

Programme Specification

Award and title: BA (Hons) Photography

<i>School:</i>	School of the Arts
<i>Subject area:</i>	Photography
<i>Entry from academic year:</i>	2025-26
<i>in the month(s) of</i>	September
<i>Awarding institution:</i>	York St John University
<i>Teaching institution:</i>	York St John University
<i>Delivery location:</i>	York St John University
<i>Programme/s accredited by:</i>	Not applicable
<i>Exit awards:</i>	Certificate of Higher Education Photography Diploma of Higher Education Photography BA (Ord) Photography
<i>UCAS code / GTTR / other:</i>	W64W
<i>Joint Honours combinations:</i>	Not applicable
<i>QAA subject benchmark statement(s):</i>	Art and design 2019
<i>Mode/s of study:</i>	Undergraduate periods of study ¹ for full time / part time
<i>Language of study:</i>	English
<i>Paired with Foundation Year</i>	No
<i>Study abroad opportunities:</i>	Yes
<i>Opt-in YSJU Placement Year opportunity:</i>	Yes

Introduction and special features

BA (Hons) Photography engages with current developments in photographic practice across a dynamic range of media and practices. The programme explores photography as a mode of enquiry by encouraging you to experience a diverse range of visual languages, engaging with material thinking, visual storytelling, and socially engaged practice. The programme emphasises practice-based creative and critical enquiry to develop, sustain and extend your practice developing confidence, competence and increasing specialisation towards your personal ambitions and professional aspirations.

The programme will provide a foundation in photographic practice in areas such as digital capture and workflow, studio photography, location lighting, social documentary and analogue photography. You will be encouraged to explore a range of display methods such as installation, gallery display, screen and publishing-based outputs when communicating with audiences.

The programme will engage you in the fundamental genres of photography where you will explore commercial, editorial, fine art and the many forms of socially engaged practice. Skills and knowledge acquired on the programme will provide opportunities for you to build an individual relationship to the world through photography and develop the capacity to describe, enquire and critique aspects of it.

¹ The standard period of study will apply unless otherwise stated

The critical strand of the programme is integrated into the practice and provides a framework for thinking about your future direction, reflecting upon the contemporary forms photography can take. This draws upon historical, theoretical perspectives that are relevant to practitioners today.

The process of visual and conceptual experimentation and problem solving will develop subject specific and transferrable skills enabling you to negotiate careers in photography, fine arts, creative industries, community-based practice or education.

Within a supportive studio culture, the programme requires you to develop a critical mind-set that demonstrates independence, versatility, adaptability, and innovation. As a graduate of the programme you will be an independent thinker and maker, who is able to evolve your skill set in response to the changing demands of society, culture, and professional practice. This skill set comprises highly developed levels of professional awareness, critical and creative thinking, articulacy and literacy, cultural entrepreneurialism, an understanding of social justice and the ability to exploit in-demand practical skills in different contexts.

An important aspect of this supportive studio culture is the technical provision. Through workshops and technical demonstrations you will experience the full range photographic facilities [analogue and digital camera formats, darkroom tools, digital print output and related tools and software] by the midpoint in the programme. This allows you to experience a range of subject specialist options in relation to your photographic practice. From Level 5 you can book technical support sessions in relation to your practice from the specialist technical team.

You will have the chance to visit exhibitions during the programme. At the end of the programme, you will have the skills and attributes to enable you mount a graduate exhibition for the public, industry, and creative sector.

In summary, the programme offers a number of special features including:

- A material led practice approach
- Visiting speakers programme
- Engagement with live projects through external partners
- Supported work related learning opportunities
- Access to both digital and analogue equipment for capture and postproduction
- Specialist technical support in breadth of photographic media, tools and methods
- Subsidised national and/or international trips (circumstances permitting)
- Study Abroad options

Admissions criteria

You must meet the minimum entry requirements which are published on the programme specific webpage. In addition, you must have:

- A portfolio of 15-20 physical / digital visual images
- An interview which may be face to face or virtual

If your first language is not English, you need to take an IELTS test or an equivalent qualification accepted by the University (see <https://www.yorksj.ac.uk/international/how-to-apply/english-language-requirements/>).

If you do not have traditional qualifications, you may be eligible for entry on the basis of [Recognition of prior learning \(RPL\)](#). We also consider applications for entry with advanced standing.

Programme aim(s)

1. To provide a high-quality education in Photography that affirms its contribution to culture, society and its interaction with other fields of knowledge through innovative teaching.
2. To encourage and develop critical engagement to both theory and photographic practice, underpinned by intellectual enquiry within the context of social, cultural and critical contexts.
3. To develop skills in digital practices and material engagement that encourages curiosity, experimentation and employs purposeful and systematic employment of technical skills.
4. To encourage and support creative risk taking encouraging, developing autonomy, collaboration, and transferable skills in preparation for sustainable professional engagement beyond the university.
5. To develop skills in relation to Photographic practice and the student's specialist field, informed by developments in the medium of Photography and related technologies
6. To support and encourage widening and diversifying practices that acknowledges student's roles in and contributions towards society, social justice, economy and environment.
7. To broaden diversity of cultural experience in order to develop self-awareness expand ambitions and focus towards careers in the creative arts sector and related fields of engagement and employability.
8. To offer opportunities for professional experience, networking and resourcefulness through work-related learning, through both internal and external collaborative project work in anticipation of the demands of the creative industries and contemporary fine art market.

Programme learning outcomes

Upon successful completion of the programme students will be able to:

Level 4

- 4.1 Collate, evaluate, and interpret research material.
- 4.2 Demonstrate curiosity, open mindedness, and reflection in approaching Photographic practice.
- 4.3 Demonstrate skills and technical competence in Photographic practice.
- 4.4 Demonstrate responsibility and diligence in developing individual and/or group work including fulfilling briefs and meeting deadlines.
- 4.5 Demonstrate an understanding of approaches to practice, including key histories, concepts, artefacts and processes.
- 4.6 Communicate ideas and information utilising appropriate academic conventions in visual and verbal forms.

Level 5

- 5.1 Critically analyse divergent research material and form questions, arguments and conclusions.
- 5.2 Demonstrate an emerging experimental, technical, and reflective refinement of Photographic practice.
- 5.3 Demonstrate professional self-management and collaborative skills by planning workloads and meeting deadlines, accommodating change and uncertainty.
- 5.4 Apply critical skills of observation, description, and interpretation, to situate artefacts within appropriate contexts by synthesising primary and secondary sources.
- 5.5 Communicate ideas and information to engage an audience utilising appropriate academic conventions in visual and verbal forms.

5.6 Establish an enterprising attitude towards professional Photographic practice, developing networks and locating audiences

Level 6

- 6.1 Construct and apply coherent arguments through the systematic analysis of divergent ideas, materials, and methods.
- 6.2 Synthesise critical skills of observation and interpretation by situating artefacts within appropriate historical, intellectual, cultural, or institutional contexts.
- 6.3 Articulate a professionally engaged practice that is informed by intellectual curiosity, experimentation, reflection, and scholarly rigour.
- 6.4 Demonstrate ingenuity and technical expertise to resolve high quality creative work, which communicates effectively with a particular audience.
- 6.5 Demonstrate initiative, autonomy, problem solving and care by responsibly managing and supporting work.
- 6.6 Contextualise and evaluate the logistical, professional, and ethical dimensions of Photographic practice with independent and innovative consideration.
- 6.7 Demonstrate resourcefulness and innovation using critical judgement to develop a sustainable and equitable approach to Photographic practice.

Programme structure

Code	Level	Semester	Title	Credits	Module status	
					Compulsory (C) or optional (O)	non-compensatable (NC) or compensatable (X)
ART4015M	4	1	Establishing practice	20	C	X
ART4016M	4	1	Material explorations	20	C	X
ART4022M	4	1	Photography: The History, Technology and Theory of Practice	20	C	X
ART4017M	4	2	Developing practice	40	C	NC
ART4019M	4	2	Presenting Representation	20	C	X
ART5015M	5	1	Photography and Society	30	C	NC
ART5020M	5	1	Making, sensing, thinking	20	C	X
ART5019M	5	1 & 2	Professional Networks (Photography)	20	C	X
ART5016M	5	2	Realisation and exposition	30	C	NC
ART5021M	5	2	Art: Ethics and aesthetics	20	C	X
ART5022M	5	1 or 2	Professional Networks (Exchange)	10	C*	X
ART6012M	6	1	Advanced Studio (Photography)	30	C	NC
ART6014M	6	1	Dissertation	30	C	NC
ART6013M	6	2	Degree show (Photography)	40	C	NC
ART6017M	6	2	Professional Futures (Photography)	20	C	X

Any modules that must be passed for progression or award are indicated in the table above as non-compensatable. A non-compensatable module is one that must be passed at the relevant level (with a mark of 40) in order to progress.

*ART5022M is a module offered only to students who are studying abroad for one semester. They will take this module in the semester they are not abroad instead of ART5019M

Learning, teaching and assessment

Learning, teaching and assessment in Photography is centred on a progressive acquisition of skills, knowledge and experience through studio, critical and external projects which build your knowledge of your subject and your own practice. This form of practice-based learning introduces you to the core practices of Photography, (studio practice, darkroom skills, digital imaging, narrative construction, editing and printing) and the range of genres and possibilities within photographic practice as it intersects with other disciplines such as journalism, art, media, advertising and publishing, or social agendas such as sustainability, social justice, economics etc. From this foundation you will evolve a personal focus based on your interests and strengths towards a resolution. Through developing skills such as problem solving, experimentation, reflection, critical engagement you will learn how to become an autonomous, resourceful and innovative practitioner.

Learning and teaching will take place within the University, in studios, workshops seminars and lectures and also externally through live projects, work related learning initiatives, and virtually through digital engagement on the web, in online archives, social media and through the University's Virtual Learning Environment. All these sites of learning integrate to stimulate, support, and expand your development as a reflective Photography practitioner.

Teaching activities are focused on an interactive engagement with you and your work. You will have regular informal tutorials in studio as well as regular formal portfolio review tutorials. Seminars and reading groups will engage you in critical debates, and workshops will engage you in skills development. Subject-specific technicians and technical tutors will support your work through workshops, demonstrations, and informal tutoring. A programme of visiting speakers will connect you to current thinking, research and practice in Photography and related disciplines.

A key interactive mode of learning is the critique as formative assessment where a group of peers, tutors or professionals will engage in a collective discussion about your work. Your participation in critiques will provide a critical framework for you to develop skills of analysis, reflection leading to a greater degree of self-awareness. The many modes of formative assessment (including crits, tutorials, presentations) will also provide a greater knowledge of how to reach benchmarks set at summative assessment stage. You therefore will be aware of your levels of achievement as you progress through the modules and levels of study.

Portfolio and assessment

Assessment in the programme is centred on the development of your portfolio which captures the range and diversity of your work, both practically and critically, and helps you to make connections between different aspects of your practice. Self, peer, tutor, and professional assessments provide an ongoing dialogue about your work. You will have regular one-to-one and small group tutorials which look in depth at your practice and agree feedforward actions with your academic tutor, enabling you to focus and direct your learning.

One of the crucial ways that you develop as an independent practitioner is through assessment and evaluation. During the programme you will experience a range of approaches to assessment. You will experience assessment of your work by tutors, peers and also your own self assessments which ultimately are the most important as they demonstrate your own understanding of your practice. Assessment should be an ongoing dialogue, which is centred on your work whether practical or theoretical.

Assessment in the programme is centred on the development of your photography portfolio, which captures the distinctive nature, range and diversity of your work, enabling you to make connections between different aspects of your practice. Self, peer, tutor, and professional assessments provide an ongoing dialogue about your work. You will have regular one to one and small group tutorials, which look in depth at your practice and agree directions which focus and direct your learning.

Formative assessment is always focused on identifying your strengths and areas for development in order to focus your personal, academic and professional development. You will initiate and maintain a reflective portfolio which captures all your learning and enables you to make connections on your work within the curriculum and also externally to give a holistic perspective on your practice and direction. You will have regular one-to-one or small group tutorials centred on your portfolio with your tutors; this will collate formative assessment responses from all projects and activities happening in the review period as well as your self-evaluations of these activities in order to discuss and agree feedforward actions for you to develop your practice. Assessments will use the School of the Arts Rubric which accounts for a range of assessment criteria in order to make it clear where your strengths and areas for development are.

Summative assessments usually take place at the end of the module and reflect the cumulative body of work that you have undertaken during the module, and which is reflected in a numerical mark. This cumulative approach is intended to enable you to respond to feedback and develop your work. It is also intended to encourage you to take risks with your work in the knowledge that you can reflect, refine and redirect your practice following formative feedback. For this reason, modules will formally end with some form of collection, exhibition or portfolio review which enables the work to be summarised and assessed. This will usually provide an opportunity to discuss and clarify your work to an audience of tutors and/or peers.

Programme learning outcomes, Generic Assessment Descriptors, marking and feedback

The programme learning outcomes (PLOs) are mapped to module specifications. The PLOs are written broadly so they can apply across the modules. In some instances, the same PLOs are mapped to multiple modules, but may be interpreted in a different way, for example, 'practice' in a theory module can be interpreted as your scholarly writing practice, whereas in a studio module, this will be interpreted as your making practice. To pass a module you must demonstrate through the assessment for that module, the PLOs that have been mapped to it. When marking your work, we use the School of the Arts Rubric which is mapped to the University Generic Assessment Descriptors (GAD), the GAD details the marking criteria for each assessment, this enables you to understand how your work will be marked. The Rubric will also be used when we provide feedback so that you can see why you are succeeding and how to improve.

Progression and graduation requirements

The University's [general regulations for](#) undergraduate awards apply to this programme.

Any modules that must be passed for progression or award are indicated in the Programme Structure section as non-compensatable.

Internal and external reference points

This programme specification was formulated with reference to:

- [University mission and values](#)
- [University 2026 Strategy](#)
- [QAA subject benchmark statements](#)
- [Frameworks for Higher Education Qualifications](#)

21/10/21 / revised:

Programme originally approved: