The Hart School – Faculty of Design
Yr 13 A Level Photography (AQA 7206) Curriculum Overview

Curriculum intent: A-level Art and Design: Photography (AQA 7206) develops independent, critical photographers ready for art foundation courses, degrees, apprenticeships and creative careers. Component 1, the Personal Investigation, is 60% (96 marks) and includes 1,000 to 3,000 words of continuous prose (the essay). Component 2, the Externally Set Assignment, is 40% (96 marks): papers are issued from 1 February, followed by a preparatory period and 15 hours of supervised time, the first 3 hours consecutive.

AO1: develop ideas through sustained and focused investigations informed by contextual and other sources, demonstrating analytical and critical understanding. AO2: explore and select appropriate resources, media, materials, techniques and processes, reviewing and refining ideas as work develops. AO3: record ideas, observations and insights relevant to intentions, reflecting critically on work and progress. AO4: present a personal and meaningful response that realises intentions. Year 12 opens with camera, composition, lighting and editing foundations, then a technique portfolio of layering, alternative processes and camera techniques; statements of intent set a line of enquiry for the Personal Investigation. Year 13 completes the investigation and essay, then the ESA.

Students have 1:1 target conversations and live tracking against AQA grade descriptors, with QLA by AO after every PPE and portfolio review and PP and SEND work reviewed first. Access arrangements are confirmed before supervised time, and JCQ regulations apply.

Yr 13 end points: By the end of Year 13 students can complete a sustained Personal Investigation with a final outcome and a 1,000 to 3,000-word essay (Component 1, 60%); prepare independently for an AQA starting point; realise a personal response in 15 hours of supervised time (Component 2, 40%); and present both components for AQA moderation.

Yr 13 key dates (LTP): PPE 1 w/c 16.11.26 · Year 13 reports home 16.12.26 · PPE week w/c 11.1.27 · developments banded w/c 25.1.27 · AQA ESA paper released 1.2.27 · PPE 2 w/c 22.2.27 and 1.3.27 · Year 13 reports home 24.3.27 · portfolio finalised w/c 27.4.27 · 15-hour ESA w/c 3.5.27 · AQA moderation submission w/c 10.5.27 to 24.5.27 · records archived under JCQ retention w/c 12.7.27

	Autumn 1	Autumn 2		Spring 1		Spring 2		Summer 1		Summer 2
Core Course Topic: Lesson (L) numbers and the week each is taught. Bold = summative assessment.	**Personal Investigation: Developments and Essay Start** L1 · Consolidate the enquiry; developments · w/c 7.9.26 L2 · PI Development 2: sustained enquiry (AO1–AO3) · w/c 14.9.26 L3 · Essay start; Development 2: combine influences · w/c 21.9.26 L4 · Test shoot; PI development toward the final outcome · w/c 28.9.26 L5 · PI Development 3: sustained enquiry · w/c 5.10.26 L6 · Essay: chosen photographers; Development 3: combine influences · w/c 12.10.26 L7 · Test shoot; refine ideas · w/c 19.10.26	**Final Outcome, Essay and PPE 1** L8 · Essay drafting alongside developments · w/c 2.11.26 L9 · Test shoot; refine ideas · w/c 9.11.26 **L10 · PI final-outcome preparation (PPE) · w/c 16.11.26** L11 · PI final-outcome preparation · w/c 23.11.26 L12 · PI final-outcome preparation · w/c 30.11.26 L13 · Essay drafting; final outcome and evaluation · w/c 7.12.26 L14 · PI final outcome completion · w/c 14.12.26		**Completing Component 1 and the ESA Launch** L15 · PI final outcome completion · w/c 4.1.27 L16 · Essay completion and referencing (PPE week) · w/c 11.1.27 L17 · Portfolio presentation; AO1–AO4 check · w/c 18.1.27 **L18 · Coursework standardisation prep · w/c 25.1.27** L19 · ESA released by AQA; choose theme · w/c 1.2.27 L20 · Refine test shoot; plan final outcome · w/c 8.2.27		**ESA: Preparatory Work and Photographers** L21 · Pre-exam completion of preparatory work (PPE) · w/c 22.2.27 L22 · Test shoot; refine ideas (PPE) · w/c 1.3.27 L23 · Techniques / Photographer 1: refine, analyse · w/c 8.3.27 L24 · Techniques / Photographer 2: refine, analyse · w/c 15.3.27 L25 · Techniques / Photographer 3: refine, analyse · w/c 22.3.27		**ESA Development, 15-Hour Exam and Submission** L26 · Development 1: refine against AOs · w/c 13.4.27 L27 · Final-outcome preparation: plan and images ready · w/c 20.4.27 L28 · Final prep; ESA plan for the 15-hour exam · w/c 27.4.27 **L29 · 15-hour externally set exam: sessions 1–3 · w/c 3.5.27** **L30 · Portfolio finalised for submission · w/c 10.5.27** L31 · Study leave; internal standardisation · w/c 17.5.27 **L32 · AQA moderation submission window · w/c 24.5.27**	**Course Complete** No lessons: Year 13 examinations complete · w/c 7.6.27 to 5.7.27 Records archived under JCQ retention · w/c 12.7.27
Additional support links: Topic-specific pages from trusted sources (links checked September 2026)	**AQA** A-level Art and Design (Photography) 7206 **The Photographers' Gallery** Learn	**AQA** A-level Art and Design (Photography) 7206 **Getty Museum** In Focus: still life photography		**AQA** A-level Art and Design (Photography) 7206		**AQA** A-level Art and Design (Photography) 7206 **Nikon** Freezing or capturing motion: shutter speed and panning		**AQA** A-level Art and Design (Photography) 7206 **Discover! Creative Careers** Careers in the creative industries		**Discover! Creative Careers** Careers in the creative industries
Knowledge: The specific knowledge your child will learn in detail	The Personal Investigation is a sustained practical and written project. The essay (1,000 to 3,000 words of continuous prose) investigates photographers, ideas or contexts linked to the practical work and is assessed with it; it needs a clear question, critical analysis, referenced sources and a bibliography. Developments combine the influence of chosen photographers with the student's own subjects, and each should move the enquiry forward. Test shoots try new ideas before committing to a development.	The final outcome realises intentions (AO4) and is the clear conclusion of the developments. Preparation includes test prints, sequencing and presentation decisions such as size, paper and layout. The evaluation explains how the outcome answers the enquiry. PPE banding against the four AOs, with QLA by AO, guides the final weeks, and the essay is referenced and linked to the practical work.	**PPE 1** w/c 16.11.26	Component 1 is finished and presented: the final outcome, the essay and the journey that leads to them. The Externally Set Assignment (Component 2) is 40% of the A Level, marked out of 96. AQA issues the paper from 1 February with a choice of starting points; students then have a preparatory period followed by 15 hours of supervised time, the first 3 hours consecutive.	**PPE 2** w/c 22.2.27 and 1.3.27	Preparatory work for the ESA evidences AO1 to AO3: test shoots, three photographer studies with chosen techniques, and critical analysis. It must show a clear plan for the 15-hour outcome. Access arrangements are confirmed before supervised time begins.	**15-Hour Exam (ESA)** w/c 3.5.27	In 15 hours of supervised time, students realise their ESA response independently under JCQ conditions; the first 3 hours are consecutive. Both components are marked in school against AQA's criteria, internally standardised, and a sample is moderated by AQA. The final evaluation explains how the outcome realises the intentions set out in the preparatory work.	Year 13 examinations are complete. Coursework, marks and candidate records are kept securely under JCQ retention rules, then archived.
Key vocabulary: Subject terms your child should know, spell and use	*Personal Investigation, essay, continuous prose, question, referencing, bibliography, development, influence, test shoot*	*final outcome, test print, sequence, presentation, evaluation, PPE, band, QLA, referencing*		*presentation, standardisation, Component 2, Externally Set Assignment, starting point, preparatory period, supervised time*		*preparatory work, test shoot, technique, photographer study, plan, access arrangements*		*supervised time, JCQ, realisation, evaluation, internal standardisation, moderation, submission*		*JCQ retention, results day, destinations*
Camera & Editing Skills: Techniques and AO skills your child will develop	Sustaining developments; combining influences; test shoots; planning and starting the essay	Planning and producing a final outcome; test prints and presentation; evaluating; drafting and referencing the essay		Completing and presenting the Personal Investigation; finishing and referencing the essay; interpreting an ESA starting point; planning a test shoot		Independent test shoots; linking techniques to three photographers; critical analysis; planning the supervised outcome		Realising a personal response under timed conditions; evaluating against intentions; presenting a complete portfolio for moderation		Portfolio images kept for university, foundation and apprenticeship applications
How it is assessed: Formative checks and summative assessments	Every lesson: live tracking against AQA AO1–AO4 with grade descriptors; self- and peer-review; WWW/EBI and green-pen DIRT; PP prioritised; 1:1 target conversations.	Summative PPE 1 (L10, w/c 16.11.26): Personal Investigation portfolio banded against AQA AO1–AO4, full QLA by AO and cohort, PP/SEND first, feedback and DIRT inform intervention. Post-PPE QLA actioned (L11); AO check with the essay referenced (L12); standardisation readiness (L13). L14: live tracking against AQA AO1–AO4 with grade descriptors; self- and peer-review; WWW/EBI and green-pen DIRT; PP prioritised; 1:1 target conversations. Reports home 16.12.26.		Every lesson: live tracking against AQA AO1–AO4 with grade descriptors; self- and peer-review; WWW/EBI and green-pen DIRT; PP prioritised; 1:1 target conversations. PPE week w/c 11.1.27. Summative (L18, w/c 25.1.27): developments banded against AOs, full QLA by AO and cohort, PP/SEND first.		Every lesson: live tracking against AQA AO1–AO4 with grade descriptors; self- and peer-review; WWW/EBI and green-pen DIRT; PP prioritised; 1:1 target conversations. PPE 2 w/c 22.2.27 and 1.3.27. Exam readiness and access arrangements confirmed (L23). Year 13 reports home 24.3.27.		Formative evaluation against AOs (L26) and moderation annotations (L27). Portfolio finalised and banded to AQA criteria (L28). 15-hour ESA and internal standardisation of borderline work (L29). AQA moderation submission (L30); destinations tracking (L31).	Course closed; records archived under JCQ retention (w/c 12.7.27).
Builds on / leads to: How this topic connects to prior and future learning	Builds on: the Year 12 line of enquiry and bridging task. Leads to: the final outcome and PPE 1 (Autumn 2).	Builds on: Developments 2 and 3. Leads to: essay completion and standardisation (Spring 1).		Builds on: the Personal Investigation. Leads to: ESA preparation (Spring 2).		Builds on: the ESA launch. Leads to: Development 1 and the 15-hour exam (Summer 1).		Builds on: the full A Level course. Leads to: art foundation diplomas, degrees, apprenticeships and creative careers.		Leads to: results day and destinations.