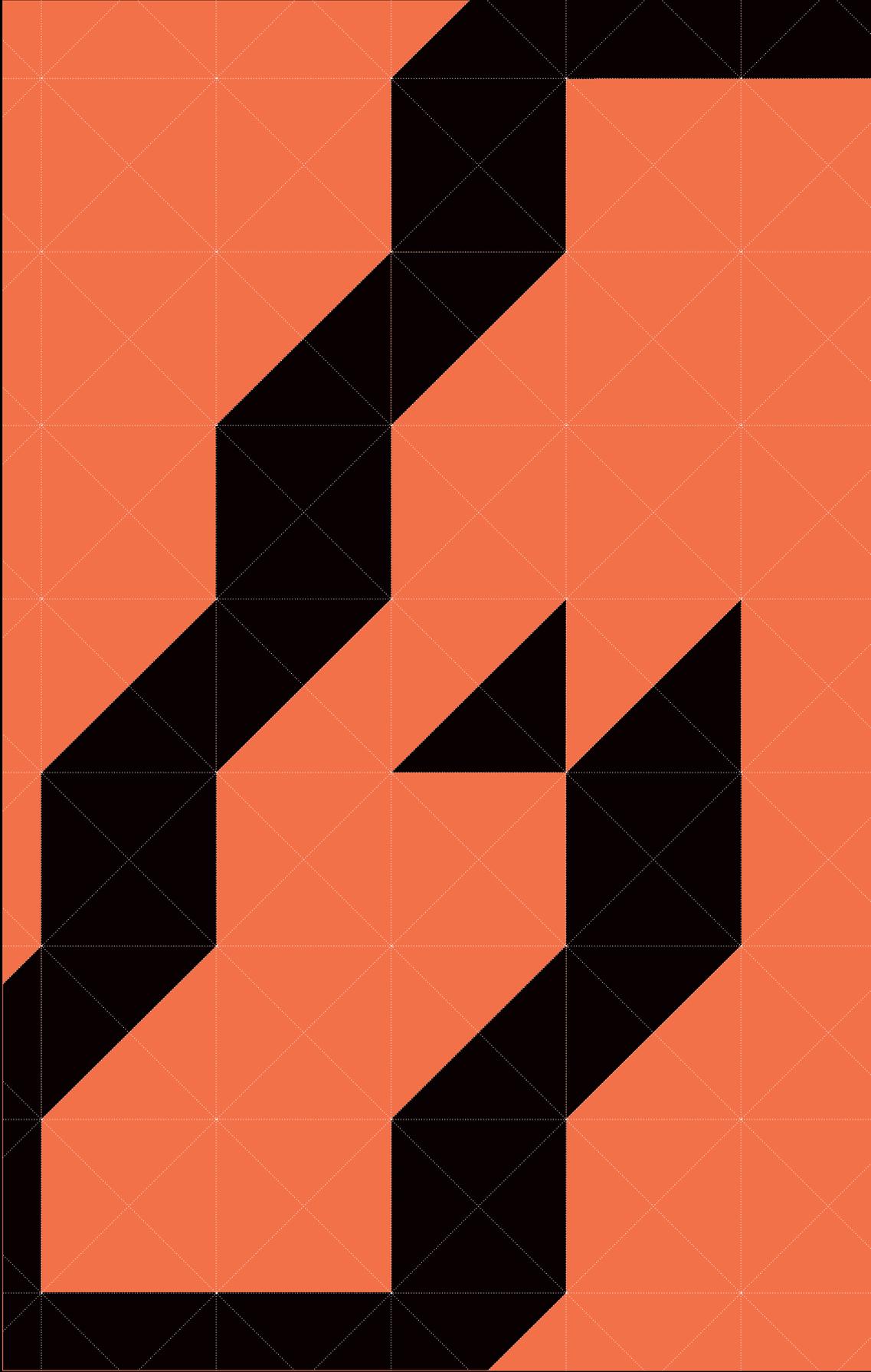# BA (Hons) Visual Communication

ARTS UNIVERSITY BOURNEMOUTH

Programme Specification

This Programme Specification is designed for prospective students, current students, graduates, academic staff and potential employers. It provides a summary of the main features of the programme and the intended learning outcomes that a typical student might reasonably be expected to achieve and demonstrate if he/she takes full advantage of the learning opportunities that are provided.

Whilst every endeavour has been made to provide the course described in the Programme Specification, the University reserves the right to make such changes as may be appropriate for reasons of operational efficiency or due to circumstances beyond its control. Any changes are made in accordance with the University's academic standards and quality procedures.

This document is available in alternative formats on request.

ARTS UNIVERSITY BOURNEMOUTH

PROGRAMME SPECIFICATION

The Programme Specification provides a summary of the main features of the **BA (Hons) Visual Communication** course, and the learning outcomes that a 'typical' student might reasonably be expected to achieve and demonstrate if they pass the course.

Further detailed information on the learning outcomes, content and teaching and learning methods of each unit may be found within this Handbook and the online Unit Information, which is available on your course blog.

Key Course Information	
Final Award	BA (Hons)
Course Title	Visual Communication
Award Title	BA (Hons) Visual Communication
Teaching institution	Arts University Bournemouth
Awarding Institution	Arts University Bournemouth
Offered in the School of:	Art, Design and Architecture
Professional accreditation	None
Length of course / mode of study	3 years full-time
Level of final award (in FHEQ)	Level 6
Subject benchmark statement	Art and Design
UCAS code	W215
Language of study	English
External Examiner for course	Kam Rehal University of Greenwich
Please note that it is not appropriate for students to contact external examiners directly.	
Date of Validation	2012
Date of most recent review	2018
Date programme specification written/revised	September 2018

Course Description

BA (Hons) Visual Communication has a vision that profoundly explores and examines the importance of visual communication in relation to culture and society, whilst championing the significance of an interdisciplinary approach to the subject. The course is interested in interdisciplinary processes of developing ideas and communicating through visual language to an audience.

Students will explore and learn to understand the critical discourse around what it means to be a contemporary 'visual communicator'. Visual Communication explores

the interface and overlap between analogue and digital technologies. It looks at ways in which traditional craft media and processes are used alongside, and combined with, digital technologies. This opens up possibilities about the process and contexts of communication and in doing so shows that the designer skill set is transferable beyond the confines of the purely visual.

The practice of visual communication in a diverse world is a fundamental principle of our programme. We expect students to consider how visual communication interacts in historical, cultural, social, philosophical and political contexts. This list is inclusive but not exhaustive and encourages students to draw upon a wide range of material from the fields of art and design culture to support, develop and advance their practice.

What is required for the future is a combination of skills and personal qualities, including: the ability to be well-versed in a wide range of technical and craft skills; processes of thinking-through-making supported by rigorous self-criticism and reflection; an informed awareness of context and audience; the ability to work collaboratively as well as independently. Above all, the future focussed designer should have an idealistic commitment to improve all aspects of sustainable user-centred communication design both locally and globally.

Visual communication is a continuum and seamless spectrum of creative activity ranging from conceptual practice to mainstream design. Visual Communication is now producing graduates who are not only able to work at any point on that continuum, but have the ability to move within it at will. These abilities are crucial in both life but also maintaining currency of practice and longevity of employment.

Course Aims

1. Be a leading HE programme by building on our past legacy while actively contributing to contemporary creative contexts and the futures of visual communication practice.

2. Provide a rich, broad and supportive working community within which students can develop holistic approaches to the subject of communications and advance their career goals in a unique and stimulating academic context.

3. To maintain a working ethos within which you feel free to experiment, to be interrogative, analytical and innovative, to question existing practice and to arrive at final resolutions from a well-informed knowledge base.

4. Create a challenging learning environment within which students can develop a deep insight into the varied issues that permeate the discipline, to enable them to match their personal interests, qualities and ambitions to professional practice.

5. Promote the consideration of social, political or environmental issues and the potential of design to inform and raise awareness of such issues through soundly-conceived ideas and innovative practice.

6. Develop student's understanding of the fundamental importance of research, evaluation and reflection in relation to practice, and to make judgements that are critically informed both aesthetically and professionally.

7. To equip students with the learning strategies of intellectual and critical enquiry and visual analysis which will enable them to arrive at visual communication solutions appropriate for specific audiences.

8. Prepare students technically for professional life by ensuring that they are fully acquainted with the processes of generation, reproduction and distribution; and to retain a balance between new and traditional media and processes.

9. To prepare students to progress their academic and professional practice and interests in either employment or postgraduate study, including through the development of advanced visual, written and verbal communication skills.

10. Encourage students to develop independence and the social skills which are increasingly necessary in the creative industries; to encourage collaboration, and to be articulate and engaging in the presentation of their ideas and work.

Course Outcomes

By the end of the course you will be able to:

A.   Intellectual Engagement, Knowledge and Understanding
A1   Evidence a variety of relevant primary and secondary research sources and apply these to your work. Develop innovative responses/approaches to projects that question, challenge and further your understanding of creative practice.

A2   Demonstrate understanding of subject knowledge through the functional, aesthetic, historical and critical perspectives that inform and shape your work.

A3   Evidence and articulate the intellectual processes involved in the production of your work. Synthesise theory and practice research findings to initiate and inform a variety of written and visual ideas and responses.

A4   Demonstrate relevance and depth in your practice in relation to contemporary contexts.

B.   Skills, Qualities and Attributes
B1   Identify, develop and apply a range of relevant problem-solving strategies that integrate form and content whilst understanding complexity, iteration and nuance.

B2   Experiment with materials, media, processes and environments in an informed and innovative way.

B3   Display a high level of technical skill in the production, presentation and documentation of your work.

C.   Professionalism
C1   Articulate your identity as a creative practitioner through reflecting on your practice in relationship to professional contexts.

C2   Participate thoughtfully and professionally when working and collaborating with others.

C3   Take a personal responsibility for your education by setting goals and managing your time and resources effectively to complete projects to the appropriate professional level.

Reference Points

UK Quality Code for higher education, including:
- Subject Benchmark Statement: *Art and Design*
- Framework for Higher Education Qualifications (FHEQ)

AUB Regulatory Framework and Undergraduate Assessment Regulations

Learning and Teaching Strategies

The teaching and learning within BA (Hons) Visual Communication's working studio environment is open so that you can make the most of opportunities that arise from within and beyond the curriculum structure. This manner of teaching is multidisciplinary, and characteristically based on collaborative studio practice.

Projects explore the interface and overlap between analogue and digital technologies, and look at ways in which traditional 'craft' media and processes can be used alongside technological developments. We are interested in the 'hybrid' processes, visual thinking and ideas generation from concept to final outcome that emerge from this overlap, with a particular focus on print and digital/traditional publishing, typography and screen-based design.

Honours study combines independent learning and taught sessions.

The course objectives will be met by deploying a wide variety of teaching and learning methods including workshop projects, studio projects, lectures, seminars, group critiques, guided reading and tutorials.

The methods employed will, whenever possible, lead you into the disciplines required of a creative design practitioner and promote the transferable skills of self-management and self-reliance.

The course is structured progressively to provide increased opportunities for autonomous learning.

The progressive promotion of student-centred learning reflects maturity as a student and allows development towards individual goals.

Teaching is directed at supporting individual engagement in learning although there will be opportunities to work in teams/collaborations to enable learning the value of peer cooperation.

The integration of theory and practice is promoted and reinforced through a team-teaching approach. Lectures, seminars and tutorials may be delivered by team members as appropriate in the creative environment of the studio.

There may also be occasions where digital delivery is appropriate. Where this is the case, this might include on-line lectures, seminars, presentations, and one to one tutorials. It is important that you engage with on-line course delivery in the same way that you would if you were on campus.

BA (Hons) Visual Communication allows you to pursue your particular creative interests and to extend the scope and depth of your enquiry. You will be encouraged to formulate and identify your particular professsional and academic interests. Risk and ambition within the field will be crucial to your individual development. Intellectual and academic integrity will be further encouraged, both through written content and 'thinking through practice'.

A Guest Speaker programme of professionals involved in the creative industries will stimulate, enlighten and enable you to formalise your own career objectives. Transferable, business and employment skills will also be incorporated through this programme.

In Level 6 you must take the major responsibility for your study. Teaching support reflects the autonomous expectations placed upon you as a mature learner through tutorial support complementing the nature of your study.

Negotiated Learning Agreements are the principle means of defining learning goals and monitoring progress and achievements. Level 6 studies provide the opportunity for you to extend your interests and abilities and demonstrate your capacity for sustained independent and professional work.

Assessment fulfils two purposes

Firstly, through regular review of student progress you receive feedback on how your learning is developing towards the achievement of the learning outcomes - **Formative assessment.** This process is delivered through the tutorial and critique experience and by engaging with this process you will develop your knowledge and skills.

Students are able to experience the assessment process from an increased personal perspective and make serious critical decisions in conjunction with the teaching staff with regard to their peers' work.

Formative assessment is provided during tutorials where an action plan is formulated to develop the student's work. Viewings and critiques offer indications of the quality of work and how it relates to the assessment criteria. Formative assessment points will be outlined in the online unit information and also within the scheme of work. The second purpose is to provide a measure of your achievement, in the form of a mark or classification, at the end of a defined period of study, i.e. unit, level, or final award - **Summative assessment.**

Communication

The staff team value good communication and ease of access to important documents; students who wish to get the best from the course will ensure they communicate regularly with staff through the appropriate channels; AUB email and

briefing sessions.

It is the student's responsibility to ensure that communication is checked and goes through recognised channels.

AUB emails are the main source of contact and you should ensure you check your account daily. Information regarding lectures, trips, assessment and tutorials along with any other vital information will be sent to your email address.

The course team will only respond to emails from AUB addresses and emails will only be answered on weekdays between 9.00am and 5.00pm.

We hold all documents on MyAUB such as project briefs, group lists and presentations. This can be accessed inside and outside of the university with your AUB email address and password.

Staff can be contacted by phone. There is a message service that should be used if no one is available to take your call. The course team will respond to messages left within working hours.

Tutorials to discuss academic issues are organised by the staff team, but students wishing for additional tutorial help can request one by email. This should be requested well in advance of the date of the tutorial; once a time is set it is vital that you attend.

Housekeeping will be held at the beginning of every session. At this point we will disseminate all information pertaining to that day's activities and any other relevant information pertaining to the course.

The course team cannot reset passwords or assist with recovery; if your details are lost you will need to contact the DCS helpdesk.

Assessment

Each unit is assessed separately, and the assessment forms part of the unit. Assessment both provides a measure of your achievement, and also gives you regular feedback on how your learning is developing.

For every unit of your course, we will inform you of what you are expected to learn; what you have to submit; how your work will be assessed; and the deadline for presenting your work for assessment. This is made available through Unit Information, which is on your course blog.

A minimum of one unit at Level 4 will be assessed on a pass/fail basis, with written feedback but no numerical grade. Details of this will be clearly expressed on the Unit Information Sheet. All other units will be given a percentage mark.

The final mark for each unit will be recorded on your formal record of achievement (transcript). With the exception of the pass/fail unit, each component of assessment is graded using a notched marking scale, whereby only certain marks are used within each grade. The only marks available within any ten-point band are *2, *5 and *8

(e.g. 62, 65, 68). These marks correspond to a low, mid, and high level of achievement within each grade band.

All learning outcomes must be passed to successfully complete the unit.

On successful completion of your Honours degree course, you will be awarded a degree classification based on your unit marks. The final classification is determined using all unit marks at Levels 5 and 6 using two different algorithms, which are detailed in the HE Student Regulations. If the two algorithms produce different results, you will be awarded the higher class of degree.

If you have joined Level 6 through either the Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) route or having completed a Foundation Degree (FdA), the final classification is determined using only your unit marks at Level 6.

For further information on assessment, progression, awards and classifications, please visit https://aub.ac.uk/regulations

Course Structure

All students are registered for the award of BA (Hons); however, exit awards are available if you leave the course early, having successfully completed one or two levels. If you successfully complete a level of the course, you will automatically be entitled to progress to the next level.

For the award of a Certificate of Higher Education (CertHE), you must have achieved a minimum of 120 credits at Level 4. This qualification may be awarded if you leave the University following successful completion of the first year of your course.

For the award of a Diploma of Higher Education (DipHE), you must have achieved a minimum of 240 credits of which a minimum of 120 must be at Level 5. This qualification may be awarded if you leave the University following successful completion of the second year of your course.

For the award of a BA (Hons) you must have achieved a minimum of 360 credits of which a minimum of 240 must be at Level 5 or above, of which a minimum of 120 credits must be at Level 6. This qualification will be awarded upon successful completion of your course.

A BA without Honours may be awarded if you have achieved 300 credits, at least 180 of which are at Level 5 or above, and at least 60 of which are at Level 6.

Course Content

BA (Hons) Visual Communication facilitates your continuing educational experience into the exciting, invigorating and inspirational world of multidisciplinary, contemporary communication. In order to make the most of the opportunities that this course offers, you will need determination, a playful attitude, an inquiring mind, enthusiasm and lots of passion for the subject. By the time you complete the course you will look at the world around you in a completely different way. You will grow as a designer, a reflective thinker, a decision maker and visual communicator. You will be

ready to progress your professional career aspirations in the creative industries or postgraduate study.

You have begun a journey on a full-time course with a teaching team that has a strong, student-centred, teaching and learning approach. The course offers the opportunity to explore the broad spectrum of graphic design practice, including: typography, illustration, screen-based design, and photography and continue to develop your skills and understanding gained from previous study or work place experiences. Facilitated through a diverse range of learning activities, you will investigate and find practical applications for design theory and visual research methods, answer projects set and evaluated by practicing designers and real-world clients and identify a practice area of personal interest to you within the creative industries. This will culminate in a self-initiated major project where you will be asked to research an area of particular personal interest, write a project proposal and produce a body of work. This project will allow you to take your initial ideas all the way through to final outcomes such as design for print and design for screen, or any combination that your research leads you to. The course will help you to achieve and expand your technical understanding while exposing you to proven methodologies for visual research, idea generation and cutting-edge industry practice.

There is a strong emphasis on balancing practical skills, conceptual thinking and research methods, working as part of a team and on the acquiring of lifelong learning skills. This is achieved through a variety of teaching methods including workshops, seminars, group activities and individual tutorials.

PAL - Peer Assisted Learning

The term 'peer assisted learning' is used to describe various types of student-to-student support. The PAL scheme involves the type of structured and managed co-operative activity that can enhance the achievement and productivity and the interpersonal relationships and psychological health and well-being of those participating in it (Johnson & Johnson, 1989).

As explained in the AUB information sheet 'Peer Assisted Learning', PAL at AUB is:

> A scheme that is intended to foster cross-year support between students on the same course.
>
> It encourages students to support each other and learn co-operatively under the guidance of students from the year above. PAL has five main aims and its purpose is to help students:
> - adjust quickly to university life.
> - acquire a clear view of course direction and expectations.
> - develop their learning and study skills to meet the requirements of higher education.
> - enhance their understanding of the subject matter of their course through collaborative group discussion.
> - be better prepared for the assessment process.

PAL sessions are intended to be planned, structured and friendly. In PAL, the emphasis is on everyone in the group working co-operatively to develop their

understanding. PAL is therefore about exploratory discussion led by PAL Leaders. The more everyone joins in these discussions, the better the sessions work.

How a student develops on the course, through the learning and teaching experience

Winter Term, Level 4
Level 4 will start with an introduction to the diverse areas of visual communication; text and image, illustration, photography, typography. The first term is characterised by sets of projects and workshops that explore issues such as narrative, research, layout and composition and documentation. In addition, a comprehensive set of lectures that support the understanding of integration of practice and theory. Students work with the course team in developing critical thinking and gaining an understanding of design methodology as well as learning to appreciate the importance of experimentation, creativity and risk taking.

Spring Term, Level 4
The programme continues to lay the foundations of design methodology and visual literacy through studio-based projects that explore typography and compositional skills, print process and motion design. These experiences broaden students' awareness of contemporary visual communication, whilst developing their problem solving, conceptuality, experimentation, creative skills and knowledge. This is achieved through a range of studio-based tutorials, workshops and seminars.

Summer Term, Level 4
The summer term seeks to bring together the creative and technical skills acquired so far in the course, as well further developing conceptual thinking skills. This consolidation process helps to focus students on their individual aims and objectives, strengths, interests and personal career direction in order to help to determine their own practice and to promote self-confidence in readiness for Level 5.

Autumn Term, Level 5
The beginning of the year demands commitment and dedication with students becoming independent learners. They also continue to develop skills and knowledge in designing for a diverse range of media. The main focus is on gaining further insight into the broad subject discipline of visual communication alongside an increasing appreciation of design aesthetics. Students further develop conceptual skills, critical analysis, creativity and self-expression and work on a range of stimulating project briefs.

Spring Term, Level 5
This term underpins the opportunity to consolidate knowledge, technical ability, personal interests and aspirations and career ambitions through self-negotiated briefs that meet unit outcomes. Students explore self-negotiated briefs which demand individual enquiry, focussing on rigour, creative intelligence and design problem solving. The focus is the development of confidence, integrity, competence and responsibility for one's own working practice.

Summer Term, Level 5
This term seeks to bring together creative and technical skills/understanding by selecting projects that reflect individual aspirations and interests to support progression into Level 6.

Independent Study Unit
There is an option to undertake *Independent Study*; the programme of study will be formally agreed by a Learning Agreement. This unit has been designed for those students who may be offered work experience or undertake study abroad programme.

Level 6
To this end, the Level 6 provision offers the opportunity for students to take greater responsibility for actively developing their career interests by locating their practice within contemporary discourses. It is intended to provide students with the opportunity to carry out extensive and specific research within their chosen focus and assist in the development of their practice. Students will focus on the development of a high-quality graduate portfolio of design work that evidences their creative thinking and employability. Level 6 students will at all times manage several projects at once and they will be expected to demonstrate high levels of personal responsibility in the day to day management of their time. Alongside continuing to develop as designers, Level 6 students will also develop as project managers, organisers and team players. Students will have opportunities to engage in competition briefs.

Specialist Resources

Each studio is equipped with a suite of Apple Macintosh computers each with industry standard software. There is also book binding and movable type equipment that can be accessed upon request.

Course Units

Unit code	Unit Title	Credit Weighting
Level 4		
VCO466	Introduction to Visual Communication	40 credits
VCO465	Visual Thinking	40 credits
VCO464	Visual Communication in Context 1	40 credits
Level 5		
VCO561	Visual Communication in Context 2	40 credits
VCO562	Research Project: Visual Communication Contexts, Theory and Practice	20 credits
VCO563	Investigating Contemporary Practice	20 credits
	OR	
VCO564	Independent Study	20 credits
VCO565	Concepts of Visual Language	40 credits
Level 6		
VCO665	Specialist Practice	40 credits
VCO662	Investigative Study	20 credits
VCO664	Major Project	60 credits

Course Diagram

This diagram shows the proposed start/end dates for each unit and shows teaching weeks only; holiday periods are not included.

Level 5																														
0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30

Autumn Term	**Spring Term**	**Summer Term**
VCO561 Visual Communication in Context 2 **(weeks 1-10)** (40 credits)	**VCO562 Research Project: Visual Communication Contexts, Theory and Practice** **(weeks 11-20)** (20 credits) **VCO563 Investigating Contemporary Practice** **(weeks 11-20)** (20 credits) **OR** **VCO564 Independent Study** **(weeks 11-20)** (20 credits)	**VCO565 Concepts of Visual Language** **(weeks 21-30)** (40 credits)

Level 6																														
0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30

Autumn Term — **Spring Term** — **Summer Term**

VCO665 Specialist Practice
(weeks 1-12)
(40 credits)

VCO664 Major Project
(weeks 12-30)
(60 credits)

VCO662 Investigative Study
(weeks 1-10)
(20 credits)