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CATS University Foundation Programme

Visual Arts Specification

Going further than others

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UNIVERSITY FOUNDATION PROGRAMME

Going further than others

CATS UFP is a Level 3 course, designed to help international students to move successfully from high school to a UK University. It does this by using a variety of assessment methods that are common in UK Universities, such as portfolios, presentations academic posters, and examinations combined with content specifically designed to build on prior learning from courses around the world. While English for Academic purposes is an essential part of CATS UFP, and all students will take an English course, assessment design within each module focuses on subject knowledge and skills, rather than the ability to cope with English as a second language.

CATS UFP is delivered over nine months (sometimes six, for students on specific visas, used to a rigorous style of study and excellent English), within a pastorally supportive and culturally stimulating context that enables students' learning to prosper. It does this by providing a variety of routes to the qualification, taught by expert staff and with time to develop English and learn about British culture. CATS UFP is only available to centres with excellent pastoral care. Centres provide a stimulating intellectual and cultural environment with small classes. Thus, enabling the best learning to happen. With CATS UFP, all learning happens with teachers who are expert in creating a positive learning environment for students from a wide range of countries.

CATS UFP has a successful record of accomplishment and is highly respected by UK universities. With this qualification, students with 12 years of schooling from their own country can make the progression that they want, to a wide range of UK universities, including those ranked most highly for both research and teaching. CATS UFP has strong advocates in its alumni, who display what a CATS UFP qualification can give them. Graduates report that they feel very well prepared for university study; often, better prepared than students from other Level 3 programmes. Universities have confirmed this, through testimonials and through extensive consultation with university based External Examiners it has gained excellent credibility with UK universities.

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INTRODUCTION: Why Choose Visual Arts UFP?

Engaging, Evolving, and Relevant.
The Visual Arts UFP at CATS is a dynamic and engaging course with a long-standing reputation for excellence. Built on years of experience, continual refinement, and feedback from educators, candidates, and working closely with universities, this qualification is designed to meet the evolving demands of both academic and creative industries.

Our holistic approach integrates practical studio work with theoretical exploration, encouraging candidates to make meaningful connections across techniques, movements, and historical contexts. Through this, learners develop both creative confidence and a deeper understanding of the visual arts in cultural and societal contexts. Balanced with studio practice, our candidates have extensive opportunities to apply their learning in a hands-on, creative environment via focused projects.

Inclusive and Accessible for International Candidates.
We recognise the challenges international candidates may face when studying for a British qualification. This course is designed with accessibility in mind, with assessment and delivery methods tailored to support candidates in achieving their full potential regardless of prior background.

Creative and Critical Skills for the Future.
The course equips candidates with essential knowledge and skills for further study and creative careers. They will learn to critically analyse artworks, evaluate the work of others, and apply these insights to their own practice. Emphasis is placed on creative thinking, experimentation, and contextual awareness — all vital for success in higher education and the creative industries.

By the end of the course, candidates will have developed work that can be used for a high-quality portfolio suitable for applications to art-related degrees or art colleges. Visual Arts supports progression to careers in architecture, design, visual communication, illustration, media, marketing, journalism, fashion, and retail, among others.

Assessment Designed for Success
Assessment is continuous and coursework-based, allowing candidates to demonstrate progress through an evolving portfolio. Regular checkpoints provide opportunities to showcase both technical skills and conceptual understanding, ensuring that feedback is timely and meaningful.

Aims of the Visual Arts UFP Course

The Visual Arts UFP aims to:

- Develop an enthusiasm and passion for visual arts.
- Build awareness of real-world applications in fields such as architecture, fashion, advertising, and design.
- Provide foundational technical, theoretical, and conceptual skills for progression to degree-level study.
- Guide candidates in producing a strong, individualised portfolio suitable for university interviews and applications, that showcase their skills.
- Offer insight into the creative industries and the art world through gallery visits, workshops, guest speakers, or industry-related opportunities.
- Emphasise practical application and creative risk-taking in the development of skills and ideas.
- Develop abilities across a broad range of artistic specialisms, helping candidates identify personal areas of interest.
- Train candidates in the use of various materials, techniques, and processes confidently and independently.
- Encourage experimentation, imagination, and originality in artistic responses.
- Support candidates in realising their intentions through competent and meaningful outcomes.

Key Academic Skills

- Students taking this course will be encouraged to develop into independent learners with the ability to think critically, understanding the key importance of research and presentational skills. The course covers these key skills in the following ways:
  -

Reasoning and critical thinking

- Students will:
- Examine artworks and visual culture from different international, historical and theoretical perspectives;
- Explore tensions between artistic intention, audience reception and institutional contexts;
- Select, organise and communicate relevant visual and contextual information through sketches, short analyses and curated sequences.

Independent learning

- Students will:
- Manage studio time, materials and workspace and plan projects;
- Work on their own initiative to prioritise tasks and develop skills;
- Work independently to test ideas, reflect on progress and complete self-directed tasks.

Research skills

- Students will:
- Research artists, movements, techniques and contexts from a range of countries and apply findings to their work;
- Reference all sources and image credits correctly and avoid plagiarism;
- Use ICT to source imagery, document processes and collaborate digitally.

Presentation and Communication skills

- Students will:
- Practise academic conventions in reflections, artist statements and longer written work;
- Develop verbal, visual and material expression through critiques, presentations and displays;
- Use word processing, layout and portfolio tools for clear visual communication;
- Organise visual information coherently in sketchbooks, portfolios and exhibitions using appropriate art vocabulary.

Assumed Prior Knowledge

The Visual Arts UFP course is open to all candidates, regardless of their previous formal study in art. However, familiarity or experience with some of the following areas (common in Key Stage 4 or equivalent art education) will be beneficial:

Specialist Areas of Study

- Fine Art
- Drawing
- Painting and related media
- Portraiture, still life, abstract, and life studies
- Landscapes/cityscapes
- Printmaking
- Mono-printing
- Relief printing
- Intaglio printing
- Screen printing
- Three-Dimensional Design
- Sculpture
- Ceramics
- Theatre/set design
- Environmental, architectural, or interior design
- Product design
- Photography and Digital Media
- Digital photography and photomontage
- Animation and moving image
- Photojournalism and documentary photography
- Studio/location photography
- Digital installation
- Graphic Communication
- Graphic design with typography
- Illustration
- Web design
- Advertising and print media
- Textiles and Fashion
- Weaving, sewing, and knitting
- Dyeing and printing techniques
- Skills and Techniques

Candidates may have experience in:

- Observational drawing and creative responses
- Working with a range of traditional and new media
- Installation, animation, audio/moving image
- Techniques using charcoal, pastels, ink, pencil, watercolour, acrylics, oil paint
- Working with found materials, clay, wood, or metal
- Creating and editing digital imagery

They may also have begun developing:

- Investigative, analytical, and experimental thinking
- Independent learning and reflective practice
- Visual and tactile communication skills using the formal elements:

The ways in which meanings, ideas and intentions can be communicated through visual and tactile language using formal elements, including line, shape, form, space, texture, colour, and tone.

Subject Content

The UFP Visual Arts course aims to broaden our students' creative horizons, as well as deepen their technical skills, critical thinking and cultural awareness. It is therefore essential, in cultivating a comprehensive and well-rounded approach to their art education, to provide students at this advanced stage of development with the opportunities to experience a broad spectrum of visual expression. We therefore offer the following practices that can be developed through individual projects,

- Drawing & Mark-making
- Illustration & Animation
- Painting
- Textiles
- Sculpture
- 3D Design
- Print Making
- Mixed Media
- Graphic Communication
- Photography/Lens based media
-

Students will be required to complete three major projects, which may be set thematically or by specialism as determined by the teacher and a personal project of their choice based on and extending one of their previous projects. Throughout each of these projects, students will develop their practical skills, creative process, and contextual understanding. To successfully complete the course, students must present their work along with a recorded presentation.

The assessment criteria apply uniformly to all projects, tasks, mini-projects, and presentations within the course. Final summative assessment will be based on the completed submissions for each project. Each project must demonstrate evidence of preparation, development, planning, experimentation, contextual awareness, and fully realised final pieces. From 2025 onwards, all final submissions will be uploaded as PDF presentations via Inspera, the designated platform for UFP submissions.

Skills and Techniques

Students are required to show practical skills appropriate to their chosen projects. Additionally, they will need to show development of their skills in all of the following:

- recording of images - such as analysis, observation (from primary and secondary sources), reflection, evaluation, research, imagination, and expression

- planning and artistic intentions - awareness of their anticipated audience, meaning and purpose, development of ideas, use of mediums and curation.
- understanding of the conventions of representational and/or figurative and non-representational and/or abstract genres or imagery
- understanding and intentions of use of the formal elements – line, shape, form tone texture, pattern, composition and colour, as well as use of space, scale, structure and rhythm
- effective use of a variety of ways of making art; the following list is not exhaustive:

    - drawing/mark making
    - painting
    - photography
    - modelling
    - sculpting
    - casting
    - constructing
    - assembling
    - intaglio printing
    - relief printing
    - mono printing
    - graffiti
    - stencilling
    - illustration
    - digital art

Quality Of Making

- Students will need show their ability to work with a range of materials, techniques, and processes effectively and with developing skill.
- Students should focus on developing the quality of their work (appropriate to a pre-university course), with fully realised final artworks showcasing their artistic intentions.
- Students will need to develop a personal art language; they will use this to express ideas and to confidently link their intentions to outcomes.

Progress

A student who makes every effort to learn and improve should see that progress reflected in their grade.

Independent Learning

Students are encouraged to work independently, and the mark scheme reflects this. Homework should be set at a minimum of 3 hours a week.

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Assessment Overview

Assessment Objectives

Assessment objectives (AOs) are designed for Level 3 study.

	Objective	Weighting
A01- Develop	To develop a direction, approach or an idea through careful planning and research, supported by contextual sources, demonstrating critical understanding, and applying a range of appropriate practical skills particular to each project	20%
A02- Explore	To explore a range of mediums, techniques, and processes appropriate to each project, showing evaluation, reflection and refinement; and that demonstrate personal individual responses with positively developing practical skills and an understanding of the formal elements	20%
A03- Record	To record the development and realization of personal responses through ideas, insights and observations that demonstrate critical and analytical understanding, informed by wider contextual studies, understanding of the formal elements and critical reflection for each project	20%
AO4- Present	To present coherent personal responses for each project, relevant to artistic intentions and reflecting a personal journey that culminates in fully realised artworks. To make appropriate connections contextually and practically	20%
AO5- Progress	To show a thoughtful work attitude, with a desire to participate, learn and improve evidenced in classroom engagement, project work as well as in independent study	20%

Assessment Overview

Visual Arts UFP is to be delivered within 140 directed learning. Candidates will be assessed via:

Project 1 (chosen by centre)	25% 40 hours	- End of unit presentation through: presentation sheet
Project 2 (chosen by centre)	25% 40 hours	- End of unit presentation through: presentation sheet
Project 3 (chosen by centre)	25% 40 hours	- End of unit presentation through: presentation sheet
Personal project chosen by candidate from one of the above and extended	10% 15% 20 hours	- Portfolio/final piece - PDF submission

Sketch books can be used for record keeping throughout each module; however, students will be assessed at the end of each module via their resolved piece, presentation sheets and exhibition/presentation.

Projects 1-3 (AO1, AO2, AO3, AO4, AO5)
Personal Project (AO4, AO5)
Final PDF Presentation

Use the following grid to mark each project. There are four levels. Within each level there is a range of 4 marks for each objective.
Once a level has been decided for each objective, award a mark from within that level. A student can be awarded Level 1, 2, 3 or
4 on each objective]

Assessment Objectives 2025 - 2026

LEVEL	GRADES	DESCRIPTORS		AO1 – DEVELOP	AO2 - EXPLORE	AO3 - RECORD	AO4 - PRESENT	AO5 - PROGRESS
				To develop a direction, approach or an idea through careful planning and research, supported by contextual sources, demonstrating critical understanding, and applying a range of appropriate practical skills particular to each project.	To explore a range of mediums, techniques, and processes appropriate to each project, showing evaluation, reflection and refinement; and that demonstrates personal individual responses with positively developing practical skills and an understanding of the formal elements	To record the development and realisation of personal responses through ideas, insights and observations that demonstrate critical and analytical understanding, informed by wider contextual studies, understanding of the formal elements and critical reflection for each project.	To present coherent personal responses for each project, relevant to artistic intentions and reflecting a personal journey that culminates in fully realised artworks. To make appropriate connections contextually and practically.	To show a thoughtful work attitude, with a desire to participate, learn and improve evidenced in classroom engagement, project work, as well as independent study.
Level 4	**16**	**Exceptional ability**	**Convincingly**	**The candidate:** Shows an exceptional ability to identify and develop, plan, and execute their own ideas, independently making purposeful and meaningful decisions informed by their critical and contextual understanding.	**The candidate:** Shows an exceptional and consistent ability to explore, experiment and master a range of mediums, techniques, and processes relevant to each artwork across all projects.	**The candidate:** Has demonstrated exceptional and consistent ability in choice of personal project/theme/objectives that is informed by meaningful research.	**The candidate:** Presents artworks in an exceptionally thoughtful and relevant fashion, whilst showing excellent coherent personal responses and a clear developmental journey with fully realised artistic intentions.	**The candidate:** Has demonstrated an exceptional work ethic, participating fully in every class and independently, creating an accomplished body of work. Has met all deadlines and homework objectives and demonstrates an exceptional desire to improve by acting on and implementing feedback throughout the course. Through a thoughtful attitude, meaningful questions, classroom engagement and art work has shown exceptional
	15		**Clearly**	Demonstrates exceptional ability in choice of mediums and techniques appropriate in all projects, that consistently shows	Evaluates, reflects and refines all projects demonstrating purposeful and effective development	Demonstrates exceptional understanding of contextual studies in relation to own work that includes critical reflection	Makes excellent judgements in annotating, selecting and presenting artworks in their final submission,	

				improvement and links to their contextual studies.	that supports experimentation.	and analysis, with purposeful and meaningful annotation.	making appropriate visual connections. As well as in choice of mediums and use of techniques for each artwork.	understanding and effort throughout the course.
	14 **13**	**Excellent ability**	**Adequately** **Just**	Shows excellent fluency and understanding of specialist art vocabulary specific to chosen projects.	Shows a congruous body of personal and individual responses in mini tasks and projects.	Provides excellent links and references to applicable theories and concepts.	Clearly evidences exceptional understanding of their own artworks through meaningful evaluation, reflection, insights, fully realised artworks and contextual studies.	Has demonstrated an exceptional ability to create their own artwork and develop their skills using their own ideas and working independently.
Level 3	**12** **11**	**Confident ability**	**Convincingly** **Clearly**	**The candidate:** Shows a confident ability to identify and develop, plan and execute their own ideas, independently making purposeful and meaningful decisions, that are successful the majority of the time and informed by their critical and contextual understanding. Demonstrates a confident ability in choice of mediums and techniques appropriate in all projects, that consistently shows improvement and links to their contextual studies.	**The candidate:** Shows a confident and mostly consistent ability to explore and master a range of mediums, techniques, and processes relevant to each artwork across all projects. Evaluates, reflects, and refines all projects demonstrating highly effective development that supports experimentation.	**The candidate:** Has demonstrated confident ability in choice of personal project/theme/objectives that is informed by clearly linked research. Demonstrates confident understanding of contextual studies in relation to own work that includes critical reflection, analysis through meaningful annotation.	**The candidate:** Presents artworks in a confident and purposeful fashion, whilst showing confident coherent personal responses and a clear developmental journey with highly effective outcomes. Makes confident judgements in annotating, selecting and presenting their artworks, making appropriate visual connections. As well as	**The candidate:** Has demonstrated a strong work ethic, participating confidently in every class and independently, creating a highly effective body of work. Has mostly met all deadlines and homework objectives and demonstrates a strong desire to improve by acting on and implementing feedback throughout the course. Through a thoughtful attitude, meaningful questions, classroom engagement and artwork has shown competent understanding and effective effort throughout the course.

							in choice of mediums and use of techniques for each artwork.	
	10		**Adequately**				Clearly evidences confident and purposeful understanding of their own artworks and contextual studies through evaluation, reflection and insights.	Has demonstrated an effective ability to create their own artwork and develop their skills using their own ideas and working independently.
	9	**Highly effective**	**Just**	Shows confidence in their fluency and understanding of specialist art vocabulary specific to chosen projects.	Shows a highly effective body of personal and individual responses in mini tasks and projects.	Provides strong links and references to applicable theories and concepts.		
Level 2	**8**	**Competent ability**	**Convincingly**	**The candidate:** Shows a competent ability to identify and develop, plan and execute their own ideas, independently and with some teacher support making mostly purposeful and meaningful decisions, that are mostly successful and informed by their critical and contextual understanding.	**The candidate:** Shows a competent and mostly consistent ability to explore and effectively use a range of mediums, techniques, and processes relevant to each artwork across all projects.	**The candidate:** Has demonstrated competent ability in choice of personal project/theme/objectives that is informed by research.	**The candidate:** Presents artworks in a competent fashion for each project, whilst showing competent personal responses and a mostly clear developmental journey with mostly effective outcomes.	**The candidate:** Has demonstrated a competent work ethic, participating in most classes and independently, creating a mostly effective body of work. Has met most deadlines and homework objectives with teacher support.
	7		**Clearly**	Demonstrates a competent ability (with some teacher support) in choice of mediums and techniques appropriate in all projects, that shows general improvement and links most	Mostly evaluates, reflects and refines all projects demonstrating good development that supports experimentation.	Demonstrates competent understanding of contextual studies in relation to own work that includes critical reflection, analysis through purposeful annotation.	Makes competent judgements in annotating, selecting and presenting artworks in their final submission, making appropriate visual connections. As	Through a thoughtful attitude, meaningful questions, classroom engagement and artwork has shown competent understanding and mostly effective effort throughout the course.

	6 5	**Good ability**	**Adequately** **Just**	of the time to their contextual studies. Ideas are relevant most of the time. Shows good ability in their use and understanding of key terms specific to chosen projects.	Shows a strong body of personal and individual responses in mini tasks and projects.	Provides good links and references to mostly applicable theories and concepts.	well as in choice of mediums and use of techniques for each artwork. Shows evidence of competent and mostly purposeful understanding of their own artworks and contextual studies through evaluation, reflection and insights.	Has demonstrated an acceptable ability to create their own artwork and develop their skills using their own ideas and working independently.
Level 1	**4**	**Adequate ability**	**Convincingly**	**The candidate:** Shows adequate to limited ability to identify and develop, plan, and execute their own ideas, and with considerable teacher support is making some decisions, that are adequately informed by their critical and contextual understanding.	**The candidate:** Shows an adequate to limited ability to explore or experiment and use a range of mediums, techniques, and processes mostly appropriate to each artwork across all projects.	**The candidate:** Has demonstrated adequate to limited ability in choice of personal project/theme/objectives. Shows minimal use of research.	**The candidate:** Presents artworks in a limited fashion, whilst showing limited personal responses and a limited developmental journey with mostly basic outcomes.	**The candidate:** Has demonstrated an adequate to limited work ethic, participating minimally in some classes and independently, creating an adequate body of work. Has met a limited number of deadlines and homework objectives with considerable teacher support.
	3		**Clearly**	Demonstrates limited ability (with teacher support) in choice of mediums and techniques that is mostly appropriate in all projects, that shows limited improvement and links to their contextual studies.	Evaluates, reflects, and refines some projects demonstrating adequate development that supports experimentation, with teacher support.	Demonstrates adequate to limited understanding of contextual studies in relation to own work that includes critical reflection, analysis through limited/basic annotation.	Makes adequate to limited judgements in annotating, selecting and presenting artworks, with little to no visual connections. As well as in choice of mediums	Through a thoughtful attitude, meaningful questions, classroom engagement and artwork has shown limited understanding and limited effort throughout the course.

	2 **1**	**Limited ability**	**Adequately** **Just**	Shows limited use and understanding of key terms specific to chosen projects.	Shows a limited body of personal and individual responses in mini tasks and projects, with a lack of quality and quantity.	Provides basic links and references to some applicable theories and concepts.	and use of techniques for each artwork. Shows adequate to limited understanding of their own artwork and contextual studies through evaluation, reflection, and insights.	Has demonstrated limited ability to create their own artwork with considerable teacher support.
	0			No work	No work	No work	No work	No work
				/16	/16	/16	/16	/16
							TOTAL MARKS	**/80**

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