

photography

A Level

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Exam board: AQA



What is this subject about?

Photography is all around us and is one of the fast growing and most exciting contemporary mediums. Photography at Esher College will develop your awareness of the photographic world that surrounds you. We work hard to enhance your appreciation of Photography, teach you how to use our Photoshop suite, Nikon cameras and professional photography studio, and above all help you learn to love the visual world that is ever evolving. The Photography teachers at Esher College all have degrees in Photography and are ex-photography/film making professionals.

What will I study over the two years?

During the first year of Photography we work with you to develop your camera, Photoshop and studio lighting skills. You will be expected to complete a shoot a week for homework, which will reinforce what you learn in the classroom. You will shoot a wide variety of photographic genres, from fashion to documentary and landscape to portraiture, informed by a variety of photographers, old and new. The emphasis in the first year is skills based which requires a positive work ethic to keep up with the homework set.

In the second year you will further explore the skills you have learnt in Year 1 and develop them with one-to-one guidance and regular peer assessment sessions; your own ideas will be nurtured and you will be encouraged to independently explore your chosen style. We will look closely at the relationship between films, art, music and photography. Alongside your practical photography, you will produce a 1500 word essay, which is an integral part of coursework in the second year.

How is the course assessed?

The coursework, which is completed in the first and second year, is worth 60%. At the end of the second year there is a 15 hour timed exam worth 40%.

What skills will I need and develop in this course?

You should possess a desire to explore this creative subject where hard work, creativity and organisational skills are essential. You will be doing a shoot a week, and an artist study for homework. This hard work will be rewarded by you very quickly being able to shoot to a near professional standard. Photography A Level will teach you how to use and appreciate the technicalities and aesthetics of much of the photography that surrounds you in your everyday life.

What can the course lead to in terms of higher education and future careers?

BA (Hons) Photography is a popular choice at university. Some students study a Foundation in Art or Photography before progressing to a creative degree, but many go straight from A Level onto a degree course.

There is now a diverse range of careers that will be open to a Photographic graduate, from film making, photography and advertising to a career in design or journalism. Last year 41% of our Photography students went on to study Photography at degree level or hoped to do so after doing a Foundation Art/Media course. Top creative universities such as Arts University Bournemouth, University of the Arts London and Nottingham Trent are popular with our students.

What are the formal entry requirements for this course?

Aside from the College's general entry requirements, evidence of real commitment to this subject is essential. Whilst it is preferable to have a grade 4 or above in GCSE Art or Art & Design or a 4 grade in Media or Textiles, it is not essential. Good grades in essay-based subjects are also key for success in second year units.

Students with no previous qualifications in Art or Design, but with a genuine desire to study this subject still achieve success on this course. You will need to contact the Head of Department and you will be required to submit a portfolio of photographs at enrolment. Acceptance on to the course will be at the discretion of the Head of Department.

Subject combination advice:

Art, Fashion, 3D Design, Graphic Communication, Media, Film Studies, Maths and English all offer a range of progression routes.

What extra support/enrichment activities are on offer?

We run two residential Photography trips. In the first year students have the opportunity to go on a 3 day Fashion + Documentary Photography residential course. This trip is based on building professional skills and photographic confidence. We have two professional photographers who run the event, and you will use professional models for the fashion shoots. This is always a popular trip and students relish working with professional photographers and models. In the second year we attend the spectacular Paris Photo exhibition. This is, arguably, the most prestigious and exciting photography exhibitions in Europe. It's scale and the variety of work is incredibly inspiring.

At the end of the second year, in conjunction with Media and Film, we hold an Esher College Oscars night. This is a night of glitz, glamour and awards. A suitably celebratory end to their Photography, Media or Film course.

We are also very lucky to have a fully kitted out professional photographic studio that is available to students throughout the College day and after College. This is fully supported by 3 Photography staff.