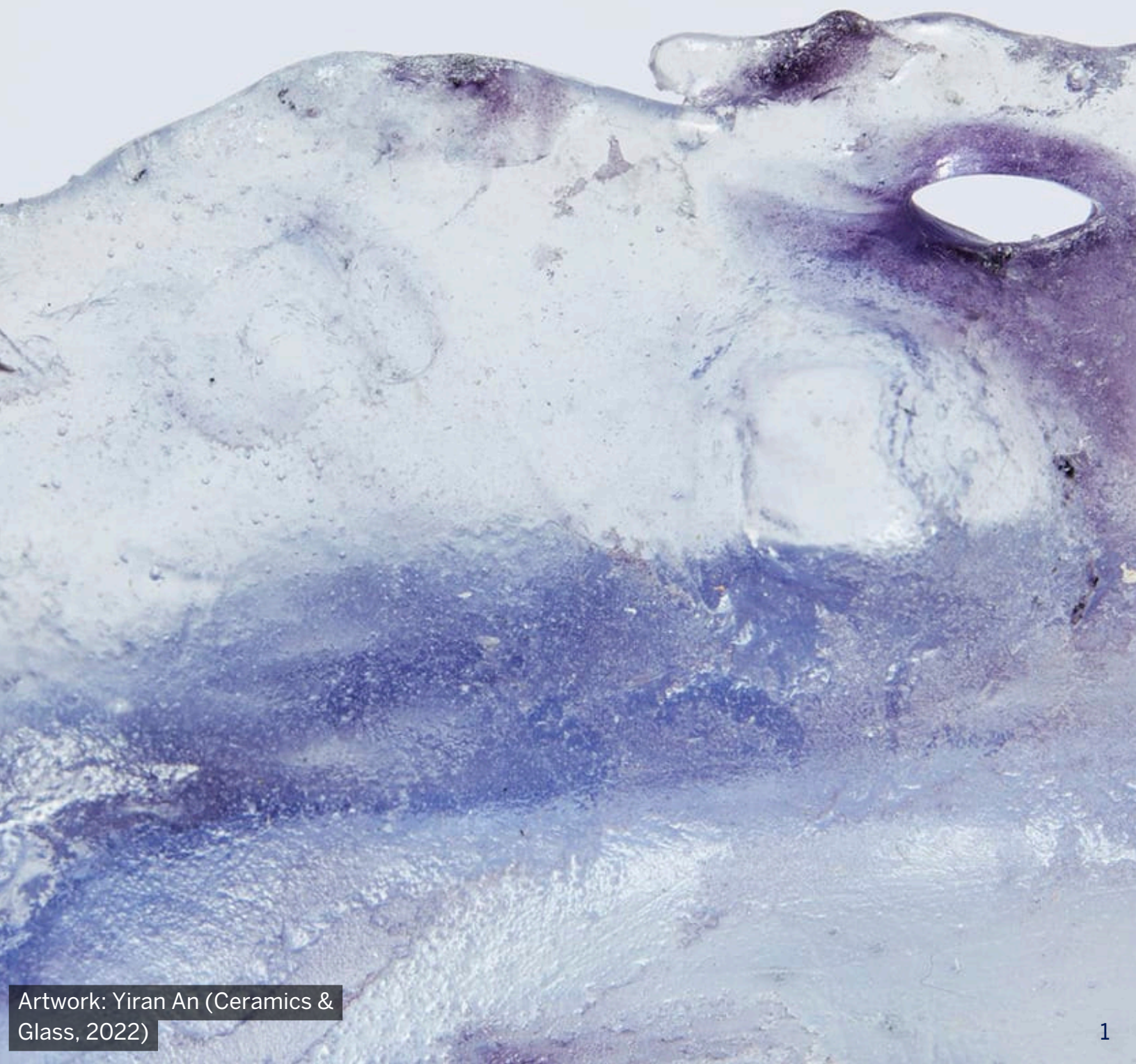


RCA

Academic Registrar January 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 oldest art and design university in continuous operation and today hosts the largest postgraduate community of art and design students globally. The RCA has been ranked the world's number one art and design university for eleven consecutive years by the QS World University Rankings by Subject 2025, reflecting the College's unrivalled reputation for excellence and influence.

The RCA is research-led, with REF 2021 recognising the College as the UK's most research-intensive art and design institution. A growing proportion of our outputs are judged 'world-leading' and 'internationally excellent', and our interdisciplinary research environment brings together artists, designers, architects, technologists and scientists to address global challenges and shape future creative practice.

With more than 25,000 alumni across the world, the RCA's graduates form a unique global network of creative leaders. Our students and alumni are internationally recognised for developing award-winning, sector-defining work — from fine art and architecture to robotics, mobility, material science and cutting-edge design innovation. InnovationRCA, our graduate start-up incubator, is one of the most successful in the UK, supporting high numbers of female-led ventures and delivering exceptional long-term commercial success.



Photo: Richard Haughton

More than 2,800 students study across four Schools and multiple research centres, taking programmes at Graduate Diploma, MA, MFA, MDes, MArch, MEd, MRes, MPhil and PhD levels. Our practice-based model blends academic rigour, creative experimentation and interdisciplinarity, supported by a highly skilled technical workforce and an academic community with deep links to industry, culture, science and the creative sector. The RCA is home to established and developing research hubs including the Helen Hamlyn Centre for Design, the Intelligent Mobility Design Centre, the Computer Science Research Centre, the Textiles Circularity Centre, the Materials Futures Research Group and a forthcoming Centre for Drawing.

The College champions a STEAM vision — integrating science, technology, engineering, art and design — with investment in specialist faculty across fields such as robotics, materials science and computer science. This approach enables our community to tackle urgent global issues including climate resilience, ageing societies, biodiversity loss, the ethics of emerging technologies and the transformative potential of AI.

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.

Our academic faculty bring world-leading expertise and industry insight into a practice-led teaching model. A core academic and research workforce of around 196 FTE is supported by more than 215 Associate Lecturers and a broad network of guest lecturers from across global creative industries and cultural sectors. Distinguished practitioners including leaders from architecture, design, fashion, visual communication, materials science and digital innovation contribute directly to the curriculum.

Our 95 specialist technicians hold deep expertise in areas including digital fabrication, prototyping, film and sound, 3D modelling, metalwork, ceramics, textiles, and emerging technologies. Their knowledge underpins an exceptional hands-on learning environment and ensures students have access to world-class technical support.

Our people form a distinctive creative ecosystem: a collaborative, interdisciplinary community working across disciplines, generations and cultures to shape the future of art and design.



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.

Registry & Student Success

The Royal College of Art has grown from around a thousand students a decade ago to approximately 3,000 students today, studying at Graduate Diploma, MA, MRes, MPhil and PhD level, with new awards in development including MFA, MDes, and Professional Doctorate. As a highly selective postgraduate-only institution, the College attracts over 15,000 applications for 1,250 new places (2022/23) from around 80 countries, across more than 30 programmes of study. Over the same period, the wider higher education landscape has undergone significant transformation, with major shifts in funding, regulation, internationalisation, and heightened expectations around the quality and inclusivity of the student experience.

In this context of growth and change, both for the RCA and the sector, the Academic Registry and Student Success functions together play a central role in the student's relationship with the College from initial enquiry through to life as an alum. This shared responsibility encompasses the full student lifecycle: initial application and admission, enrolment and registration, progression and assessment, participation in Convocation, and continued engagement as graduates and lifelong ambassadors for the RCA. It also includes the proactive support, advice, and interventions that foster belonging, wellbeing, and personal and academic success, helping every student to make the most of their time at the College.

To support these critical stages of the journey, Academic Registry and Student Success work to deliver services that are efficient, agile, responsive, supportive, and welcoming, aiming to enhance the student experience while enabling the College to achieve its strategic goals. Together, these teams are responsible for: student number modelling; fee assessment; management of student records and the student record system; admissions, enrolment and registration; Student Route visa compliance; statutory and management information (including returns to HESA and the OfS); administration of US government loans; assessment, progression and convocation; production of transcripts and certificates; support for academic appeals; student funding advice; casework, conduct, and complaints; mental health and wellbeing services; disability and dyslexia support; and student engagement activities designed to promote retention, inclusion, and successful outcomes.





Purpose of the post

The Academic Registrar will:

- Provide strategic and operational leadership for the end-to-end student journey from enquiry to graduation, ensuring regulatory assurance and data integrity while driving proactive retention, belonging and successful outcomes for a predominantly postgraduate, international community. Lead the Academic Registry pillar and co-own student success outcomes with the Head of Student Success & Experience, underpinned by shared data services and joint KPIs.



Main Duties and Responsibilities

Leadership and management

- Provide strategic and operational leadership across the entire student lifecycle, from application to graduation, ensuring seamless integration of Academic Registry and Student Success & Experience functions.
- Lead two operational pillars:
 - Academic Registry — covering admissions, enrolment, scholarships and bursaries, student records, assessment, visa compliance, quality assurance, and data & systems.
 - Student Success & Experience — covering wellbeing, counselling, disability and dyslexia support, casework, complaints and conduct, student advice (including international and finance), student funding, and proactive engagement and retention activities.
- Line-manage senior postholders including: Head of Registry Operations, Admissions & Enrolment Manager, Assistant Registrar (Assessment & Visa Compliance), Deputy Registrar (Information & Systems), Quality Assurance Manager, Head of Student Success & Experience, and other designated senior managers.
- Build a unified leadership culture across both pillars, ensuring that managers work to joint KPIs for student success, including retention, belonging, completion, and progression into employment or further study.

- Act as the institution's senior professional lead for UKVI sponsor compliance, statutory data returns, and quality assurance, ensuring these are integrated into day-to-day practice and risk management.
- Manage the allocation and deployment of Registry resources: staff, accommodation and funds, and in association with HR, determine and prioritise staff development.
- Lead on projects designed to implement effective change within Professional Services.
- Lead and implement change for student-related processes to support the enhancement of the student experience including registration, assessment and convocation.
- Ensure that robust metrics and key performance indicators are devised, developed and used effectively for each of the Registry teams in delivery of the Strategic Plan.
- Ensure that appraisals, setting of objectives and staff development plans are carried out in alignment with College priorities, in a timely fashion, with appropriate performance measures and management.
- Champion equity, diversity, and inclusion across all services, embedding anti-racist, inclusive practices in policy, process, and staff development.

(i) Services and systems

- Lead, plan and manage service review projects within the Registry and Student Success, championing excellence in delivery, a positive service culture and ensuring that outcomes are delivered on time and to budget.
- Oversee the delivery of high-quality, student-centred services that are responsive to the needs of a predominantly postgraduate, international cohort to ensure that they align with the College's Recruitment Strategy.
- Lead the design and delivery of an integrated enquiry model for all non-academic student queries, ensuring smooth triage and case management through ServiceNow (or equivalent).
- Be accountable for the review and enhancement of the external on-line student recruitment portal service.
- Be accountable for the review and enhancement of the student records system (in liaison with the Digital Delivery team) which incorporates all applicant, student and academic records; to oversee a training programme for users of the system in the central administration and in Schools and, once established, ensure the continued effective operation of the system.

- Drive service improvements through co-design with staff and students, drawing on user feedback, sector benchmarking, and operational analytics.
- Recommend the development of new services or processes as required to support the changing requirements of the College.

(ii) Regulatory requirements

- Ensure compliance with relevant statutory and regulatory requirements including, but not limited to, the submission of data to HESA and the OfS.
- Ensure compliance with the responsibilities of the College's UK Visa and Immigration (UKVI) Student Route sponsorship licence and to act as the College's Key Contact for all licences.
- Ensure compliance with consumer protection legislation and guidance from the Competitions and Markets Authority (CMA) in respect of student information and registration.
- Lead, plan and manage the development and operation of the College's appeals processes, ensuring compliance with the Office of the Independent Adjudicator's Good Practice Framework.
- Ensure that the College's academic and regulatory framework supports the ambitions of the Strategic Plan to develop new modes and formats of academic delivery, conforms to external requirements, and assures the standards of its awards.
- Advise staff and students on the implementation of the College's academic and regulatory framework.
- Maintain an up-to-date regulatory risk register for all areas under remit, reporting regularly to the PVC Education & Student Success and relevant governance committees.

(iii) Management information

- Utilise, and/or instruct the utilisation of, management information to facilitate effective planning for growth and the monitoring of data relating to admissions, progression and attainment (including recruitment trends and patterns, recruitment forecasts and retention forecasts, provision of scholarships and bursaries).
- Contribute to determining, in consultation with senior colleagues, and as approved by Senate and Council, the numbers by school and programme to meet the College's financial and student number requirements, and plans for growth.

(iv) Operational

- Oversee and be accountable for the management of the Registry and Student Success teams to ensure effective:
 - processing of student applications, offers, fee status assessments, admissions, registration, leaves of absence and withdrawals;
 - administration of postgraduate loans and US government loans;
 - academic record keeping;
 - academic administration and support for applicants, students, staff and partner institutions;
 - efficient and secure processing of results and conferment information along with the notification of final award results and the provision of accurate transcripts;
 - organisation of the College's graduation ceremonies.
- Provide high level, expert advice in relation to relevant aspects of the work of the Registry, for example, in relation to complex student cases.

(v) Communication

- Instruct and oversee the production, maintenance and accuracy of Registry and Student Success areas of the College's website.
- Ensure effective communication between the Registry and Student Success, the Vice-Chancellor's Office, the Senior Management Team, the Academic Strategy and Development Group, the Admissions and Enrolment Delivery and Enhancement Group, the Operations Group, General Managers and administrators, and operational and support functions including Human Resources, Finance, Information, Learning and Technical Services (ILTS), Estates & Campus Operations and Health & Safety.
- Ensure that College policies are communicated to, understood, and complied with by all members of the Registry.

(vi) General

- Undertake continued professional development and engage with national and international institutional and professional networks related to the role of Academic Registrar and the academic administration of small and specialist institutions (e.g. Academic Registrars' Council);
- Represent the College externally ensuring constructive engagement with relevant sector bodies such as the Office of the Independent Adjudicator, the Student Loans Company, and UKVI.
- It is essential to the development of the Registry function that the role holder is able to respond flexibly and positively to changes in the requirements of the post. This job description is therefore a guide to the type and range of responsibilities the role holder will be expected to undertake and the duties of the post may be altered from time to time to meet changing operational requirements.

Person Specification

Essential:

Education

- Educated to first degree level or equivalent.

Experience

- Significant experience in a comparable leadership role in an HE academic registry environment.
- Experience of effective staff management and development, including performance and appraisal management.
- Significant demonstrable operations management experience as well as evidence of process management, development and review.
- Significant experience and a detailed understanding of student records systems and data management.

Knowledge

- Full understanding and working knowledge of UK HE policies, practices and academic regulations in relation to student administration
- Demonstrable knowledge of compliance and understanding of UKVI requirements.



Photo: Iwan Baan

Person Specification

Skills and abilities

- Excellent numerical and analytical skills with the ability to use digital technology to support business processes and record keeping, analyse complex problems and recommend and execute appropriate solutions.
- Ability, capacity and willingness to adapt quickly to changing pressures and demands, to apply experience to new or unfamiliar challenges, to plan, prioritise and organise own workload effectively and that of others, to meet deadlines and get things done and to initiate and sustain improvements in service.
- Proven ability to translate strategy and policy into actions and operations, including questioning accepted viewpoints and ability to challenge 'upwards'.
- Demonstrable effective interpersonal skills including negotiating, persuasion and influencing skills.
- Ability, drive and personal presence to establish effective working relationships, engagement with key stakeholders (internally and externally), and the political acumen to be effective at a senior level within the College.
- Highly effective people management skills, with the ability to motivate and engage others and drive high performance
- Strong IT skills and the aptitude to learn, and where necessary specify, new systems and/or software.

General

- Membership of relevant educational and/or professional bodies and networks.
- Evidence of commitment to continuous professional development.
- Commitment to equality of opportunity and diversity with the ability to work harmoniously with colleagues and students of all cultures and backgrounds.

Desirable:

- Educated to postgraduate level.
- Experience of working in a postgraduate, research-intensive environment.
- Experience of working in an internationalised environment, including experience or knowledge of non-UK higher education systems, frameworks and quality assurance and enhancement regimes.
- Project management skills.
- An understanding of, and experience in, student support services in higher education.

Pay & Benefits

Additional Information:

- Responsible to: Pro Vice-Chancellor Education & Student Success
- Full time salary: Competitive
- 30 days annual leave plus extended breaks at Christmas and Easter, at the discretion of the College. Pro rata for part time employees
- A contributory defined benefit pension scheme and interest-free season ticket loan are available alongside many other benefits
- Location: Kensington/Battersea/Hybrid, London
- Department: Education and Student Success
- 1FTE, permanent role
- Responsible for:
 - Head of Registry Operations
 - Assistant Registrar (Assessment & Visa Compliance)
 - Head of Student Success and Experience
 - Student Success Manager
- Key contacts:
 - PVCs, Directors, Deans, Associate Deans, Heads of Programme, School General Managers and Administrators



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





11 years
as the world's
N°1 University
for Art & Design

QS World University Rankings
by Subject 2015-25

Together, the RCA community can generate change now for a sustainable future everywhere.