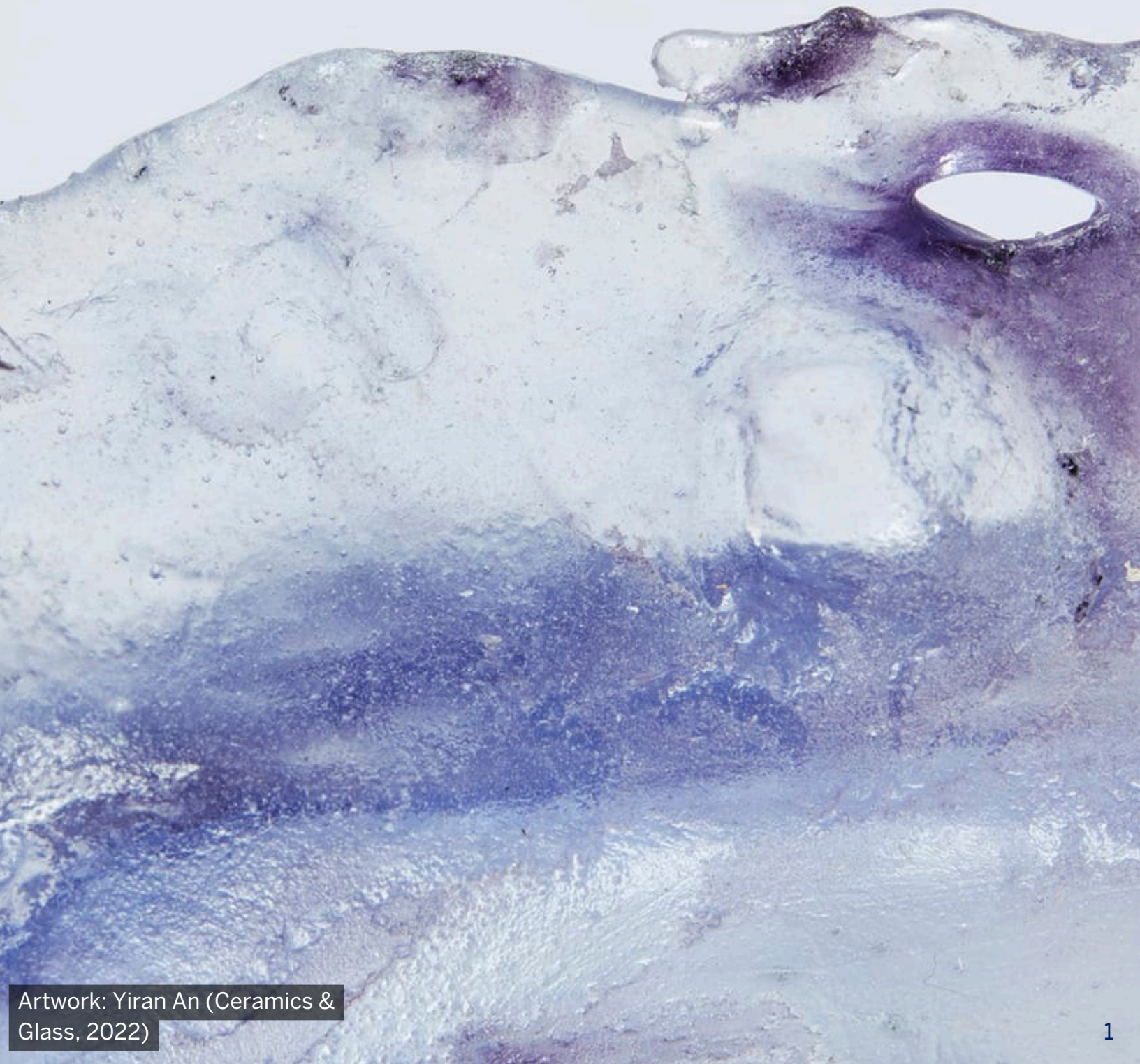
RCA

# Senior Postdoctoral Researcher October 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:

### 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.

Purpose of the post

The Royal College of Art is looking for a researcher to contribute to the development of a new urban design programme at Riyadh University of Arts (RUA), Saudi Arabia's new flagship university for arts, design, and creative education.

The programme will offer a distinctive design-led and research-led urban design education, grounded in the urban histories, cultures, conditions, knowledge, and practices of Saudi Arabia and the wider Middle East. Its ambition is to challenge established urban design teaching models and develop new theory and practice for the future of cities and the discipline.

The researcher will participate in an applied research and curriculum development project examining urbanisation, contemporary urban design practice, and the discourses informing architecture and planning in Saudi Arabia. A particular focus will be the rapid transformation of cities in the region and the role that urban design can play in creating ambitious urban environments that are socially inclusive, environmentally responsive, and culturally specific.

The research will study how urban design can generate long-term social and public value in the context of socio-cultural, environmental, and economic change, and in relation to housing, heritage, infrastructure, public health and wellbeing, and climate and ecological pressures. It will analyse the policies, regulations, professional cultures, and decision-making processes that influence how cities are planned, designed, delivered, and governed.

The work will define the intellectual and pedagogical foundations of the new MA Urban Design programme in the College of Design and Architecture. It will examine research-led and practice-based approaches to teaching, as well as the role of design research, interdisciplinary collaboration, and diverse forms of public, institutional, industry, and community engagement in advancing urban design. The researcher will work with academics, practitioners, policymakers, cultural institutions, professional bodies, and industry, ensuring that the programme is informed by local knowledge, expertise, and practice.

We are looking for someone with a strong research profile and established knowledge of the architecture and urbanism of Saudi Arabia and the wider region, including their social, cultural, environmental, and institutional contexts. Candidates should have a PhD or comparable research experience in practice. Experience of higher education teaching, curriculum development, academic publishing, and collaboration with professional or public-sector partners would be an advantage.

This is an exciting and unique opportunity to help establish new approaches to urban design pedagogy and research at a major new institution with the ambition to lead design and arts practice in the region and beyond.

The role may require occasional travel to Saudi Arabia, to support project delivery, stakeholder engagement, and related activities.

# Main Duties and Responsibilities

Responsibilities

- To undertake high-quality, rigorous research into contemporary urban design practice, education models, professional standards, and regional urban history and development, leading to robust research outcomes.
- To analyse, interpret, and synthesise diverse data and evidence to inform programme development, teaching and learning, and research strategies.
- To contribute ideas for the development of the intellectual positioning, creative ambition, and long-term relevance of the programme and the College's wider research agenda at RUA, working with the Academic Lead to ensure these are in line with the strategic direction of the project.
- To manage research and project activities, coordinating multiple strands of work and ensuring effective delivery of research outcomes against agreed milestones and deadlines.
- To collaborate in the development of research and industry engagement strategies, programme and course specifications, research reports, briefing papers, and presentations, tailoring content and style to a broad range of specialist and non-specialist audiences.
- To work with academics, practitioners, professional bodies, industry, government, and public-sector organisations to develop collaborative research, knowledge exchange projects, and productive partnerships.
- To produce and disseminate research outputs through appropriate channels.
- To participate in project team meetings and activities, events, and workshops, contributing ideas for the development, delivery, and promotion of projects.
- To supervise, where relevant, junior researchers or project workers, ensuring they are equipped to deliver work within agreed timescales and at appropriate levels.
- To undertake general administrative and other tasks relevant to the project, as required.
- To ensure the confidentiality of sensitive project information through appropriate data protection measures.
- To conduct all research reflecting best practice in ethics, integrity, research data management, and research governance, ensuring compliance with RCA policies.

Skills, knowledge, and experience

Essential

- The successful candidate must be able to demonstrate at least one of the following:
  - A PhD in urban design, architecture, planning, or a related discipline, or
  - Comparable research experience in professional practice
- Knowledge of the urban histories, practices, and transformations of Saudi Arabia and the wider Middle East.
- Ability to read and analyse Arabic-language sources and literature required for the research
- Strong analytical and synthesis skills, with experience of working with diverse sources of evidence and using a wide range of research methods.
- Experience of working with academic, professional, public-sector, or industry stakeholders.
- Evidence of producing high-quality research outputs.
- Evidence of experience contributing to and reporting on projects.
- Demonstrable understanding of good practice in research conduct (including in research ethics, research integrity, and handling research data).
- Demonstrable ability to work collaboratively as part of a team, working constructively with senior staff and supporting less experienced colleagues.
- Demonstrable ability to manage multiple workstreams and undertake a wide range of tasks.
- Excellent writing, communication and presentation skills, with the ability to adopt an appropriate style for a range of specialist and non-specialist audiences.
- Proficiency in digital tools for the preparation of presentations, reports, and publications.

Desirable

- Experience of higher education teaching and curriculum or programme development.
- Familiarity with professional accreditation and course validation.
- Experience of academic writing and publishing.

# Pay & Benefits

Additional Information:

- Full time salary - Grade 8: £49,680- £53,756 per annum including London Allowance
- 1FTE, fixed term until 31.8.2028
- 30 days annual leave plus extended breaks at Christmas and Easter. Pro rata for part time employees and those on a contract less than a year.
- A contributory defined benefit pension scheme and interest free season ticket loan are available, alongside many other benefits
- The successful candidate will be required to work at our Kensington Campus, London
- The role may require occasional travel to Saudi Arabia, to support project delivery, stakeholder engagement, and related activities.
- Responsible to: Prof Sam Jacoby

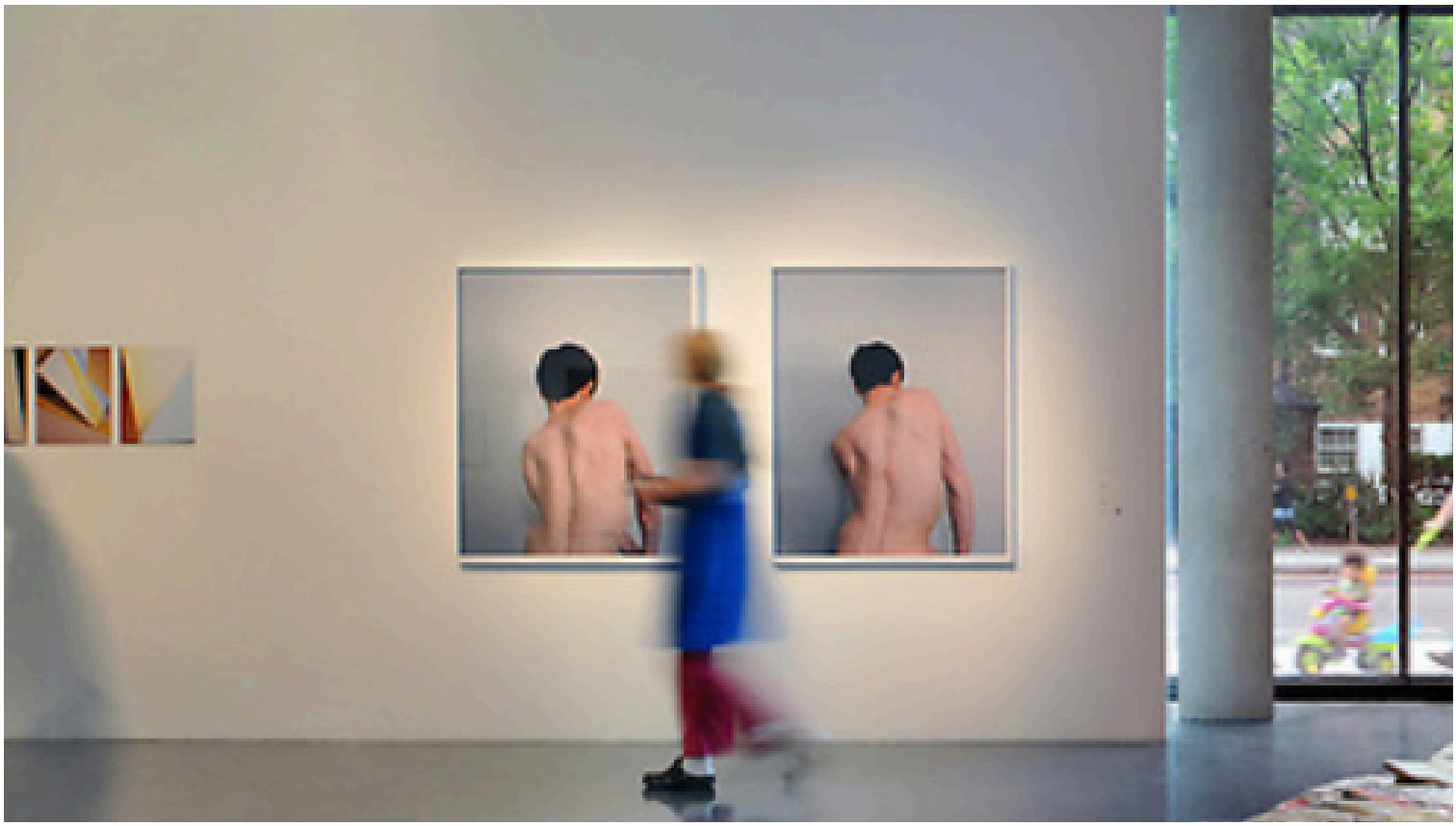

Photo: Philip Vale

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
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

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

QS World University Rankings by Subject 2015–26