Prospectus

DISTANCE LEARNING DIPLOMA COURSE
SOCIETY OF BOTANICAL ARTISTS

The following is an outline of the prospectus only, the final version for Course 24 will be provided after enrolment.

Twelve assignments, as listed on the next page, will be expected to reach tutors by a due date. A copy of your Tutors Assessment Marks Sheet (TAMS) will be returned with the assignment which will show a mark based on ten key areas of assessment (KAA), together with a written critique giving advice, diagrams and colour notes as necessary.

Students can choose either watercolours or coloured pencils on the course but not work in both.

The brief for all the assignments will always be available but students should consider waiting for the result of the previous assignment and TAMS before proceeding too far in order to take advantage of tutors' comments. This particularly applies to the first five assignments which cover the basic skills needed for successful botanical painting. Students are advised to act upon their tutors' advice to amend or re-do part of previous assignments, for their own satisfaction and to aid the learning process. As part of the course, we strongly suggest that students keep up a sketchbook, which will be provided, in which to do exercises, pencil studies, field studies, colour notes and charts. Although it is intended that students work alone on assignments, they can contact their tutors throughout the course for initial advice or clarification on assignments.

We hope to hold an Introductory meeting in London in January 2027. We understand that in commencing a course of this nature students may feel isolated until the Seminar in the second year, so the Introductory meeting is an opportunity to meet the Course Director, each other and some of the tutors who will give demonstrations in basic skills, practical advice, answer questions and show an array of work by previous students. An online zoom option is also held for students unable to attend.

The Seminar for the course will be held in London in 2028, usually in early June. This will enable students to meet tutors, show them amended work, look at work by previous students, discuss any individual difficulties, and be shown any procedures or painting techniques which might be helpful. An online zoom option is also held for students unable to attend.

Tutors are all respected botanical artists and Members of the SBA with many years of experience in a variety of fields ranging from teaching, illustration, botany and commercial design. All have individual CVs available for inspection if requested.

There is a password-protected student area on the Society website with more learning content which students will have access to whilst they are students and afterwards for the year when they are Graduate members.

Please read the Frequently Asked Questions on the website for more information.

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Assignments

The following is an outline only of the assignments for the course commencing in January 2027. The final version for Course 24 will be provided after enrolment.

ASSIGNMENT 1 DRAWING

Due end February 2027

1.Line and wash drawing in ink. 2.Single flower line drawing. 3.Complete study in pencil showing tone and texture. All with subjects of your choice, life-size and worked from life.

Suggested exercises.

ASSIGNMENT 2 MONOCHROME

Due mid-April 2027

Two exercises covering shading, layering and blending. Using the knowledge gained produce a small study of a plant or plants, not smaller than A3, using continuous tone. Also, one single flower with attached leaf and stem in pencil or ink, stippled.

ASSIGNMENT 3 MIXING GREENS AND PAINTING LEAVES

Due end June 2027

Make a green colour chart using blues and yellow and proprietary greens mixed with other colours. The main assignment requires you to paint a page of assorted leaves, minimum number seven. Variations and suggestions for this will be given in the individual assignment information. UK students may wish to choose the option of completing part of this assignment on Kelmscott vellum.

ASSIGNMENT 4 FLOWERHEADS

Due end August 2027

Exercises: wet on wet, wet on dry, etc. The differences resulting from mixing and layering paint or coloured pencils. Paint a page comprising seven flower heads with no more than 6cm of stem, using examples of different shapes and colours. UK students may wish to choose the option of completing part of this assignment on Kelmscott vellum.

ASSIGNMENT 5 FLOWER STUDY/ARRANGEMENT OF STEMS

Due mid-October 2027

A portrait of one variety of flower with composition in mind.

ASSIGNMENT 6 FRUIT, VEGETABLE OR SPICE STUDY

Due mid December 2027 - Send in Digitally

A portrait of fruit or vegetables with or without dissection. Textures and reflective highlighting, good contrasts and composition planning will play an important part in this assignment. Fungi are not allowed because they are not classified in the plant kingdom.

ASSIGNMENT 7 BOTANY

Due mid-February 2028 - Send in Digitally

The Botany assignment is to improve your understanding and observations of the subject. Three botanical studies are set as follows: the parts of a flower and how they are put together; a comparison of two leaves; interpreting the structure of a fruit. A botany text-book is provided as useful guidance for this assignment.

ASSIGNMENT 8 TONAL REFRESHER

Due end March 2028

Understanding colour and tonal contrasts can be one of the most difficult areas for artists to achieve. This is an opportunity for students to look back over previous assignments but instead of working with graphite, students are to produce a one-colour only study that shows an understanding of light, mid and dark tones.

ASSIGNMENT 9 BOTANICAL ILLUSTRATION

Due May 2028

This will require a true example of botanical illustration where art and science meet and should include dissection, root or bulb as appropriate.

ASSIGNMENT 10 WORKING IN THE FIELD

Due July 2028

Use your sketchbook to record specimen information out in the field from a site of your choosing. Use this information to produce your final assignment page showing specimens and habitat example. Examples of your sketchbook research are to be sent in with this assignment work for marking.

ASSIGNMENT 11 DESIGNING FROM PHOTOGRAPHS

Due September 2028

A piece of work showing how photographic reference has been of assistance to you in a choice of design.

ASSIGNMENT 12 MIXED FLOWER COMPOSITION

Due November 2028 - Send in Digitally

Use a mix of flowers, foliage and berries to create an important, traditional study. This piece prepares you for your final Diploma work portfolio which will be adjudicated by a panel of specialised assessors.

DIPLOMA PORTFOLIO: A FOUR-PART SUBMISSION

Due April/May 2029

Part 1: a true botanical illustration with dissections etc.

Part 2: a study of fruit or vegetables

Part 3: a mixed study OR you can choose a subject/topic of your choice.

Part 4: during the course, an essay of not more than 2,500 words must be researched and chosen from set subjects, with a minimum of 3 images, and submitted as part of the Diploma Portfolio. Appropriate allowance will be made for students whose first language is not English as judgement will be made on content and understanding rather than grammar.

MODULAR ASSESSMENT

Assignments will be judged on a modular basis: that means that each assignment will carry ten marks which will count towards the total marks for the Diploma.

Eleven assignments	10 marks for each assignment	= 110 marks
Assignment 8	5 marks	= 5 marks
Three Diploma portfolio artworks	25 marks for each part	= 75 marks
One essay	10 marks	= 10 marks
		TOTAL = 200 marks

Total marks will convert to the percentage which will fit into a final Diploma grade as follows:

90–100%	Distinction
80–89%	Credit
70–79%	Higher Pass
60–69%	Pass

We expect the cost of the entire course from January 2027 to June 2029 to be £4,695 for those living in the UK, £4,855 for those living in the EU and £4,970 for those living in the rest of the world (because of the different postage and courier rates).
The course fee includes the student subscription to the Society for the period until graduation. After that there will be a free year of Graduate membership because it is hoped that graduates will use that year to consolidate their learning from the Diploma and use it as an opportunity to consider how they might develop themselves further as an artist and perhaps apply for Fellow membership of the Society.
For those with a UK bank account, course fees can be paid by a deposit of about a third followed by 18 instalments payable monthly by standing order. For those outside the UK, the whole amount can be paid or an individual arrangement may be negotiated: usually, a deposit of about a third with less frequent instalments because of the higher bank charges.

This course is highly structured and will require commitment and dedication. We hope students will be rewarded with a great sense of satisfaction on completion and with more than 600 graduates from all over the world will tell you it was worth the effort.

Details of the Graduation and Awards Ceremony to be held in London in 2029 will be announced towards the end of the course.

Applications will open via the website in mid-June and close at the end of September 2026. Applications will be acknowledged after they close, and the firm offer of a place will be made via email during October 2026.