

A Level

Photography

AQA



Having a good compact digital camera (3 to 5 megapixel is adequate) at the very start of the course is extremely useful – most students already have access to one. Although some costs are met by the college (such as film processing chemistry) and provided free of charge, students must pay for other ongoing costs (such as film, photographic paper and printer credit) though these are available through the college at reduced prices. Students are asked to buy a photographic kit of essential items sold at cost price.

Darkroom photography is available to all students but is not a core component of the course

If you choose not to continue this subject onto year two, you are able to sit an AS exam at the end of year one.

Course Content

The Photography course places a distinct emphasis on observation. The course is concerned with the development of your photographic knowledge, skills and understanding. The course involves the study of both photographic theory and practice, and the way they inform each other. It aims to develop a range of expressive, analytical, interpretive and practical skills through the investigation of the medium's inherent processes, strategies, values and approaches.

The course is intensive and demanding, not least in time, and students should be made very aware of the commitment necessary to succeed and achieve in this subject. It requires a high degree of self-discipline, and a large amount of self-directed study outside of lessons is a given. It is essential that students are very motivated, organised and have a high-degree of time-management skill in order to be able to meet the demands of the course. They need to be both willing and able to rise to the inevitable challenges they will face.

It should also be pointed out that this is NOT a vocational course. It can help students who wish to pursue some aspect of photography as a career but is not explicitly designed as such.

At the beginning of the course your work is more teacher-led, and aims to provide the necessary foundation of key skills and concepts. Over the course the emphasis moves towards individually initiated practical projects as ability, confidence, awareness and understanding increase. The course aims to provide opportunities for students to experience.



*Photograph taken by
Francesca Mylod-Ford who is currently studying
A level Photography*

Photographic image making – working with a range of cameras (SLR and compact), in manual and automatic modes, digitally. Film options are available.

Photographic image adjustment and manipulation – Computer-based, manual and darkroom manipulation approaches are utilised.

Photographic processing and printing– Both digital and chemical approaches can be explored, and students can make use of darkroom printing processes as well as computer-based methods.

Critical and contextual study – the analysis of the work of other photographers, past and present, working in a range of genres, in colour and black and white, and utilising both traditional and contemporary/modern approaches. This involves written work, and historical as well as theoretical aspects.

Presentation – from the presentation of preparatory work in sketchbooks (paper or electronic) to the mounting up of final images, from negative or digital files.

Photography

Methods of Teaching

Teachers use a whole class teaching approach in the first phase of the course, moving towards an increased emphasis on small-group seminars, individual tutorials as work becomes increasingly student-led with the advice and guidance of staff. Lessons are practical as much as theoretical, involving writing but also thinking, shared looking, discussion and oral presentation.

Our aim, particularly in your AS year, is to adopt a flexible approach that can respond directly to your interests, ideas, needs and previous photographic skills, knowledge and understanding

You will receive continual assessment on your progress and termly progress review tutorials – both written/formal and verbal/informal. Your final assessment will consider both your units of work separately, though with specific reference to examination board assessment objectives, considered holistically.

Year 1

During the first two terms of the course you will have the opportunity to experience both chemical and digital photographic processes. This phase provides the basis for one extensive practical project.

Component 1: Portfolio

Alongside this work you will be expected to build up evidence of your awareness of the context of photography within culture to complement and inform your practical work.

Component 2: Externally-Set Assignment

Towards the end of the AS course you will complete your response to externally set questions. This involves a preparation period and 10 hours of supervised time.

Year 2

The second year allows for a continuation of the work begun in the first year but with a greater opportunity for, and emphasis on, an increased level of ambition, depth, complexity and sophistication.

Component 1: Personal investigation

This involves one, extended, in-depth practical project, as well as an extended (1000 - 3000 word) written compulsory component.

Component 2: Externally-Set Assignment

Your response to externally set questions. This involves a preparation period plus 15 hours supervised time.

Financial Implications

Although the Art department will provide essential chemicals for you to work with, it is important to stress that Photography can be a costly subject and will involve some ongoing personal expenses, such as printer credit. The College has a Student Support Fund for those students who might have difficulty meeting these costs.

Where will it take me?

Many careers involve some aspect of visual imaging, some more explicitly than others. Specific career paths include: journalism, radiography, surveying etc. What is more, the skills gained in the study of photography at this level are highly transferable: analysis, evaluation, discussion and presentation, for example.

Minimum Entry Requirements

5 GCSEs at Grades A* - C including Maths and English.

If you have not studied Art at GCSE level, you will need to have enthusiasm and commitment for the subject.

Apply online: www.psc.ac.uk/apply t: 01962 857555 e: admissions@psc.ac.uk

Peter Symonds College, Owens Road, Winchester, Hampshire SO22 6RX