

Post-16 Curriculum - Photography

Subject Curriculum Overview

Subject	Photography
Qualification / Specification	Click or type here
Awarding Body	Click or type here
Level	3
Curriculum Lead	Rich Wiseman
Teaching Staff	Di Vince-Guidan
Guided Learning Hours	360
Year(s) Delivered	12 & 13
Last Review Date	June 2026
Next Review Date	June 2027

1. Curriculum Intent

The purpose of the Photography A level course is to create and develop: Independent thinking, Independent creativity, Critical thinking and Technical skills. These are all highly transferable skills. Upon developing these skills at A Level students are then in a secure place to explore pathways such as: Foundation Diplomas, Undergraduate degrees, Russell group universities. Outside of University Photography is part of the Art industry. At the end of A Level success is shown by the development of a cohesive visual journey that demonstrates technical skill, creative experimentation, and deep conceptual understanding. Learners succeed by deeply exploring an original theme, learning from historical and contemporary artists, and continually refining their ideas.

2. Foundational Knowledge

Area	Essential Knowledge / Skills	Why It Matters
Camera Types	Understand the differences between DSLR, mirrorless, compact, and smartphone cameras.	Helps learners choose the right equipment for different photographic purposes.

Camera Controls	Know how to use aperture, shutter speed, ISO, white balance, and focus modes.	These are the core settings that determine exposure, sharpness, and creative effects.
Exposure Triangle	Understand how aperture, shutter speed, and ISO work together to create a correctly exposed image.	Essential for producing well-exposed photographs in different lighting conditions.
Composition	Apply principles such as the rule of thirds, leading lines, framing, symmetry, and balance.	Strong composition creates visually engaging and effective photographs.
Lighting	Recognise natural and artificial light, direction, quality, colour temperature, and how light affects subjects.	Light is the most important element in photography and influences mood, texture, and detail.
Lenses	Understand focal lengths, zoom vs prime lenses, and how lenses affect perspective and depth of field.	Enables photographers to select the best lens for portraits, landscapes, sports, or macro photography.
Focus and Depth of Field	Know how autofocus and manual focus work, and how aperture influences depth of field.	Ensures subjects are sharp and supports creative storytelling through selective focus.
File Formats	Understand the difference between RAW and JPEG image formats.	Choosing the correct format affects image quality, editing flexibility, and file size.
Colour Theory	Understand colour harmony, contrast, saturation, and white balance.	Improves visual impact and supports effective image editing and storytelling.
Image Editing	Use editing software to crop, adjust exposure, colour, contrast, and remove minor imperfections.	Post-processing enhances image quality while maintaining authenticity.
Photography Genres	Recognise the characteristics of portrait, landscape, wildlife, sports, documentary, macro, and commercial photography.	Helps learners apply appropriate techniques to different photographic situations.
Visual Storytelling	Understand how images communicate ideas, emotions, and narratives.	Photography is a visual language used to inform, persuade, and inspire audiences.
Health and Safety	Follow safe practices when working with equipment, lighting, tripods, and on location.	Reduces risk to the photographer, subjects, and equipment.
Copyright and Ethics	Understand copyright, model releases, privacy, consent, and ethical image manipulation.	Ensures photographers work legally and responsibly while respecting others.

Image Evaluation	Analyse photographs using technical and creative criteria, including exposure, composition, and impact.	Encourages critical thinking and supports continuous improvement in photographic practice.
Equipment Care	Learn how to clean, store, transport, and maintain cameras, lenses, batteries, and memory cards.	Proper maintenance extends equipment life and ensures reliable performance.

3. Powerful Knowledge

Powerful Knowledge Area	Why It Matters	Evidence of Understanding
Camera Controls (Aperture, Shutter Speed, ISO)	Enables photographers to intentionally control exposure, depth of field, and motion to communicate ideas.	Selects appropriate settings independently and explains how technical choices support creative outcomes.
Composition and Visual Language	Understanding composition helps create images that guide the viewer's attention and convey meaning.	Produces well-composed photographs using principles such as rule of thirds, leading lines, framing, balance, or symmetry, and justifies compositional decisions.
Light and Lighting	Light shapes mood, atmosphere, texture, and narrative. Mastery of natural and artificial lighting expands creative possibilities.	Demonstrates control of lighting techniques and analyses how light affects the impact of photographs.
Exposure and Tonal Control	Understanding tonal range allows photographers to capture detail and create expressive images.	Produces correctly exposed images and intentionally manipulates highlights, shadows, and contrast for artistic effect.
Digital Editing and Post-Production	Editing is an essential stage of contemporary photographic practice and enhances communication of ideas.	Uses editing software purposefully to refine images while explaining how edits support the project concept.
Contextual Studies (Photographers and Movements)	Learning from historical and contemporary practitioners develops critical understanding and informs personal practice.	Makes meaningful references to photographers, comparing techniques, themes, and influences within written and practical work.
Visual Analysis and Critical Thinking	Analysing photographs develops the ability to interpret meaning, symbolism, and visual communication.	Evaluates images using appropriate photographic terminology and supports interpretations with evidence.
Creative Process and Project Development	Photography involves experimentation, refinement, and problem-solving rather than simply taking pictures.	Maintains a coherent portfolio showing experimentation, reflection, refinement, and justified creative decisions.

Conceptual Photography	Strong photography communicates ideas, emotions, and messages, not just attractive images.	Develops projects around clear concepts with photographs that consistently express intended meanings.
Genre Conventions	Understanding genres (portraiture, documentary, landscape, fashion, still life, etc.) allows informed creative choices and innovation.	Applies or challenges genre conventions while explaining the reasons behind those decisions.
Ethics and Representation	Photographers have responsibilities regarding truth, consent, bias, and representation.	Discusses ethical issues in photographic work and demonstrates responsible photographic practice.
Presentation and Sequencing	The order, format, and display of images influence how audiences interpret photographic narratives.	Presents work professionally with sequencing, layout, and presentation choices that strengthen the intended message.
Independent Investigation	A Level Photography values sustained enquiry and independent learning.	Produces a personal investigation demonstrating original thinking, research, experimentation, and critical evaluation.
Reflection and Evaluation	Reflective practice enables continuous improvement and deeper artistic understanding.	Evaluates successes and limitations of work, identifies next steps, and responds constructively to feedback.

4. Curriculum Implementation

Term / Unit	Key Content	Foundational Knowledge	Powerful Knowledge	Assessment Opportunities
Yr 12 - Autumn 1	Workshops Pinhole camera Portrait Studio set up Dark room / wet processes	Elements of Photography Shoot Fundamentals Photography History Creative Process understanding of Materials & Techniques	Communication Develop understanding, Visual language, Informed choices, technical competence.	Formative Crits & Peer Reviews Material Workshops, A02. Tutorials.
Yr 12 - Spring 1	Development of working vocabulary and specialist terminology. Independent project.	Materials and techniques. Analysis and evaluation. Idea development.	Critical thinking and contextual understanding. Communication. Conceptual understanding. Problem solving.	A01 A02 A03
Yr 12 - Summer 1	Introduction of personal study. Introduction of personal investigation.	Building on knowledge gained in the first 2 terms.	Critical thinking and contextual understanding. Communication. Conceptual understanding. Problem solving.	As above. Formative assessment at each stage.
Yr 13 - Autumn 2	Continuation of Summer 1	Consolidation of all knowledge.		As above. Formative assessment at each stage.

Yr 13 - Spring 2	Component 2; Response to an externally set assignment.	Consolidation of all knowledge.		Tutorials and one to one assessment weekly.

5. Assessment Strategy

Assessment Type	Purpose	Frequency
Diagnostic	GCSE results to establish identifies strengths, weaknesses, and potential,	Start of course.
Formative	Monitoring progress and providing actionable feedback during the creative process	Weekly
Summative	Overview of progress and to set targets.	Every half term
Synoptic	Ability to meet 4 assessment objectives.	Termly