

“To me, photography is an art of observation. It’s about finding something interesting in an ordinary place... I’ve found it has little to do with the things you see and everything to do with the way you see them.”

— Elliott Erwitt

Photography is taught at KS4 and KS5 by Mr Thurston, a dedicated Photography teacher from within the Art department. The Photography department includes a large Photography classroom complete with PCs with the use of Photo Shop CS4. The department also has a darkroom for film photography and a studio complete with professional lighting.

Through Photography we see the unseen and develop a better understanding of the world we live in. The fascination with imagery has captivated humans from the earliest times and continues to be a source of intrigue and wonder. This desire to create images and record the world around us defines us as a species. We read, respond to and creatively use visual language in our daily experiences.

At the Open Academy the Photography department engages the students with a broad range of themes that will inform their understanding of what makes a good photograph and how to create compelling images. Their practical work is complimented with contextual studies which influences the final work the students create.

At higher levels the students’ work develops beyond the creation of imagery and takes on a deeper meaning. Students’ work is independently developed with greater emphasis on the interests of the students themselves. It is also at this stage that the students’ work moves beyond just class work and develops into refined photography, demonstrating a clear understanding of photographic techniques and a deep contextual awareness, culminating into original and individual final images.

The Photography rooms are open during lunchtime and after school for Photography students to continue their studies or develop their exam preparation work. Students are encouraged to complete their own photoshoots during their free time and visit photography exhibitions throughout the course.

Key stage 4

Students who choose Photography at this key stage will follow the AQA GCSE Photography Course. This is divided into two units:

- Unit 1 : Portfolio of Work which accounts for 60% of the final grade
 - Unit 2 : Externally Set Task, which accounts for 40% of the final grade
- Students will learn the basics of how to use the camera and will be shown how to manipulate their work with Photo Shop CS4. The students will work through different projects with set themes and will have the opportunity to take part in Photography trips. Year 10 will culminate with an exam with a pre-set theme. The students will be required to develop their work based on the theme and create final images in exam conditions.

Year 11 will be divided between the mock exam and the final GCSE exam. The mock exam is used as excellent practice for the students to prepare for their final exams, with the work they create added to their coursework portfolios. It is important that students remember that the GCSE photography course still expects coursework and as such the mock exam work is added to the students' final Photography portfolios. The final section of the course is used for preparation time for the final exam. Students will be expected to begin their work from a starting point selected by the exam board. Students will then have a ten hour exam period to complete final images for their portfolios.

Key stage 5

The structure of the A Level course is similar to the GCSE course, with the quality and knowledge expected from the students far higher. The A Level course is a two year course. Students will follow the AQA A Level photography course which is divided into two components within each year:

- Unit 1 : Portfolio of Work which accounts for 60% of the final grade
- Unit 2 : Externally Set Task, which accounts for 40% of the final grade

Year 12

Students will begin the course by evidencing their knowledge and understanding of Photography with small photo shoots. Students will be expected to experiment with their cameras and prove their ability to use functions such as: aperture, shutter speed and white density. Students will work through different projects throughout the year culminating with final coursework images. Students will complete the year with an exam with a choice of starting points set by the teacher. The students will have a ten hour exam and will be given a grade at the end of the year based on their course work and exam work.

Year 13

Students will be expected to create their own project title as a starting point. The work they create will be informed by the work they produced in year 12 which should help them develop a thought-provoking title for their personal project. Students will have the opportunity to use some of the work they created in the previous year to compliment the work they produce in year 13. By the end of their personal project students will be expected to produce final images to support their title. The students' exam work will be based on a set of starting points selected by the exam board. At the end of the preparation period students will sit a 15 hour exam. It is this course work and final exam in year 13 that will be used to form the students' final grade for their A Level.

The course is assessed in four areas, as follows:

- A01 – Develop ideas through sustained and focused investigations informed by contextual and other sources, demonstrating analytical and critical understanding.
- A02 – Explore and select appropriate resources, media, materials, techniques and processes, reviewing and refining ideas as work develops.
- A03 – Record ideas, observations and insights relevant to intentions, reflecting critically on work and progress.
- A04 – Present a personal and meaningful response that realises intentions and, where appropriate, makes connections between visual and other elements.

