Key Stage 4 Big Picture – Photography 2026-28

Whole Course Overview

Photography is an inspiring and creative subject in which students will develop a range of technical skills that will allow them to express their ideas and intentions through the art of the photographic image. As each student progresses through the course, they will develop their abilities in using a variety of different digital and analogue cameras, equipment, and processes. These skills will empower students to produce beautiful and original photographic outcomes. Students are encouraged to explore the history of photography and analyse how the photographic image has featured and impacted social and cultural issues since its invention. Manchester's rich cultural and industrial heritage has long been a source of inspiration for photographers, and this ever-changing environment provides a unique backdrop for our students to explore the subject. They will investigate and evaluate the work of notable photographers, both past and present, to draw inspiration to influence their personal creative responses. Alongside this they will develop transferable skills in communication, collaboration and independence, all with the aim of preparing them to confidently apply their photographic skills and knowledge in future studies and employment as they enter the modern world.

Technical Skills

Students will become proficient in using a range of digital and analogue cameras and equipment. They will learn photographic techniques including studio set-up, photo shoot planning, lighting, viewpoint, aperture, shutter speed, depth of field, movement, digital editing and manipulation, film, use of enlarger, chemical processes, photographic paper and darkroom practices. Students will develop these skills while working in photographic genres that include studio, portraiture, location, landscape, nature, documentary, photojournalism, fashion, experimental and art photography. Students will learn how to consider colour, line, form, tone, texture, shape, pattern, composition, scale, sequence and contrast in their work.

Component 1 - Portfolio

Students will build a portfolio of work documenting photographic practices, analysis, evaluations and experimentation leading to creative responses. The portfolio will consist of several small projects and one large scale sustained project running through Year 10 and 11.

Component 2 – Externally Set Assignment

Students will choose from seven themed starting points to build an independent body of work. Through experimentation, investigation, manipulation and the influence of the work of others, students will produce a further portfolio and self-directed creative outcomes to be exhibited and assessed.

Assessment – Holistic

AO1: Develop ideas through investigations, demonstrating critical understanding of sources.
AO2: Refine work by exploring ideas, selecting and experimenting with appropriate media, materials, techniques and processes.
AO3: Record ideas, observations and insights relevant to intentions as work progresses.
AO4: Present a personal and meaningful response that realises intentions and demonstrates understanding of visual language.

Year 10

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Autumn 01 *2026* *Weeks 1 – 7 (7 weeks)* *OCTOBER HALF TERM*	*Autumn 02* *2026* *Weeks 8 – 15 (7 weeks)* *CHRISTMAS*	*Spring 01* *2027* *Week 16- 22 (7 weeks)* *FEBRUARY HALF TERM*
Themes – Nature and Wildlife **Content** Students will learn how to operate a range of cameras and photographic equipment. They will learn specific techniques to allow them to produce effective and original images. **Skills**: • Digital SLR camera operation • Depth of field • Shutter speed • Aperture • ISO • Analysing the work of others	**Themes – City Life Project - Urban, Street and Architectural** **Content** Students will develop skills in digital editing and manipulation while learning how to work on location to photographing urban street life and architecture. **Skills:** • Mood board/Theme board development • Analysing the work of others • Shutter speed • Digital editing and manipulation • Viewpoint • Composition	**Themes – City Life Project - Photojournalism and street/urban** **Content** Students will work with both digital and analogue/film cameras to experiment and build their skills, while referring to and analysing the work of renowned photographers. **Skills:** • Develop and effective mind map • Planning a photoshoot • To create observational drawings and sketches to support portfolio. • Viewpoint and perspective • Mounting • Zoom photography
Assessment Objectives **AO1: Developing ideas** – Photographer research page, showing what inspiration will be taken from their work. **AO2: Refining work** – To record and evaluate experimentation with composition, shutter speed and depth of filed.	**Assessment Objectives** **AO1: Developing ideas** – Theme/mood board related to the theme **AO2: Refining work** – Portfolio page experimenting with digital editing	**Assessment Objectives** **AO1: Developing ideas** – Mind Map showing expansive thinking. **AO2: Refining work** – Detailed photoshoot plan including sketches. **AO3: Recording ideas** – Digital development portfolio page.

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AO3: Recording ideas - Experimental page showing use of different skills **AO4: Presenting a personal and meaningful response** – Printed nature images that show use of explored techniques. ***Each assessment objective will be assessed based on current portfolio work.*** ***Attitude to Learning (ATL) - Data capture*** ****Class feedback sheets***	**AO3: Recording ideas** – Idea development page focusing on digital manipulation showing critical thinking. **AO4: Presenting a personal and meaningful response** – Refined and edited images mounted for display. ***Each assessment objective will be assessed based on current portfolio work.*** ***Attitude to Learning (ATL) - Data capture*** ****Class feedback sheets***	**AO4: Presenting a personal and meaningful response** – Refined street photograph mounted. ***Each assessment objective will be assessed based on current portfolio work.*** ***Attitude to Learning (ATL) - Data capture*** ****Class feedback sheets***
Spring 02 2027 Weeks 23 – 27 (5 weeks) EASTER	***Summer 01 2027 Weeks 28 – 33 (6 weeks) WHIT***	***Summer 02 2027 Weeks 34 – 40 (7 weeks)***
Themes – City Life Project – Documentary, Landscape and City **Content** Students will be introduced to manual editing techniques using traditional photographic processes including cyanotypes, surface applications and lumens. **Skills**: • Planning a photoshoot • Analogue/film camera operation • Film developing • Studio lighting • Chemical processes	**Themes – Self Directed Project** **Content** Students will experiment with mixed media to produce photographic art both digitally and manually. Using art materials to enhance and manipulate photographic work. Students will learn how to operate studio lighting and shoot in the studio. **Skills**: • Presenting work for exhibition • Printing on alternative surface • Drawing and painting • Transferring	**Themes – Self Directed Project** **Content** Students will refine their ideas and conduct a number of photoshoots to deepen their understanding of their self-directed project. They will learn how to analyse images in more depth and connect ideas to form a photographic story. **Skills**: • Using images in context • Analysing and evaluating in depth • Editing techniques • Digital transformation

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• Photo developing	• Collaging	
Assessment Objectives **AO1: Developing ideas –** Theme board and artist analysis **AO2: Refining work** – To record and evaluate experimentation with analogue photography **AO3: Recording ideas** – Analysis of experimentation and development of ideas. **AO4: Presenting a personal and meaningful response** – Printed image ***PPE – 5 Hour supervised time*** ***Each assessment objective will be assessed based on current portfolio work.*** ***Attitude to Learning (ATL) - Data capture*** ****Class feedback sheets***	**Assessment Objectives** **AO1: Developing ideas** – Research page on art photography **AO2: Refining work** – Initial experimentation with different media **AO3: Recording ideas** – Example of work using different media **AO4: Presenting a personal and meaningful response** - Final response presented ***Each assessment objective will be assessed based on current portfolio work.*** ***Attitude to Learning (ATL) - Data capture*** ****Class feedback sheets***	**Assessment Objectives** **AO1: Developing ideas** – Mood board and independent research pages. **AO2: Refining work** - Experimentation with digital and manual editing while also examining contemporary photographers work. **AO3: Recording ideas** – Development of ideas through editing and manipulation processes. **AO4: Presenting a personal and meaningful response** – Mini event / sport Zine including live action photography work. ***PPE – 5 Hour supervised time*** ***Each assessment objective will be assessed based on current portfolio work.*** ***Attitude to Learning (ATL) - Data capture*** ****Class feedback sheets***

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Year 11		
Autumn 01 2027 Weeks 1 – 7 (7 weeks) OCTOBER HALF TERM	***Autumn 02 2027 Weeks 8 – 15 (7 weeks) CHRISTMAS***	***Spring 01 2028 Week 16- 22 (7 weeks) FEBRUARY HALF TERM***
Themes – Self-directed project **Content** Students will explore a range of editing and shooting techniques to develop strong personal responses to their project. **Skills**: • Tripod use • Slow shutter speed photography • The golden hour • Incidence • Using fisheye lenses	**Themes – Self-directed project** **Content** Students will use a range of light sources to create unique images, while focussing their self-directed project towards a final outcome. **Skills**: • Using different light sources • Operating using slow shutter speeds • Image projection • Using prisms and orbs • Alternative printing methods	**Themes – self-directed based on AQA set starting points** **Content** Students will produce a portfolio of ideas and experiments. **Skills**: • Theme exploration using self-directed methods • Photographer research and experimentation using influences in personally chosen format • Development of ideas
Assessment Objectives **AO1: Developing ideas** – Theme and composition mind map **AO2: Refining work** – Experimentation done at home on phones presented and analysed. **AO3: Recording ideas** – Idea development page showing links to sources. **AO4: Presenting a personal**	**Assessment Objectives** **AO1: Developing ideas** – Mood board of examples of light photography **AO2: Refining work** – Record of experiments with critical evaluation **AO3: Recording ideas** – Examples of developed ideas **AO4: Presenting a personal**	**Assessment Objectives** **AO1: Developing ideas** – Artist and them research and analysis presented through personally chosen method. **AO2: Refining work** – Idea experimentation using influences **AO3: Recording ideas** – Initial development of ideas and digital or manual editing

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and meaningful response – Final piece presented and mounted. ***Attitude to Learning (ATL) - Data capture*** ****Class feedback sheets***	**and meaningful response** – Final piece printed on item to be used in promotion ***PPE – 5 Hour supervised time*** ***Each assessment objective will be assessed based on current portfolio work.*** ***Attitude to Learning (ATL) - Data capture*** ****Class feedback sheets***	
Spring 02 2028 Weeks 23 – 27 (5 weeks) EASTER	***Summer 01 2028 Weeks 28 – 33 (6 weeks) WHIT***	***Summer 02 2028 Weeks 34 – 40 (7 weeks)***
Themes – self directed **Content** Students continue to develop their portfolio using their primary and secondary research to experiment with possible ideas before beginning work on their personal and meaningful response. **Skills**: • All skills learnt during the course put into practice independently.	**Themes – self directed** **Content** Students will complete all their portfolio work culminating in 10 hours of supervised time, in which all work should be finished including a personal and meaningful response. **Skills:** • All skills learnt throughout the course put into practice independently.	**Content – Exam and coursework is submitted**
Assessment Objectives **AO3: Recording ideas** – evidence of continued development of ideas **AO4: Presenting a personal**	**Assessment Objectives** • **To meet AO1: Developing ideas** • **To meet AO2: Refining work** • **To meet AO3: Recording ideas** • **To meet AO4: Presenting a personal and meaningful response**	

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and meaningful response – Initial work on personal response and clear direction in portfolio evidenced.	**10 Hour supervised time**	