

DEPARTMENT: PHOTOGRAPHY
2026 EQUIPMENT RECOMMENDATION



Student work:
Beth Tyldesley
Commercial Work

FIRST YEAR STUDENTS / PHOTO AND VIDEO CERTIFICATE STUDENTS

* Please note that Higher Certificate students must also refer to the second-year equipment listed on the following page.

Must Have:

- **Mirrorless camera or Digital DSLR camera body**
When purchasing a new camera body, we strongly recommend a mirrorless option, as DSLR camera bodies are becoming less common in the industry. However, there is still a substantial amount of affordable second-hand DSLR equipment available on the market that is more than adequate for first year.
- **1x Good multi-purpose zoom lens.**
Generic lenses like SIGMA and Tamron are more than adequate. Please discuss your options with the relevant service providers attached later in the document.
- **1x Reflector board** (107 - 110cm).
Please do not buy a reflector smaller than this.
- **1x Strong sturdy tripod**
Invest in a good tripod that can support your camera and lens. Arca-Swiss base plates are more general and therefore recommended. We strongly recommend not buying a tripod under R1000, a decent tripod that will last will be around R4000- R6000. We see Benro, Manfrotto and 3-Legged-Thing as reputable brands.
- **A Memory card**
A memory card with a write speed of at least 150 MB/s is required. MicroSD cards used with an adapter are not acceptable. Memory card types are camera-model dependent; however, we recommend professional-series cards from Lexar, SanDisk, and Delkin—specifically Lexar's silver and gold cards, SanDisk's black and red cards, and Delkin Prime cards. These ranges offer a lifetime warranty.
- We do not recommend Transcend cards, as cheaper or slower options do not carry the same warranty coverage. Please consult our recommended suppliers for reliable advice.

Good to Have:

- **1x Extra Camera battery**
Please be aware that some generic brands are not compatible with certain camera bodies. We find that KnF works well in general but there are exceptions. Please consult our recommended suppliers for reliable advice
- **1x Cable Release**
A cable release is better than a phone for triggering the shutter because it minimizes camera shake, ensures reliability without signal issues, and provides precise, instant control.
- **Cleaning kit**
- **Memory Card Reader**
We do not recommend using a phone to transfer images from a camera to a computer, it often compresses files, reducing image quality, risks data loss and may lack support for RAW formats. In contrast, a memory card reader is important for transferring, editing, and backing up data from memory cards used in cameras, smartphones, and other devices. It provides faster and more accurate file transfers, supports multiple card types, enables access on devices without card slots, and helps recover or format cards. Faulty memory card readers are one of the top reasons for corrupted files. PGYTECH is a reputable brand.

(Please refer to the FAQ section on Page 5 of the document for more information)

RECOMMENDED CAMERA BODIES

FujiFilm, Nikon, Canon and Sony are the only four digital camera brands we recommend. Although there are other great brands on the international market; we have found that in terms of product range and support these brands have a very strong presence in South Africa.

SECOND YEAR / PHOTO AND VIDEO CERTIFICATE STUDENTS

- **1x Speedlight flash**
We recommend the Godox system to our students
- **1x wireless flash trigger**
- **1x Studio Light with Battery Pack.**
It is important for this light to be battery operated as it is portable to move round to outside remote locations.
- **1x Light stand**
Although a normal stand is more than adequate, it is worth recommending the use of a boom stand, as it is more versatile than a standard stand. Furthermore, a C-stand is expensive but durable and multi-purpose. Please speak to our recommended suppliers for sound advice.
- **1x Any light shaper**
Umbrella, beauty dish, softbox, zoom reflector etc.
- **8x AA batteries**
Recyko or similar with a charger.
- **8x AAA batteries (if necessary)**
(We found that with AAA's Duracell actually lasts longer than rechargeable AAA's)

Second-year equipment builds upon the gear already purchased in the first year. If a student does not have a proper mirrorless camera, it is recommended to purchase one in the second year, as students are encouraged to undertake real industry-related assignments from the second semester onward.

Having at least one professional lens is highly beneficial. (Please consult the list of recommended camera dealers.) Keep in mind that in commercial photography, professionals always ensure they have a high-quality portrait lens (e.g., an 85mm fixed lens). People are often the subject matter, regardless of the photography genre you pursue. However, students will not be penalized if they are unable to acquire such a lens at this stage.

Studio and flash (Strobist) photography constitute a significant part of a professional's kit. Students should purchase at least one Speedlight. Dedicated flashes from brands like FujiFilm, Nikon, and Canon are quite expensive, so we strongly recommend using the Godox brand. Our students have used them frequently in the past, and we confidently endorse them.

Video will be covered extensively during second year. It is recommended but not compulsory to have the following equipment.

NEUTRAL DENSITY FILTER



CAMERA CAGE



CAMERA GIMBAL



THIRD YEAR

- **1x Light stand**
- **1x Any light shaper**
- **1 x Continuous LED light**
Please consult our recommended suppliers for reliable advice.
- **1 x Gimbal**
A gimbal is essential for achieving smooth, professional-quality video footage, and it's an important tool for videographers and content creators looking to produce high-end video work.
- **1 x Cage**
A camera cage is a protective frame that surrounds your camera, providing additional support, and mounting options for accessories. Improving ergonomics, and enhances stability for smoother shooting.
- **1 x ND Filter**
A nice to have but by no means a must-have: (It is recommended to acquire 1x good portrait lens (i.e the Nikon 105mm Macro f2.8 lens or the Fuji XF 50-140mm F2.8R LM WR lens or Sony 85MM F1.8 or Sony 85mm F1.4 G Master). Please consult our recommended suppliers for reliable advice.

A student now needs to acquire an additional studio light or a continuous light to prepare for industry demands. The third year focuses on introducing students to the market and helping them launch their businesses. To do this effectively, students not only need the right equipment but also must become familiar with their tools.

Over the years, continuous light sources have evolved from inefficient, bulky options to highly versatile, energy-efficient devices powered by LED technology. While studio strobes remain essential for certain commercial photography applications, modern continuous lights have become strong competitors, especially in video production and beginner-friendly setups. The choice between the two often depends on the specific requirements of the project. We highly recommend purchasing a continuous light, as videography plays an increasingly important role in supporting still photography.

Third-year equipment builds on the gear already purchased in first and second year. If a student does not have a proper mirrorless camera, it is recommended to purchase one, since students are encouraged to undertake real industry-related assignments.

SERVICE PROVIDERS

Buying equipment is more than just finding the best bargain or buying the cheapest camera available. It is also about building relationships. The following list of service providers are people that we have found are not only committed to giving our student's good deals and outstanding service but also committed in supporting students in establishing their careers.

NAME	NUMBER	SERVICE
ATPHOTO Henry Tope	(012) 348 4890 info@atphoto.co.za henry@atphoto.co.za Unit C One Highveld Centre 5 Bellingham Street Centurion	Printing lab
WET INK	(012) 346 2012 print@wetink.co.za 183 Thomas Edison St, Menlo Park, Pretoria	Printing lab
ODP - ART OF PRINT Tammy Marshall	(012) 761 3700 tammy@artofprint.co.za 322 Garsfontein Road, Waterkloof Glen, Pretoria	Printing lab
CAMERASTUFF Delton Naidoo	(011) 880 4155 delton@camerastuff.co.za 473 Jan Smuts Ave, Blairgowrie, Randburg	Flash equipment Reflector boards Cable releases Studio lighting Location lighting Light stands Light shapers Rechargeable Batteries
CAPE FILM SUPPLY	(087) 470 0421 getfilm@capefilmsupply.co.za 101 Harrington St, Cape Town City Centre, Cape Town	Film developing lab Film suppliers
GLOWHIRE Johannesburg Cape Town	(011) 880 8124 rentals@glowhire.co.za 70 Oxford Rd, Riviera, Johannesburg (021) 300 3046 capetown@glowhire.co.za 15 Wembley Rd, Gardens, Cape Town	Camera and equipment rentals
LUDWIG'S PHOTOGRAPHIC Ludwig Jacobs	(012) 362 4268 ludwigsphoto@gmail.com 160 Lynnwood Road, Hillcrest, Pretoria, South Africa	Repairs Second hand gear Support

NAME	NUMBER	SERVICE
<p>OUTDOORPHOTO PRETORIA</p> <p>Lappies Labuschagne Steph Boonzaaier Rayden van den Berg Wean Stephan</p>	<p>(012) 348 3693</p> <p>lappies@outdoorphoto.co.za steph@outdoorphoto.co.za rayden@outdoorphoto.co.za wean@outdoorphoto.co.za stephan@outdoorphoto.co.za</p>	<p>New and premium second-hand equipment-All sales personnel will be able to assist with any second hand queries. All second hand items have been tested, cleaned and photographed. Outdoorphoto's 2nd hand equipment comes with a 6 month warranty.</p> <p>New Cameras & Lenses Tripods Flash equipment Reflector boards</p> <p>Cable releases Studio lighting Location lighting Light stands</p> <p>Light shapers Rechargeable Batteries Workshops</p>
<p>OUTDOORPHOTO FOURWAYS</p> <p>Lundi Mbanga Jerrie Lewis Bernard Koch Dewald</p>	<p>(011) 811 1089</p> <p>lundi@outdoorphoto.co.za jerrie@outdoorphoto.co.za bernard@outdoorphoto.co.za dewald@outdoorphoto.co.za</p>	<p>New and premium second-hand equipment -All sales personnel will be able to assist with any second hand queries. All second hand items have been tested, cleaned and photographed. Outdoorphoto's 2nd hand equipment comes with a 6 month warranty.</p> <p>New Cameras & Lenses Tripods Flash equipment Reflector boards Cable releases Studio lighting</p> <p>Location lighting Light stands Light shapers Rechargeable Batteries Workshops Printing</p>
<p>ORMS - CAPE TOWN - SOMERSET WEST</p> <p>ORMS - BELLVILLE</p>	<p>(021) 465 3573 021 013 6616 sales@orms.co.za sw-sales@orms.co.za</p> <p>Shop 5, Roeland Square Shop 25, Waterstone Cnr Roeland & Upper Village Shopping Centre, Canterbury Street Somerset West Gardens, Cape Town</p> <p>(021) 9101380 sales-bellville@orms.co.za</p> <p>Ground Floor, Tygervalley Chambers 2 27 Willie van Schoor Drive Bellville, Cape Town</p>	<p>New Cameras & Lenses (Photo & video) Tripods Flash equipment Reflector boards Cable releases Studio lighting</p> <p>Location lighting Light stands Light shapers Rechargeable Batteries Workshops Printing</p>
<p>PROFOTO SOUTH AFRICA</p>	<p>(071) 608 0947 (082) 537 7957</p> <p>profotoza@gmail.com</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Wholesale supply of New Profoto Lighting Equipment Student subsidies available on request for all NEW Profoto equipment Sales of Demo & Preowned Profoto Lighting Equipment Repairs and maintenance of all Profoto Lighting equipment
<p>HD GLOBAL</p>	<p>(071) 608 0947 (082) 537 7957</p> <p>profotoza@gmail.com</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> New Cameras & Lenses for Photo and Video (Nikon, Sony, Canon) Lighting for Photo & Video (Profoto, Godox, Aputure, Nanlite) Memory Cards and external backup devices Tripods and related grip-gear Camera bags and hard cases Cleaning equipment Backdrops Photographic accessories

Q: I am a first-year student and already have a camera. Can I just use the one I have?

A: The list we have compiled is designed to assist students who wish to pursue photography as a future career. Entry-level cameras, even those not on the list, should be sufficient for first-year work. However, when you reach second year, you'll be competing with professionals, and generally, better equipment produces better results. First year is your most important and often most expensive year, as it lays the foundation for future purchases.

We advise against investing in the following models: Canon 2000D, Canon 1200D, Canon 250D, Canon 4000D, and the Nikon D3000 series. If you already own one of these cameras, they will suffice for your first year. However, please be aware that these models have limitations that may pose challenges in second and third-year projects.

If you already own a camera and are unsure whether it is suitable, you can email our studio manager at boltont@openwindow.co.za for assistance.

Q: Should I invest in an expensive camera if I'm unsure about pursuing photography as a major in my second year?

A: If you buy one of the cameras on the list we can assure you that we will be able to sell it at second-hand value (60% of the purchase value and depending on the technology) to a first-year the following year. Provided that the camera is in good condition. See our supplier list for second hand retailers.

Q: What else should I budget for?

A:(All students): We are committed to providing students with a positive and enriching learning experience. To this end, we regularly organize field trips and workshops outside of usual class times as practical exercises. An additional fee of R800 per year is expected to cover these field trips

Printing is an essential part of photography, and students are required to complete some printed assignments each semester.

Second- and third-year students will work on professional portfolios, which involve sourcing models, make-up artists, props, and location scouting—activities that can be costly. We recommend budgeting up to R2000 per semester to cover these expenses. Of course creative solutions can help keep costs manageable.

Third-year students should budget an additional R2000 for exhibitions and materials for their darkroom and fine arts modules. Please keep in mind that Open Window strives to keep these costs affordable. For final portfolios and artist books at the end of the year, third-year students should budget approximately R1000 - R4000.

Q: How relevant is photography as a career with AI as threat?

A: AI is a valuable tool that can give a student a competitive edge in the job market. It helps young photographers work more efficiently by automating time-consuming editing tasks, allowing them to deliver high-quality work faster. This efficiency is highly valued by clients and employers.

Additionally, AI opens up new creative opportunities, enabling students to experiment with innovative techniques and styles that stand out in a crowded industry. It also provides insights into current trends and audience preferences, helping them create work that is in demand and marketable.

By mastering AI-enabled tools, students will be better equipped to adapt to industry changes and meet the expectations of professional clients. This technological proficiency, combined with their artistic skills, will make them more attractive candidates for internships, freelance work, and employment opportunities in a competitive job market.

At Open Window, we see AI as a positive technological advancement that enhances learning, creativity, and career prospects.

Q: What is the difference between mirrorless and DSLR?

A: The main difference between a DSLR and a mirrorless camera lies in the mechanism they use to capture light. A DSLR uses a mirror to reflect light onto the image sensor, while a mirrorless camera lets light directly hit the sensor, resulting in a quieter and quicker process.

Mirrorless cameras are quickly becoming the dominant technology in photography, with major brands like Canon, Nikon, and Sony focusing heavily on advancing these systems. They are introducing groundbreaking features and expanding their range of dedicated lenses, ensuring mirrorless systems stay at the forefront of innovation. Meanwhile, DSLRs remain a reliable option but are seeing less development, as some brands have shifted their resources away from DSLR systems to prioritize the future of mirrorless technology.

Q: What is the difference between a micro SD card and SD card?

MicroSD cards are the smaller-sized version of SD cards and the biggest difference between the two is the form factor. BUT as photographers it is essential to have a SD card to avoid data loss or malfunction of communication between the card and the camera.

Q: What is a hybrid camera and why is it important if I want to study photography?

A hybrid camera is a versatile tool that blends the features of both DSLR and mirrorless cameras, enabling you to capture high-quality still images and videos with ease. For photography students, it is a valuable asset because it allows you to explore both photography and videography, expanding your skill set and preparing you for a wide range of creative projects.

In today's visual-centric world, many photographers are expected to produce video content as well, and a hybrid camera makes it easier to meet this growing demand in the industry. It offers a cost-effective solution by combining the functions of two separate cameras into one, saving money while allowing you to develop both photography and videography skills.

As hybrid cameras continue to evolve, they ensure you stay competitive and adaptable in the dynamic creative industry. Learning videography alongside photography enhances career opportunities, improves storytelling abilities, and aligns with industry trends that require both still and moving images. Videography helps refine your understanding of light, composition, and post-processing, complementing your photography skills while preparing you for the evolving needs of the industry. Embracing videography ensures you remain versatile and relevant in an ever-changing creative landscape.

Q: When do I need to purchase the equipment?

A: It is expected that a student has their equipment available by week 5 of the academic year.

RECOMMENDED CAMERA BODIES: IN ORDER OF CHEAPEST TO MORE EXPENSIVE

* Speak to the providers (listed on page 4) for second hand DSLR options and others.

FUJIFILM

FUJIFILM X-T30 III



FUJIFILM X-S20



FUJIFILM X-T50



FUJIFILM X-T5



FUJIFILM XH-2 s



FUJIFILM GFX-100SII



SONY

SONY A6700



SONY A7 IV



SONY A7 V



SONY A7R5



SONY A1 II



CANON

CANON EOS R50



CANON EOS R7



CANON EOS R8



CANON EOS R5



CANON EOS R5 II



CANON EOS R6 II



NIKON

NIKON Z50 II



NIKON Z5 II



NIKON Z6 III or II



NIKON Z8



NIKON Z9



RECOMMENDED LENSES: IN ORDER OF CHEAPEST TO MORE EXPENSIVE

* Speak to the providers (listed on page 4) for second hand DSLR options

FUJIFILM

FUJIFILM XF 16 – 50MM
F2.8 - 4



FUJIFILM XF 18-120MM F4



FUJIFILM XF 16 – 55MM F2.8



**FUJIFILM XF 56MM
F1.2



**FUJIFILM XF 90MM
F2.8 MACRO



**FUJIFILM XF 50-140
F2.8



SONY

SONY FE 24-105MM
F4 G OSS



SONY FE 24-50MM
F2.8 GM



SONY FE 16-25MM
F2.8 GM



SONY FE 24-70MM
F2.8 GM I OR II



**SONY FE 85MM F1.8



**SONY FE 16-35MM
F2.8 GM I OR II



CANON

CANON RF 24-105MM
F4-F7.1
* SPECIFICALLY FOR R7



CANON RF-S 18-150MM
F3.5-F6.3
* SPECIFICALLY FOR R7



CANON RF 24-70MM
F2.8



**CANON RF 24-70MM
F2.8L IS USM



**NOT NECESSARY BUT
NICE TO HAVE

NIKON

NIKON Z 24-70MM
F4 S



Nikon Z 28-75mm F2.8



**Nikon Z 85mm F1.8 S



**Nikon Z 70-180mm
F2.8



**Nikon Z 50mm F1.4



**Nikon Z 17-28mm
F2.8



FIRST YEAR AND HIGHER CERTIFICATE ACCESSORIES

5-IN-1 REFLECTOR



TRIPOD



MEMORY CARD READER



CLEANING KIT



CABLE RELEASE



MEMORY CARD



STUDIO AND FLASH LIGHTING EQUIPMENT (SEE PAGE 2 & 3 FOR MORE INFORMATION)

GODOX AD200 PRO TTL POCKET FLASH KIT



GODOX AD 400 PRO



GODOX AD600PRO WITSTRO ALL-IN-ONE OUTDOOR FLASH



GODOX TT685 TTL FLASH



GODOX V860III TTL LI-ION FLASH KIT



GODOX XPRO TTL WIRELESS FLASH TRIGGER



GODOX X2T TTL WIRELESS FLASH TRIGGER TRANSMITTER



GODOX X3 PRO TOUCHSCREEN TTL WIRELESS FLASH TRIGGER
*RECOMMENDED FOR ADVANCED PHOTOGRAPHERS

