Tring & District CAMERA CLUB

Photographic Qualifications

2026

Peter Cox

Photography Qualifications

Two main streams of opportunity

	Royal Photographic Society (RPS)	Photo Alliance of Great Britain (PAGB)
	https://rps.org/qualifications/	https://thecacc.org.uk/pagb/pagb-awards/
Entry Level:	OU Course (associated)	Badge
First Level:	Licentiate	Credit
Advanced level:	Associate	Distinction
Top Level:	Fellow	Master

Open University course is RPS accredited but stands alone – very popular with our members - 14 have achieved this. An excellent online learning process that can be useful for any member in their early days of learning their craft.

These qualifications are awarded based only on the quality of the images – there is no actual 'study' (except OU). However, it is unlikely that anyone would reach the standard without studying to develop their craft.

Photography Qualifications

RPS awards are based on an assessment of 'panels' – the images have to be very good and the presentation of the panel is key to success.

- *RPS have recently changed their rules and the Licentiate level is now 'digital' only. At same time they changed their standards to be much stricter and messed up their processes – the whole thing is currently being reviewed. This is a disgrace!*
- *It takes between 1 and 3 years to achieve the LRPS qualification*

PAGB awards are based on the quality of a number of individual images – the images have to be excellent / amazing at top level.

- *PAGB entries are assessed individually in random order, mixed with entries from others*
- *PAGB is used more by other clubs than TDCC, for no real reason!*

Open University - Digital photography: creating and sharing better images

- *A 10 week intensive programme based on Zoom*
- *See next pages for overview by recently qualified Claire Constable*

Open University

Digital photography: creating and sharing better images

https://www.open.ac.uk/courses/short-courses/tg089/

Introduction and why I did the course

- Keen interest in photography
- Joined TDCC September 2023
- Encouraged to enrol in the OU's course - Digital photography: creating and sharing better images.
- Purchased a new digital camera – Fujifilm X-T5

What you will need

- A digital camera
- And/or a smart phone
- Photo-editing software

What did the course involve?

- Short 10 week course / 100 total study hours (@ 10 hours per week) N.B. Allow time to go out and take photos!
- Online weekly study text, tutorial videos, a photo-sharing website, and supported discussion forums.
- Fee - £240
- Study method – online learning
- Weekly assignments – optional – but worthwhile getting involved with
- Supportive online community
- Assessment – presentation panel of 10 images
- Certificate upon completion

What did the course cover?

- Week 1: What makes an interesting image?
- Week 2: When light becomes data
- Week 3: Working with exposure
- Week 4: Focus and depth of field
- Week 5: Understanding and using colour
- Week 6: Displaying your images
- Week 7: Historic and contemporary innovation
- Week 8: The power of smartphone photography
- Week 9: Preparing for the end-of-module assessment (EMA)
- Week 10: What next?

Assessment

The end-of-module assessment (EMA) has two components:

- A panel of 10 images you have captured and worked on. Your visual and technical skills in digital photography are assessed.
- A short piece of written work to assess your ability to articulate your visual awareness and your knowledge of the principles and techniques of digital photography.
- A few weeks after submission you are sent detailed feedback and a % mark. You also receive expert feedback on the visual awareness and technical quality shown by your set of images.
- You can then apply for a certificate.

Positives of the course

- Quick learning – especially with a new camera!
- Learning how to manipulate images with photo-editing software (LR & PS). The course does not provide any particular form of software training, so it helps if you are familiar with one or another.
- Invaluable support from club mentor and TDCC club members.
- Encouraging a creative mix of practice, learning, sharing and reflection.
- Learning how to evaluate yours and others' work.
- Develop your photography with a supportive online community. I would encourage you to get involved with the course's on-line community.

Negatives of the course

- Lots to learn in a short period of time – but not overwhelmingly so.
- Not much interaction/feedback from course moderators – more detailed feedback, however, is given on your End of Module Assessment
- Collaborating, sharing images and providing constructive comments with other course participants – the benefits of this were dependent on how communicative your group was!

What advice would I give?

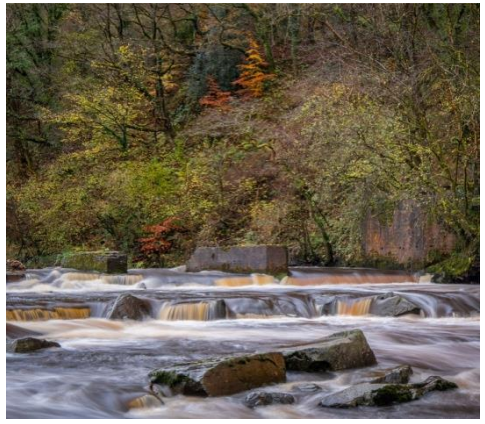
- Don’t leave submitting your images and assessment to the last minute. The process and technology can prove challenging.
- Presenting a panel of 10 images – think about the different skills and techniques you need to demonstrate.
- Try different genres – get out of your comfort zone.
- Attend TDCC’s guest photographer nights, and creative nights for inspiration.
- Take part in TDCC club competitions.
- Talk to other TDCC club members for advice and support. There’s so much knowledge and expertise amongst them! There are several in the club who have completed the course.

My 10 images









Photography Qualifications

The other popular qualification is the Licentiate Royal Photographic Society (LRPS)

This is awarded to those who present a ’panel’ of 10 very good images.

- The images should demonstrate different skills and genres:
  - Landscape / Portrait / Architecture / Macro etc – the choice is yours but a mix is needed
  - Long DoF / Short DoF / Long and Short Exposure / Closeup
- The panel should be arranged such that the 10 images, together have the effect, from a distance, of an 11th
  - Shapes should blend together and fit the shape of the panel
  - Colour should blend
  - Texture should be similar

No actual ‘study’ is required, but very few photographers will pass without significant study and practice of new craft.

Assessment is rigorous and examines Technical ability, Visual Awareness & Communication

The club will provide a coach and there are RPS advisors available, but they aren’t very good.

Photography Qualifications

PAGB Qualifications

Only 1 person in the club has a PAGB qualification – myself with ‘Credit’ (CPAGB)

Yet it is very common in most other clubs (together with LRPS)

I would encourage those who tend to produce good ‘one off’ images (rather than having a strong personal style) to apply for a PAGB qualification.

‘Badge’ and ‘Credit’ are the first two levels and are awarded to those who present 10 excellent images.

No actual ‘study’ is required, but very few photographers will pass without significant study and practice of new craft.

Assessment is rigorous and examines Technical ability, Visual Awareness & Communication also artistic stylisation is encouraged

The club will provide a coach and there are RPS advisors available, and they are generally very good

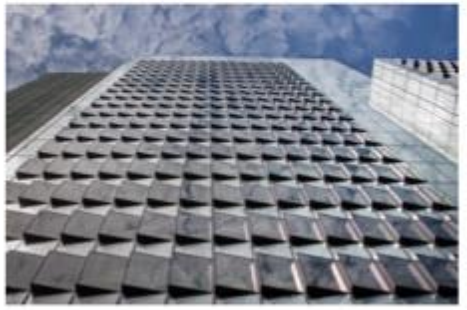
Photography Qualifications

To finish off the session – lets celebrate a few of the LRPS Panels that have been successful….

I'll illustrate why these panels passed

Chris Gregory









Sarah Murrell












Ros Alcock



01



02



03



04



05



06



07



08



09



10

In Conclusion -Why study towards a Qualification?

- Progression in the craft tends to come from ‘steps’ rather than a straight line – qualifications can offer a target for each next step…..
- Studying towards a qualification is a great way of learning:
  - It opens your learning to best practice
  - It provides learning outside of TDCC
  - It feels good to achieve an award and be recognized
- They are achievable by most members - more than 40% of TDCC members have already achieved a qualification, a further 20% are currently working towards a first or second qualification
- TDCC provide a development programme for members and a coach for all those studying towards a qualification