



# Assessment and how to get qualified



Open College of the Arts

Student Support

This booklet is one of a series of guides for students studying with the OCA.

Others in the series are:

- **Study skills**
- **Keeping sketchbooks and learning logs**
- **Looking at other artists**

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# Assessment and how to get qualified

More and more people are taking the idea of lifelong learning seriously.

- You may want to get credit for your hard work and achievements with the OCA.
- You may want to move on from a course with the OCA to a qualification such as a Certificate or Diploma of Higher Education
- You might want to do a full degree through the OCA.

...It is entirely up to you. We are just as keen to support you whether you study for pleasure or to gain qualifications, but this guide is for those who want to have their work assessed in order to gain qualifications.

At the end of your course we offer:

- a **Record of Completion** to any student who has successfully undertaken all the course assignments
- the **OCA Award** for certain courses, based on a formal graded assessment for which you must apply

OCA is strongly committed to providing the same educational and tutorial support to students whether or not they apply for the Award.

If you think you might like to get your work formally assessed, have a look at the answers to the questions below, and please get in touch with the OCA office if you have any queries about how to apply.

# Qualifications or not?

It may not have occurred to you that doing an 'arty subject' can count towards a qualification. It may be that it simply doesn't matter to you one way or another, **but** if there is even an outside chance that you may, in the future, want to take account of your learning with OCA, it's worth considering going through the assessment process. It may influence the presentation and the thoroughness with which you do your work. However, you may be doing the course entirely for pleasure and to fill your leisure time. OCA is very happy to support your studies even if you have no desire to 'get qualified'.

## I'm thinking of going to college or university and want to know if my OCA courses count?

Yes. You can take your portfolio of work if you are planning to go to art college, or go through the process to gain credit points so that your OCA course achievements can be counted directly towards the qualifications you may need to enter college or university. Talk to your tutor and Academic Services at OCA as early on as possible if you think you want to do this.

## What if I have done a lot of studying in this area before but didn't get any qualifications? Can I get my skill and experience taken account of?

**APEL** (Accreditation of Prior Experiential Learning) is the term used for the award of credit based on learning that happened in the past.

If you previously studied at Higher Education (HE) level you may be eligible for APEL for what you have already done. This will not only save you time, as you will not have to repeat credits already obtained, but will also substantially reduce the overall cost of an HE qualification from OCA.

For more information please request an *APEL Application Pack* from OCA. This gives more guidance on how the process works and gives you details of how to apply for APEL.

### Is getting accredited going to mean a lot of extra work for me?

No, you have to do no more than you would do otherwise studying any OCA course. The only thing is that you have to make absolutely sure that you keep a really good Learning Log (and Sketchbook if appropriate) since these elements are worth 20% of your marks. It is also really important to keep your tutor reports because you must send them in for the assessment.

### What are credit points and what can I do with them?

The traditional degree model involves three or more years' study with exams at the end of each year. Success in the final exam results in a degree, which is usually graded according to the level of achievement in the exam (1st, 2:1, 2:2, 3rd).

However, many students now want the flexibility of part-time study, or the opportunity to mix subjects, or want to change institutions. So now you can complete accredited courses, receive pass grades and accumulate credit points through all these actions so that none of your hard work is ignored or not taken account of.

For OCA Level one courses 40 credits are due, for level 2, 60 points are due and for level 3, 60 points are also due.

*No credit is awarded for your OCA course without work being assessed.*

OCA has a Certificate of Higher Education (CertHE), Diploma of Higher Education (DipHE) and a BA Hons (Creative Arts) Degree validated.

If you are wondering about a degree, you will need to accumulate 360 points in total, and at least 120 of these must be at Level 2 and 120 at Level 3.

However, academic institutions also award other qualifications. With 120 points, no matter at what level, you may obtain a Certificate of Higher Education. With 240 credit points, at least 120 at Level 2 or above, you may obtain a Diploma of Higher Education.

You can approach any educational institution within the formal education sector if you want to study with them and want your OCA credit points to count towards a degree or other qualification. You will be asked about the number and level of your credit points; these will be considered in the light of the course you wish to take.

Credit points issued by one institution do not necessarily convert to another on a one-to-one basis. The receiving institution has to be sure the course for which the points are issued is broadly in line with its own requirements. To take an extreme case, you can't expect to put credit for garden design towards a degree in nuclear engineering at another institution. In less extreme cases, the receiving institution may only see your OCA credits as partially relevant to its courses, and so may offer only partial acceptance. Credit Transfer Offices at receiving institutions will be able to advise you.

*if you are studying at Level 3, credit points cannot be transferred as the degree classification is awarded at this level. Therefore the institution with whom you are studying at this level will award the degree.*

### How do I apply?

The Assessment Application Form is in your Student Handbook. Once we have your application we will send you further details of assessment dates and deadlines. We also send you an Affirmation Form which you need to sign and return as evidence your assessment submission is your own work.

### When do I apply?

Apply for formal assessment when you have completed your penultimate assignment. That way, you have no chance of missing out on getting assessed when the time comes.

### What do I submit?

For assessment you must send a cross-section of the work you have done on the course, plus your learning log, sketchbooks if you have them, plus your tutor reports. If the course you are doing has specific assignments for assessment, then these are the elements you submit, but you can also submit additional carefully selected pieces of work to back up your assessment.

# Presenting work for assessment

The key to a successful presentation of work, apart from the quality of the content, is to make sure that what you send is well organised and clearly labelled.

- **All** your work must be clearly labelled with your name, student number, the course and the relevant assignment number.
- All students (on writing courses as well as visual art courses) need to submit learning logs for their assessments. Visual art students also need to send in sketchbooks. These should all be clearly labelled with your name and student number. You should also add a label to say what the book is – a sketchbook or a learning log. If you are going to submit more than one learning log or sketchbook, add a note on each book to say '1 of 4, 2 of 4' etc.
- It is most helpful if you write a contents list to go with your submission which reflects each clearly labelled element. This way, things will not go astray. Make sure that you note down which elements go with which assignment. This helps the assessors enormously.
- Make sure you submit your tutor reports and that they are well labelled as such and easily accessible.
- For writing courses submit the original assignment, the tutor report on it, and also any re-working on the assignment you did as part of your tutor's feedback.
- For visual art courses it is not essential to have a smart portfolio to submit your work in. In fact if work is in plastic sleeves the assessors will take the artwork out of them to take a look anyway, since the plastic often obscures the image. It is better not to send it in a tube, since this can damage your work and is difficult for the assessors to view if it doesn't lie flat.

Full guidance on the assessment criteria for individual courses is in the Appendix at the back of each course.

The OCA cannot accept responsibility for loss or damage to any work submitted for assessment, however caused, and you are strongly advised to keep copies or a record of any work submitted wherever possible. After the assessment we will return your work to you through our courier unless you have indicated differently.

Work will be returned 4 to 6 weeks after ratification of the grades. A delivery supplement is required for the return of work to certain destinations (see the Assessment Application Form for details)

# The assessment process

Assessors see portfolios of work and mark according to an agreed scheme that applies to all portfolios.

They consider whether your work shows evidence of having achieved the expected outcomes for the course and decide at what level your work should be graded.

They confer to agree a final grade which is recorded by OCA. This grade is provisional and subject to modification by the accrediting university. This is standard procedure in all UK universities.

Once the grades are ratified, the award is issued to you naming the course and the grade awarded. Information on grades cannot be provided before this procedure has taken place.

Your submission is 'marked' against set criteria. The percentage mark you obtain equates to a grade:

- 70% or above – Grade A
- 60% – 69% – Grade B
- 50% – 59% – Grade C
- 40% – 49% – Grade D
- 30% – 39% – Fail (retrievable)
- 29% or below – Fail (non-retrievable)

A retrievable fail means you would be allowed to resubmit your work after moderation. You would however, only be able to obtain a capped pass mark of 40%.



## Grades

Grading is on a scale from A to D and F in all courses.

**Grade A** (70-100) is only awarded to work of an exceptionally high level of achievement with all the characteristics of Grades B, C and D but in addition:

- very high observational and technical skill, with exceptional invention and judgement demonstrated across a wide range of work
- written work of a very high standard.

**Grade B** (60-69) is awarded to work of a very high standard with all the characteristics of Grades C and D but in addition:

- all the work will display a high degree of observational and technical skill
- there will be some excellent pieces of work showing a very high standard of invention and judgement
- written work will be of a high standard.

**Grade C** (50-59) is awarded to work with all the characteristics of Grade D but in addition:

- some practical work will be of a higher standard of competency
- some practical work will have a greater personal identity
- there will be more imaginative and expressive use of the relevant media
- there will be a more critical understanding of the student's own work and the work of others.

**Grade D** (40-49) is awarded to a student who satisfactorily completes all aspects of the course and produces competent practical and written work of a standard appropriate to this level.

**Grade F** – Fail (retrievable) (30-39) Later reassessment is possible.

**Grade F** – Fail (irretrievable) (29 or under) Later reassessment is not possible.

Grade C is regarded as a good grade showing that work submitted has significant achievement and competence. Grade D should not be regarded as evidence of a lack of ability or as near-fail; it is a clear pass grade showing ability and competence but with potential for further development. Grades A and F are awarded relatively rarely.

Second and third level courses involve greater self-motivation, imagination and self-discipline, and are marked on the same scales.

*Note: The final degree classification is the average of marks obtained in assessment at Level 3.*

## The qualifications

OCA courses are accredited by Buckinghamshire New University. You can build up your credit from the courses to work towards a higher education qualification if you wish to do so:

### **Certificate of Higher Education (CertHE)**

120 credits at Level 1 (HE4)

### **Diploma of Higher Education (DipHE)**

120 credits at Level 1 (HE4) + 120 credits at Level 2 (HE5)

### **BA (Creative Arts) Degree**

120 credits at Level 1 (HE4) + 120 credits at Level 2 (HE5) + 60 credits at Level 3 (HE6)

### **BA Hons (Creative Arts) Degree**

120 credits at Level 1 (HE4) + 120 credits at Level 2 (HE5) + 120 credits at Level 3 (HE6)

## Are there any regulations I should be aware of?

There are a few essential regulations about assessment. These are listed in the Student Handbook.

## Who can I ask if I need extra advice on this?

If you require further guidance on how to use credits, next course selection or have further assessment queries please contact Academic Services at OCA on 0800 7312116.

OCA's website [www.oca-uk.com](http://www.oca-uk.com) is your first stop for information about courses, plus access to help, support, advice and tips from tutors and other learners.

Register on the website, upload a picture if you like, and get chatting to other students via the forum.

Find out about exhibitions and books recommended by fellow students, discuss the state of contemporary art or the music industry, share tips on techniques and processes, and share your thoughts on studying from home.



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