the RCA lies in its people: our students, academic community, researchers, technical specialists, professional services teams and our global network of alumni and partners.

The RCA's Chancellor is Sir Jony Ive, one of the world's most influential designers. The Pro-Chancellor and Chair of Council is Sir Peter Bazalgette, and the President & Vice-Chancellor — the College's Chief Executive — is Professor Christoph Lindner, who joined the RCA in 2024.

The RCA's academic faculty bring world-leading expertise and industry knowledge to the College's model of teaching. All faculty are actively engaged in their relevant industries and professional practice beyond academia, and the RCA is the only specialist art and design university where all of our permanent academic staff are also research active and included in the RCA's submissions to the UK Research Excellence Framework.

The RCA has a total academic and research workforce of over 400 people, which includes Associate Lecturers, Visiting Professors and Guest Lecturers who bring 'live industry' experience into the taught curriculum

The RCA also employs a team of over 100 highly skilled technicians, many of whom themselves have postgraduate qualifications and are well established and recognised practitioners in their fields of specialism. Our skilled technical staff and technical resources are integral to delivering an interdisciplinary approach which is a key part of the student experience.



OUR STRATEGIC DIRECTION: TOWARDS THE RCA AT 200 (2026–2030)

The RCA's new Strategic Plan sets out a transformational five-year phase as we begin our journey towards our bicentenary in 2037. Our ambition is to become the world's most influential art and design community, with a global footprint and a renewed approach to research, education, partnerships and organisational culture.

By 2030:

- The College will operate across two revitalised central London campuses, including a reimagined Darwin Building at Kensington.
- We will establish research and education hubs outside the UK for the first time.
- We will strengthen our global partnerships, increase access to scholarships and widen participation for students from all backgrounds.
- We will be recognised for leadership in emerging creative technologies, especially AI, and for our contribution to sustainability, regenerative practice and public good.

Our work is underpinned by the RCA's four values — Collaboration, Curiosity, Inclusion and Integrity — and by commitments to long-term resilience, financial sustainability, staff and student wellbeing, and a culture where creativity and innovation thrive.



The College's ambitions will be delivered through three Strategic Pillars:

Strategic Pillar One

Creating and delivering the best art and design education, dialogue and research.

Strategic Pillar Two

Championing a community with outstanding potential who are diverse, inclusive and connected.

Strategic Pillar Three

Convening transformational exchanges of art and design expertise and ideas.

Our Values



Photo: Shaun James

The RCA community operates in line with four agreed values:



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.



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.



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.



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.

Centre for Materials Science & Culture

Research in the Centre for Materials Science & Culture (CMSC) focuses on the invention and the experience of materials and how these are framed by novel materials systems innovation to address the challenges of environmental sustainability and human health and wellbeing.

CMSC has led a portfolio of UK Research & Innovation and internationally funded research in the areas of circular economy, biomanufacturing textiles from waste, sustainable digital society, materials experience and AI.

Significantly, the CMSC led the UKRI Interdisciplinary Textiles Circularity Centre (TCC) programme, one of five centres funded by the UKRI National Interdisciplinary Circular Economy Research strategic initiative. The aim of TCC was to demonstrate a transformation pathway to establish a culture of circular economy for the UK apparel-textiles industry by adding environmental, economic, social, and technical value to biowaste as it flows from recycling of waste, production of textiles, to consumption and reuse of apparel.

Circular Design Toolbox proof of concept project

The Circular Design Toolbox (CDT) project is funded by the UKRI Translation: Proof of Concept 2026 scheme. The Circular Design Toolbox was developed from the research of the Textiles Circularity Centre into circular design strategies including: Materials Circularity to innovate circular bio-based textiles (resulting in the Circular Materials Design Toolkit and the Maintaining Materials Toolkit); Consumer Experience to position these materials in circular experiences that slow down consumption by satiating human wellbeing needs (resulting in the Circular Experience Toolkit); and Circular Supply Chains which put these strategies into a relationship in the form of a local supply chain design (resulting in the Circular System Toolkit).

The aim of this 9-month proof of concept (POC) project is to translate the CDT into a commercially deployable service proposition ready for licensing, pilots and seed investment. To realise this aim, the overarching objectives are (1) to develop and evaluate one pilot programme with Two Lives London and their supply chain partners, in order to (2) produce a set of case studies that would enable us to identify and specify a full commercialisation proposition including an IP licensing framework, and 3) to develop a minimum viable digital platform prototype to demonstrate scalable CDT delivery.

UK apparel brands, municipalities, Business Improvement Districts (BIDs), and the emerging Producer Responsibility Organisation (PRO) ecosystem require practical, implementation-ready tools to design products, procurement and consumer experiences that qualify for lower fees and capture the upside of this EPR fees pool. The POC addresses this policy need.

Purpose of the Post:

The purpose of the postdoctoral researcher post is to contribute to the design and technical operations of pilot delivery and commercial validation, as follows:

A facilitated pilot programme will be delivered with our partner, Two Lives London, and their clients and supply chain in London and Portugal. The pilot will be formally evaluated against pre-agreed baseline metrics (e.g. EPR fee band, contamination rate, circular procurement score) to generate quantified, publishable case-study evidence.

This pilot programme will include establishing the Circular Design Hub, prototyped by TCC as the Regenerative Fashion Hub, which will operate as a place-based dissemination, engagement and validation vehicle, in a high-street location for the duration of the POC. In the Hub, we will host workshops with our partner and associated supply chain stakeholders, create physical demonstrators for case implementations, prototype ways to communicate value to different stakeholders, and engage the community for feedback on the digital platform and associated indicators. We will also host engagement activities and workshops with other user segments we identified in a previous market assessment study, such as with Business Improvement Districts. The Hub will provide public validation of softer wellbeing indicators that industry and policy audiences can operationalise as metrics, while also building partnerships for next-stage commercialisation. Through doing this, we will continue to build partnerships to undertake next stage commercialisation activities.

This role is essential for managing the high-street Circular Design Hub, facilitating co-design workshops, and gathering qualitative and quantitative data needed to build evidence packs to produce a full commercialisation proposition.

In addition, the postholder will contribute to prototyping the Digital Platform in the Circular Design Hub through gathering requirements from stakeholders and co-creating prototypes.

The postholder will work closely with the team in the Centre for Materials Science & Culture, the consultancy Arcade Advisory Ltd (Bruno de Penanster), and InnovationRCA.



Main Duties and Responsibilities

Main Duties and Responsibilities:

- To undertake high-quality, rigorous, and collaborative applied research which leads to robust outcomes.
- In collaboration with team members, to manage the award, ensuring execution of proposed research, efficient management of resources, and effective delivery of research outcomes and impacts.
- To work with academic, industry and third sector partners on collaborative research and knowledge exchange projects.
- To support engagement with partnering companies and initiatives, undertaking collaborative research projects and contributing to working relationships to maintain a productive partnership.
- To produce and disseminate research outputs that are effectively shared with the world through appropriate channels (for example books, peer-reviewed journals, conferences) to the discipline.



Main Duties and Responsibilities

- To produce research outputs that are suitable for submission to the national Research Excellence Framework (REF) exercise, with a quality of at least 3* as per the REF definition.
- To support communication of research outcomes to a wide variety of audiences, including through public engagement, tailoring content and style to a broad range of specialist and non-specialist audiences.
- To participate in relevant academic, industry, government and policy networks as appropriate, presenting the work of, and representing, the Centre.
- To participate in Centre team meetings and activities, events and workshops, contributing ideas for development, delivery and promotion of projects, and to communicate insights to the consortium.
- Where appropriate, to support the delivery of Executive Education courses and workshops.
- To conduct all research reflecting best practice in ethics, integrity, research data management, and research governance, ensuring compliance with RCA policies and external funding terms and conditions and sector standards.
- To ensure compliance with RCA processes and procedures in relation to procurement and use of equipment and facilities, including health and safety policies, working with relevant departments across RCA.
- To ensure confidentiality of sensitive project information is maintained, through appropriate project data protection.
- To undertake general administrative and other tasks relevant as part of the team's and the Centre's work, as required by senior staff.



Essential:

- The successful candidate must be able to demonstrate at least one of the following:
 - a PhD degree related to circular design innovation in the circular economy, preferably in the area of apparel/textiles; or
 - equivalent experience in a different sector; or
 - a Masters degree and significant experience in research projects.
- Subject knowledge: Core knowledge in design (industrial, apparel, product); in addition to knowledge in apparel-textiles; circular design innovation and strategies; systems design and related strategies.
- Experience with circular design approaches related to apparel or product design.
- Experience of working in research and research projects, either academic or commercial/industrial in a topic directly related to this area of research.
- Experience with development and facilitation of studies and workshops applying design methods and high levels of interpersonal skills for a range of users (industry, society/consumers, researchers, designers, stakeholders).
- Communications and graphic design skills.
- Evidence of producing at least two outputs in peer reviewed academic journals or one research output independent of PhD supervisor, in a topic related to this area of research
- Demonstrable understanding of good practice in research conduct (including in research ethics, research integrity and handling research data).
- Demonstrable ability to be a collaborative member of a broader team, working constructively with senior staff, and supporting the work of less experienced staff or students involved in projects.
- Evidenced flexibility and confidence to tackle a wide range of tasks, with an open, pro-active, creative, and problem-solving approach.
- Evidenced excellent writing, communication, and presentation skills, able to adopt an appropriate style for a range of specialist and non-specialist audiences.
- Evidenced strong interpersonal and team-working skills.
- Genuine commitment to the aims of the Centre.



Desirable

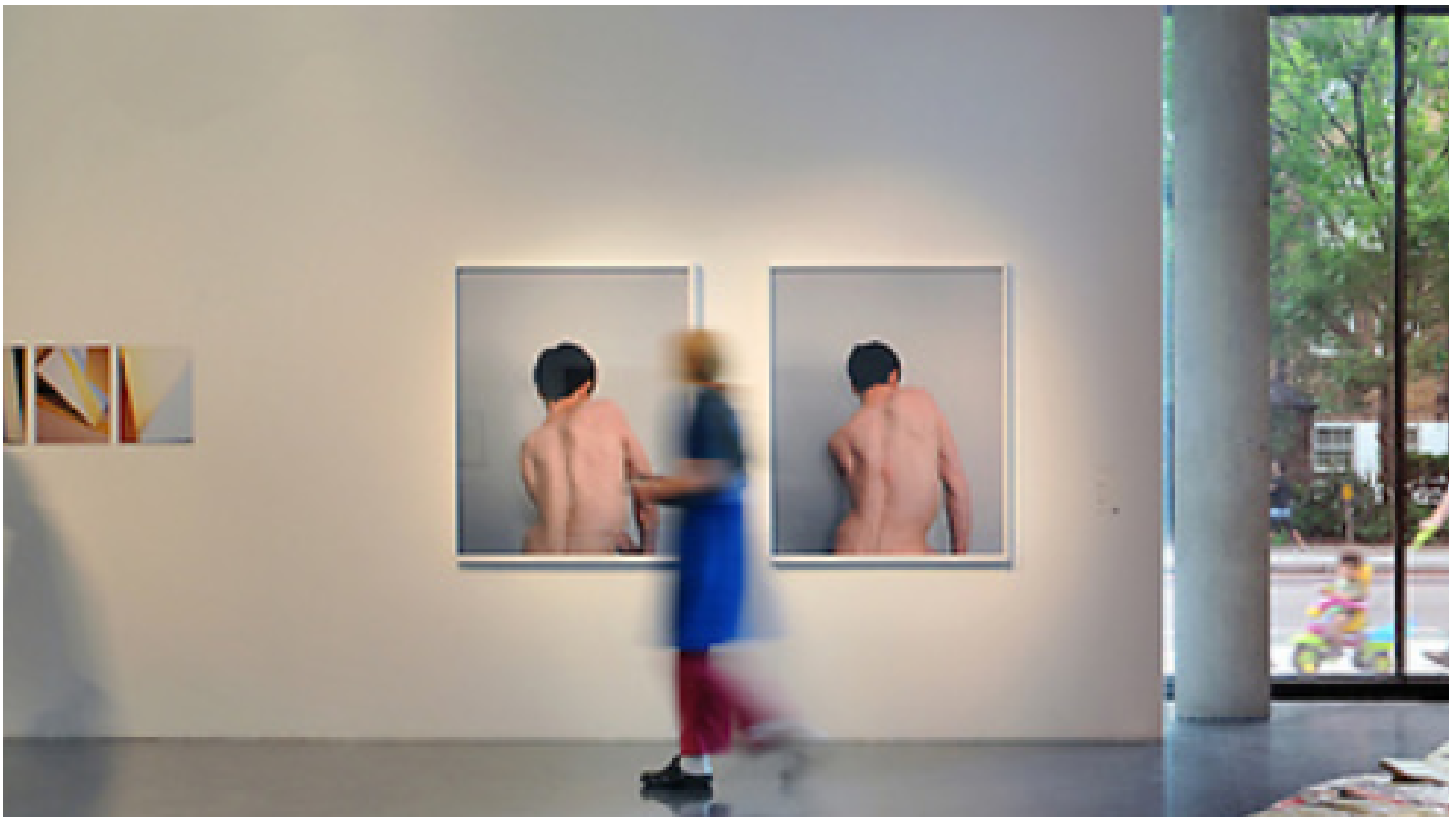
- Subject knowledge in circular business model innovation; materials science; human behaviour and the circular economy; industrial sustainability and the circular economy.
- Evidenced experience of collaborative projects, preferably involving HE/industry collaborations in a field related to this area of research, and/or methods of interdisciplinary collaboration.
- Evidenced experience of contributing to and reporting on projects.
- Experience with or interest in qualitative research methods.



Pay & Benefits

Additional Information:

- Full time salary - Grade 7: £44,840 - £49,680 annum including London Allowance:
- 30 days annual leave plus extended breaks at Christmas and Easter. Pro rata for part time employees
- A contributory defined benefit pension scheme and interest free season ticket loan are available, alongside many other benefits
- Department: Center for Material Science & Culture (CMSC)
- Responsible to: Director of Centre for Materials Science & Culture
- Location: On site at the Royal College of Art, Battersea South Campus, London
- Contract: 1FTE, Fixed term, for 8 months from 1st November 2026
- Hours: 5 days a week, 09:30 – 17:30
- International travel to Portugal is part of the programme.



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

30 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.



Equality, diversity and inclusion - Disability and neurodiversity

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





12 YEARS as the world's
N°1 University for Art & Design

QS World University Rankings by Subject 2015–26