RCA

Academic Planning and Performance Manager

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.

Academic Planning and Performance Manager



Role purpose

The Academic Planning and Performance Manager will lead the development and delivery of the College's academic planning and performance framework, ensuring institutional planning, analysis, and performance monitoring provide a robust evidence base for strategic and operational decision-making across the Royal College of Art. Line-managed by the Academic Registrar, the postholder will lead key planning cycles, establish and maintain robust planning methodologies and evidence bases, oversee scenario modelling and forecasting, develop performance monitoring, and provide authoritative analysis and recommendations to senior leaders and committees.

The postholder will work closely with senior academic and professional service colleagues to secure alignment between institutional strategy, academic planning, student number forecasts, portfolio development, resource requirements and performance objectives. The postholder will provide authoritative professional advice, and constructive challenge to senior leaders, identifying risks, testing assumptions and recommending evidence-based interventions to strengthen t performance monitoring and delivery across the College. This is a senior professional services role requiring strong analytical capability, a high degree of professional autonomy, excellent judgement, the ability to influence senior leaders and translate evidence into strategic recommendations, and practical improvements.

Role context

The Royal College of Art is a world-leading specialist postgraduate institution of art, design, architecture, communication and creative practice. The College operates in a complex and fast-changing higher education environment, requiring robust planning, high-quality evidence and clear performance reporting to support academic, operational and strategic delivery.

The Academic Planning and Performance Manager will lead the development of consistent planning and performance approaches across the College. The role will support evidence-informed decision-making through accurate data, transparent assumptions, coordinated planning processes and effective reporting.

The postholder will work across Academic Registry and Student Support, Schools and professional services, including Finance, Technical Services, Data and Insight, and Strategy. They will ensure the effective alignment between student number planning, academic portfolio planning, student outcomes, resource planning, governance reporting and delivery monitoring.



Main Duties and Responsibilities

Key responsibilities

1. Planning cycle coordination

Lead key institutional and academic planning cycles on behalf of the Academic Registrar and senior leaders.

Maintain an annual planning calendar covering student number planning, recruitment and admissions monitoring, academic portfolio planning, quality cycles, student outcomes reporting, performance monitoring and related institutional planning activity.
Ensure that planning processes have clear timelines, responsibilities, reporting requirements and decision points.

Work with Schools and professional services to ensure that planning activity is timely, coordinated and aligned with the College's governance and reporting cycles.

Identify gaps, duplication or misalignment in planning processes and recommend practical improvements.

2. Evidence-based planning and decision support

Provide senior leaders with clear, timely and reliable analysis and recommendations to support planning and decision-making.

Collate, analyse and interpret quantitative and qualitative data from a range of sources, including applications, offers, acceptances, enrolments, continuation, progression, completion, student feedback, student outcomes, programme performance, resource use and relevant external benchmarks.

Translate complex data into clear insights, briefings, dashboards, reports and recommendations.
Ensure that planning reports distinguish clearly between data, assumptions, risks, options and decisions.

Work with data owners to improve the quality, consistency and usability of planning data.
Contribution to the development and lead the monitoring of institutional KPIs, performance indicators and strategic measures.

3. Senior advisory support

Provide planning and performance advice to the Academic Registrar, PVC Education and Student Success, Deans, Heads of Programme, School General Managers and senior professional service colleagues.

Provide evidence, analysis and options to support effective decision-making.
Support senior leaders to understand trends, risks, dependencies and implications arising from planning and performance data.

Provide constructive challenge where assumptions require further testing, evidence is incomplete, or operational implications need to be clarified.

Build effective relationships across Schools and services, using tact, credibility and diplomacy to influence colleagues at different levels of seniority.

4. Scenario modelling and options analysis

Develop and maintain planning models and analytical tools to inform student number planning, admissions and enrolment monitoring, programme viability, portfolio planning, resource implications and delivery risks.

Work with Finance, Admissions, Schools, Registry, Quality and Technical Services to ensure that planning models are based on agreed assumptions and consistent data sources.

Prepare options analysis showing the implications, risks, dependencies and trade-offs associated with different planning scenarios.

Maintain appropriate version control and documentation for planning models and assumptions.
Present modelling outputs in a format that enables senior leaders to make informed decisions.



5. Academic portfolio and programme planning support

Provide planning and evidence for academic portfolio review, new programme proposals, programme changes, suspensions, closures and portfolio review activity.

Prepare evidence packs drawing together information on demand, recruitment, conversion, enrolment, continuation, student outcomes, quality indicators, resource requirements, technical implications and financial assumptions.

Support Schools and senior leaders to consider portfolio decisions in a consistent and evidence-informed way.

Ensure that decisions, assumptions and follow-up actions are recorded clearly and can be tracked through governance processes.

6. Student number planning and admissions performance

Coordinate student number planning and lead admissions performance monitoring in partnership with Admissions, Finance, Schools and senior academic leaders.

Coordinate planning assumptions relating to applications, offers, acceptances, conversion, deposits, enrolment and target student numbers.

Produce analysis of recruitment and admissions performance by School, programme, market, domicile, fee status and other relevant categories.

Lead regular reporting on recruitment and admissions performance, highlighting trends, risks and areas requiring attention.

Contribute to the development of improved approaches to target monitoring, offer pacing and planning adjustments.



7. Performance monitoring and strategic delivery

Develop and maintain performance monitoring arrangements to track delivery of agreed College priorities.

Track actions, milestones, risks, dependencies and progress arising from planning decisions. Produce regular performance updates for the Academic Registrar, PVC Education and Student Success, Deans and relevant committees.

Highlight emerging risks, underperformance, data gaps or delivery dependencies requiring senior attention.

Contribute to the review and evaluation of major planning decisions, projects and interventions.

8. Governance and committee reporting

Prepare high-quality papers, reports, briefing notes and presentations for senior groups and committees.

Ensure that committee papers are clear, accurate, evidence-based, decision-focused and appropriate for their audience.

Support the Academic Registrar in maintaining clear audit trails for planning decisions, including assumptions, approvals, actions and follow-up.

Track actions and decisions arising from planning and performance discussions.

Work with governance, Registry and quality colleagues to ensure that planning and performance reporting informs academic standards, student experience and institutional assurance.



9. Planning process improvement

Develop and maintain planning templates, assumptions logs, action trackers, risk trackers, reporting tools and standard operating procedures.

Identify opportunities to simplify processes, reduce duplication and improve coordination between Schools and professional services.

Establish and maintain consistent planning definitions, data sources, reporting conventions and version control.

Contribute to continuous improvement of planning and reporting processes.

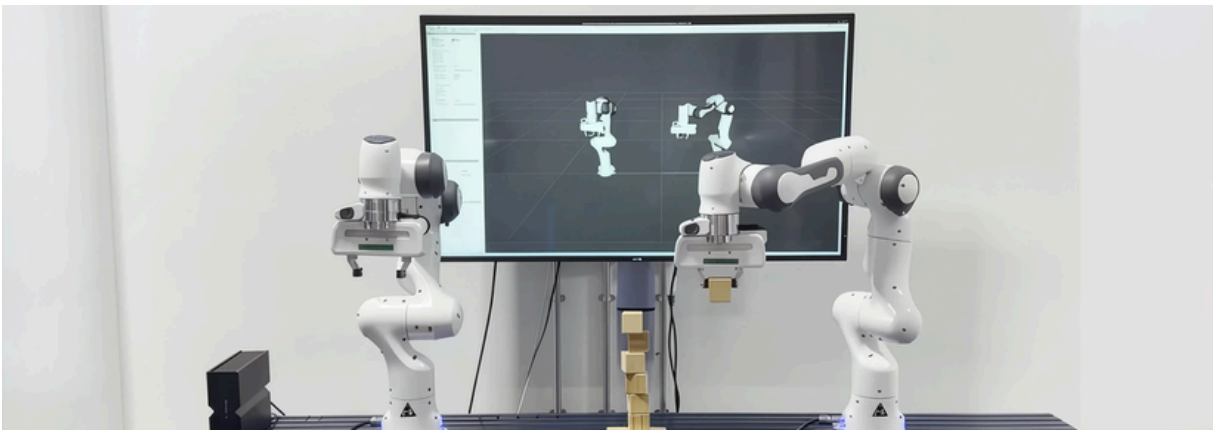
Support colleagues to adopt clear and consistent approaches to planning, reporting and performance monitoring.

10. Data quality, systems and reporting tools

Work with relevant data, systems and business intelligence colleagues to improve the reliability, accessibility and usefulness of planning and performance data.

Support the development and use of dashboards, management reports and planning tools.
Identify data quality issues and work with data owners to resolve them.
Ensure that planning and performance reports use consistent definitions, agreed data sources and clear assumptions.

Contribute to the development, review and implementation of systems that support academic planning, student lifecycle reporting, programme management and performance monitoring.
Ensure that sensitive data is handled appropriately and in line with data protection requirements.



11. Cross-College Planning Coordination

Work collaboratively with colleagues across Academic Registry, Schools and professional services to coordinate institutional planning activity.

Develop effective working relationships with key academic and professional service stakeholders involved in planning, reporting and performance activity.

Support alignment between academic and professional service planning activity by identifying interdependencies, risks and delivery considerations.

Contribute to cross-College working groups, projects and reviews as required.

Promote clear communication, transparency and effective coordination within planning and reporting activity.

12. General responsibilities

Contribute to the wider work of Academic Registry and the College as required.

Promote equality, diversity and inclusion in all areas of work.

Comply with RCA policies, including those relating to data protection, confidentiality, information security, health and safety, safeguarding and records management.

Participate in appraisal, professional development and relevant training.

Undertake any other duties commensurate with the grade and nature of the role.



Main Duties and Responsibilities

Key outputs

The Academic Planning and Performance Manager will be expected to produce and maintain:

- annual planning calendar;
- planning templates and guidance;
- student number planning reports;
- admissions and enrolment performance analysis;
- portfolio planning evidence packs;
- scenario models and options analysis;
- dashboards and senior briefings;
- committee reports and presentations;
- assumptions logs and version-controlled planning documents;
- risk, dependency and action trackers;
- process improvement recommendations;
- review and evaluation reports;
- Institutional planning and performance framework, including agreed measures, reporting arrangements and monitoring processes.

Key working relationships

Academic Registrar

The Academic Registrar is the postholder's line manager and primary senior sponsor. The role will support the Registrar in strengthening planning discipline, academic governance, student lifecycle insight, reporting and institutional performance monitoring. The role will support coordinated planning activity on behalf of the Academic Registrar and relevant leaders in Registry Operations & Admissions, Student Support & Success, and Quality Assurance and Enhancement.

PVC Education and Student Success

The role will provide evidence, analysis and planning support for education strategy, student success, academic development and delivery of agreed strategic priorities.

School Deans and Heads of Programme

The role will support programme performance monitoring, portfolio planning, student number planning, evidence gathering and delivery planning.

Dean of Creative Education and Practice

The role will support planning and evidence relating to creative education, student success, academic enhancement, inclusive education and cross-College educational innovation.

Finance

The role will collaborate with Finance on student number planning, financial assumptions, resource modelling and business case development.

Recruitment

The role will work with Recruitment on application, conversion and enrolment analysis.

Technical Services

The role will work with Technical Services on the planning implications of curriculum delivery, technical demand, facilities, workshops, specialist resources and student access.

Essential criteria

Qualifications

- Educated to degree level or equivalent professional experience.
- Evidence of continuing professional development relevant to planning, data analysis, higher education administration, project management, governance, performance reporting or business analysis.

Knowledge and experience

- Substantial experience of planning, performance reporting, data analysis, academic administration, governance, or business planning higher education or similarly complex environment.
- Experience of coordinating and delivering complex planning cycles or institutional processes involving multiple stakeholders.
- Experience of analysing and interpreting data to produce management information, reports, briefings or recommendations.
- Experience of advising senior leaders and advising on planning, performance, risk or operational issues.
- Experience of preparing high-quality written reports, committee papers, presentations or briefing notes for senior audiences.
- Experience of working across organisational boundaries and building effective relationships with academic and professional service colleagues.
- Understanding of the UK higher education environment, including governance, assurance, quality,student outcomes, regulatory expectations and institutional performance.
- Experience of using evidence to support decision-making, improvement and performance monitoring.

Skills and abilities

- Strong analytical skills, including the ability to interpret complex information, identify trends and draw out implications.
- Strong numerical skills and confidence working with data, spreadsheets, dashboards and reports.
- Excellent written communication skills, with the ability to produce clear, concise and decision-focused papers.
- Excellent verbal communication and presentation skills.
- Ability to advise, influence and constructively challenge colleagues at different levels of seniority.
- Strong planning, organisation and project coordination skills.
- Ability to manage competing priorities and deliver work to agreed timescales.
- Ability to exercise sound judgement, discretion and political sensitivity.
- Ability to work independently, exercise sound judgement and take responsibility for the delivery and quality of a defined area of work.
- Ability to translate strategic objectives into practical plans, milestones, measures and reporting arrangements.
- High level of accuracy and attention to detail.
- Strong digital and analytical skills, including advanced Excel skills and experience of working with reporting, planning or business intelligence tools.
- Commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion.
- Commitment to confidentiality, data protection and responsible use of institutional data.

Desirable criteria

- Experience of working in a specialist, postgraduate, creative arts, design or research-intensive higher education institution.
- Experience of student number planning, admissions analysis, portfolio review or academic workload/resource modelling.
- Experience of working with business intelligence tools, dashboards or data visualisation software.
- Experience of supporting academic governance or senior committee structures.
- Experience of risk management, benefits tracking or post-implementation review.
- Experience of process improvement, business analysis or change management.
- Knowledge of HESA, OfS, TEF, Access and Participation, student outcomes measures, quality assurance or related sector reporting frameworks.
- A postgraduate qualification, project management qualification, data analysis qualification or management qualification.



Pay & Benefits

Additional Information:

- Job title: Academic Planning and Performance Manager
- Grade 9 - Salary £56,192 to £62,600 per annum including London Allowance
- Department: Academic Registry
- Responsible to: Academic Registrar
- Responsible for: : Leadership and delivery of the College's academic planning and performance framework, including institutional planning cycles, student number planning and forecasting, performance monitoring, scenario modelling, analytical reporting and continuous improvement of planning processes.
- Location: RCA campuses, London, with hybrid working in line with College policy
- Contract: Full-time, permanent
- Working hours (35 hours per week) 9.30am to 5.30pm with an hour each day for lunch.
- 30 days annual leave plus extended breaks at Christmas and Easter, at the discretion of the College.
- Cycle to work scheme, pension, Interest-free season ticket loans are available alongside many other benefits.

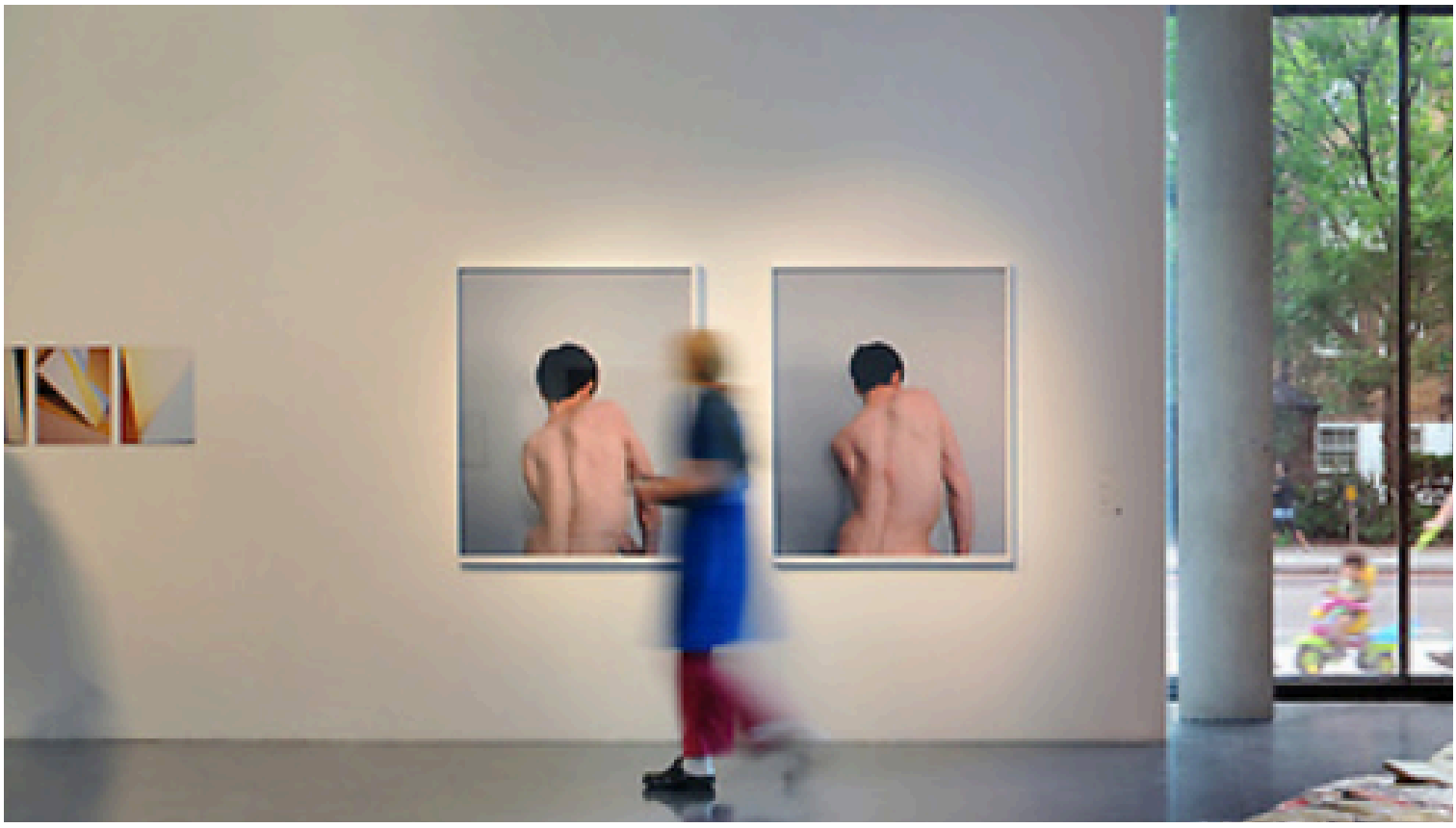


Photo: Philip Vale

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