Course Specification

BA (HONS)
COMMUNICATION DESIGN AND STRATEGY

This handbook should be used by students who are studying on Level 4 and Level 5 during 2026/27.



AUB Arts University Bournemouth

About the Course Handbook

This Handbook provides you with basic information about your course. Through the approved course specification, it provides you with the aims and outcomes of your course and outlines the content and how this will be delivered.

The course is subject to a rigorous process of quality assurance and enhancement. This may result in changes to individual units as the course develops, to ensure that the relevance and quality of the course is upheld. You will be consulted by a member of the course team before any changes are made.

Information in this Handbook should be used in conjunction with the HE Assessment Regulations. It is your responsibility to ensure that you are aware of the regulations that apply to your course and you should refer to the regulations throughout your studies. If you have any questions, you should speak to your Programme Leader, or member of the course team. The Assessment Regulations can be located on the Induction section of Canvas, or https://aub.ac.uk/regulations

Important information about key policies which apply to your academic studies is available on the Induction section of Canvas. Please view this material on the Induction section of Canvas.

If you would like a copy of this Handbook in an alternative format, please contact equalities@aub.ac.uk.

ARTS UNIVERSITY BOURNEMOUTH

COURSE SPECIFICATION

The Course Specification provides a summary of the main features of the **BA (Hons) Communication Design and Strategy** 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 in the Unit Descriptors, which forms part of the Course Handbook.

Key Course Information	
Final Award	BA (Hons)
Course Title	Communication Design and Strategy
Award Title	BA (Hons) Communication Design and Strategy
Teaching institution	Arts University Bournemouth
Awarding Institution	Arts University Bournemouth
Offered in the School of	Arts, Media and Creative Industries Management
Professional accreditation	None
Length of course / mode of study	3 years full-time 4 years optional placement year
Level of final award (in FHEQ)	Level 6
Subject benchmark statement	Arts and Design
UCAS code	W213
Language of study	English
External Examiner for course:	Details available on request
Please note that it is not appropriate for students to contact external examiners directly	
Date of Validation	July 2022
Date of most recent review	N/A
Date course specification written/revised	July 2023

Course Description

BA Communication Design and Strategy is an innovative and unique degree program designed to equip students with the creative design skills and strategic thinking needed to communicate effectively across various media in today's evolving communication landscape.

This course is the perfect choice for students who are passionate about creative design and are eager to harness the power of strategic thinking with the goal to create impactful and meaningful communication. It combines creative design practices with the study of business and design strategies, enabling students to develop design solutions that not only look fresh and engaging but also fulfil clients' strategic objectives.

During the course, students will study a variety of units that cover key aspects of creating innovative and targeted design with a message which will be realised via strategic approaches to unlock the desired objective. The curriculum includes creative design, visual identity, typography, digital and print media, advertising, and branding, combined with units

and projects on marketing strategies, consumer behaviour as well as, business operations. This interdisciplinary approach gives students a comprehensive understanding of both the creative and business sides of communication design.

On completion of the course, students will be able to:

- Understand in depth the creative industries.
- Create original work in accordance with business strategy and stakeholders needs for targeted audiences.
- Create original design work and brands.
- Create strategy focussed presentations, pitches and report writing.
- Implement creative problem solving and design frameworks.
- Understand design strategy, idea generation, user experience.
- Collaborate as part of a team as well as working effectively as an individual.
- Produce innovative brands, strategies, and a portfolio of work.

By the end of the course, graduates will leave with a portfolio of work that will highlight their potential within industry. They will be adept at creating strategic communication designs that effectively convey a message, tell a story, or promote a brand. They will have the ability to integrate strategic thinking into their design process, ensuring that their work aligns with business objectives and effectively resonates with the intended audience.

Distinctive features of the course

Interdisciplinary Approach: This course uniquely combines creative design with strategic business principles.

Research Emphasis: Unlike other design courses, this program places significant focus on research skills for strategic decision-making.

Practicality: Hands-on learning and portfolio creation ensure students gain practical design experience.

Professional Development: The course fosters goal-setting and effective resource management, preparing students for the professional world.

Course Industry Patron Scheme: All courses at AUB are connected formally with an industry Patron, an industry practitioner or business that acts as a critical friend to the course and course team. Many courses work with several industry partners, but the more formal Industry Patron connection offers the opportunity to collaborate and maintain close relations with industry / business. This is a unique concept that ensures AUB courses are industry relevant and maintain current practices while providing further opportunities for students to engage with industry practitioners.

AUB Strategic vision

A new UG Communication Design and Strategy course would fit with the university's strategic vision in several ways:

Innovation: Developing a Communication Design and Strategy course supports AUB in broadening its scope by offering a unique curriculum which combines creative design with business principles. It also allows students to develop entrepreneurial skills and prepare themselves for start-up. employment or freelance as well as agency employment.

Collaboration: The proposed course will involve collaborations across different courses within AUB but also with relevant industry partners.

Internationalisation: A course in Communication Design and Strategy will attract international students who are interested in creative leadership combined with design skills. This will enrich the diversity of AUB and enhance the student experience.

Optional Placement Year

The optional Placement Year offers students the opportunity to:

- Get under the skin of an **industry, organisation, and role** to assist them with making better-informed decisions about their future career prospects.
- Undertake a placement, which ensures students can take **personal responsibility** for tasks, duties, and projects within a real-world work setting.
- **Develop and recognise their own work ethic and powers of critical reflection**.
- Build **high-level transferable skills** and enhance professional competencies in the workplace.

The Placement Year will be recognised on the degree transcript. As students will remain a registered student for the duration of the Placement Year, they will retain access to all university support services. Students will be allocated a Placement Tutor who will maintain regular remote contact with them. Placements often lead to a permanent role on graduation, providing a greater chance of success for graduates of this course.

Course Aims

The BA Communication Design and Strategy course is an innovative program designed to blend the areas of graphic communication and business strategy. This unique combination fosters the development of creative innovators, adept in bringing powerful messages to life through strategic design thinking. Emphasizing a practical learning methodology, the course explores various facets of communication design, such as graphic design, digital media, and print media.

Simultaneously, students gain a solid grasp of business strategy, exploring areas like marketing strategies, consumer behaviour, and business operations. This interdisciplinary approach not only imparts a thorough understanding of communication design in a business framework but also focuses on honing research skills. This enables students to address complex challenges and make strategic, informed decisions. Graduates of this course will be uniquely equipped to integrate creative design with business strategy, opening new pathways to effectively connect with and influence target audiences.

Develop Creative Innovators: To produce graduates who can creatively integrate graphic communication with business strategy.

Become Communication Designers: To provide in-depth knowledge in graphic design, digital media, and print media.

Understand Business Strategy: To equip students with a solid understanding of marketing strategies, consumer behaviour, and business operations.

Interdisciplinary Approach: To offer an integrated learning experience that combines creative and commercial elements.

Enhance Research Skills: To strengthen students' abilities in conducting research and tackling complex issues.

Prepare Strategic Decision-Makers: To prepare graduates to make informed strategic decisions, bridging creative design with business strategy.

Course Outcomes

This course enables students to demonstrate the following subject knowledge and understanding, intellectual and academic skills, practical subject skills, key skills and attributes, and professional and transferable skills.

The outcomes that students will have demonstrated upon completion of the BA (Hons) Communication Design and Strategy course, are as follows:

- Evidence a variety of relevant primary and secondary research strategies. Analyse findings to develop design concepts based on audience behaviours and cultural values.
- Evidence understanding of subject knowledge through functional, aesthetic, historical and critical perspectives.
- Evidence and articulate the intellectual processes involved in the production of complex, strategy led, creative design work.
- Synthesise theory and practice research findings to initiate and inform a variety of written and visual ideas and responses.
- Identify, develop, and apply a range of relevant problem-solving strategies that will support the creative process to deliver innovative solutions.
- Experiment with materials, media, processes, and environments in an informed and innovative way.
- Display an elevated level of technical skill in the production, presentation, and documentation of work.
- Articulate personal identity as a creative practitioner through reflecting on personal practice in relationship to professional contexts.
- Participate thoughtfully and professionally when working and collaborating with others.

Reference Points

UK Quality Code for higher education, including:

- Subject Benchmark Statement: ART & DESIGN
- Framework for Higher Education Qualifications (FHEQ)
- AUB LTAF and Undergraduate Assessment Regulations

Learning, Teaching, and Assessment Strategies

While studying on the BA Communication Design and Strategy course, students will undertake a range of projects to gain valuable experience that will equip them in a unique way to produce creative design with business principles. These projects challenge students to apply their skills in creative problem-solving, strategic thinking, and effective communication. Students gain practical experience in aligning design solutions with business goals to engage target audiences. These diverse projects promote creativity, critical thinking, and problem-solving skills, preparing students to navigate the complex challenges of the communication design industry.

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 to students acquiring 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.

Theoretical, contextual, studio and professional practices are embedded within all units. Some units also have strategy and marketing principles as part of their syllabus. This integration dissolves the artificial barriers between these forms of engagement, such as recognising theory in making, allowing students to fully realise their potential and truly understand the rich relationship between these elements of practice.

A proportion of summative and formative assessment takes place during group reviews of work whereby a small group of students and members of the staff team critically engage the students during an open discussion. The staff write up their notes and agree upon a mark following this session. The use of a group review of work as a means of formative assessment allows students to develop their ability to verbally articulate their individual practice. It also offers an opportunity for them to see fellow students work and discuss it. This formative assessment approach is transparent and promotes assessment as part of the learning within the unit of study for the full range of learners. Students will learn not only from the assessment and discussion relating to their own work but also from that of their peers. This approach will enable students to understand more fully how their work is assessed against learning outcomes.

Student Engagement

Enhanced Learning through Collaboration: The course's use of group presentations and team collaboration fosters cooperative learning. Students engage with diverse perspectives, deepening their understanding and application of communication design and business strategy concepts.

Co-design of Learning: Students are encouraged to actively participate in their education, such as drafting design proposals that align with their interests. This autonomy motivates them and ensures their learning is directly relevant to their career goals.

Building a Professional Portfolio: A progressive assessment approach, combined with practical skills and project work, enables students to develop a strong portfolio. This is particularly significant in later stages of the course, where major projects are aligned with personal and career interests.

Developing Critical Research Skills: Emphasizing research from the outset, the course encourages deep engagement with content, fostering critical thinking and informed decision-making—key skills in creative and business domains.

Real-World Applications and Networking: Interaction with industry-set briefs, guest speakers, and design agencies offers real-world experiences, enhancing learning and helping to build vital industry connections.

Assessment

Each unit is assessed separately, and the assessment forms part of the unit. Assessment both provides a measure of student achievement, and also provides students with regular feedback on how their learning is developing.

For every unit of a course, we will inform students of what they are expected to learn; what they need to submit; how their work will be assessed; and the deadline for presenting work for assessment.

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

Students will receive a final mark for each unit in the form of a percentage, which will be recorded on a formal record of achievement (transcript). 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 an Honours degree course, students will be awarded a degree classification based on their unit marks. The final classification is determined using all unit marks at Levels 5 and 6.

If a student has 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 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 a student leaves the course early, having successfully completed one or two levels. If students successfully complete a level of the course, they will automatically be entitled to progress to the next level.

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

For the award of a Diploma of Higher Education (DipHE), students 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 a student leaves the University following successful completion of the second year of the course.

For the award of a BA (Hons) a student 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 the course.
A BA without Honours may be awarded if a student achieves 300 credits, at least 180 of which are at Level 5 or above, and at least 60 of which are at Level 6.

Core Values and Skills

In developing courses, the University aims to create a curriculum that reflects its values and ethos. It should prepare students for the future not only in enabling them to have a successful career, but also empower students with the knowledge, skills and passion to have a positive impact on the world and be an agent for change. AUB has drawn from the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) (https://sdgs.un.org/goals) which have informed our values of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion as well as our Graduate Attributes.

Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI)

"We are better for our diversity. We are enriched by the depth of respect we have for each other and the strength of our relationships with our people, our places and the planet. Through our commitment to working with those who are different to us, or challenge us, we grow stronger together, creating new synergies, global connections and sustainable futures." (AUB Strategy 2030)

As an organisation we have moral, social and legal obligations to fulfil in terms of EDI, and in doing so our commitment is to put EDI at the heart of every area of activity. It is not covered as a separate, stand-alone section, rather it forms an integral part of the curriculum, throughout your study here.

Graduate Attributes (GA)

Over recent years, there has been an increasing pace of change, technological, social, environmental. This has been further impacted by the world-wide pandemic effecting significant change in the global economy and the employment market.

In this context, the University has recognised the importance of developing AUB graduates who have the attributes to be able to build their career, adapting to different circumstances and embracing changes. A suite of attributes have been defined that we feel are particularly appropriate to the creative courses that we deliver and to AUB's core values; during your course, both curricular and extra-curricular activities will give you the opportunity to prepare for your working career.

The course will introduce students to topics which are integrated with the curriculum at every stage of learning. This will allow the student to structure their career development journey through levels 4-6 of the degree course and consider the following stages: Self Awareness, Opportunity Awareness, Decision Making and Transitioning into Work. These align to the AUB Career Readiness stages: Explore, Focus, Engage and Achieve.

In practice, this means that each unit of the course, at each Level, will include elements of career development and these will be shown explicitly in unit descriptors and outline syllabuses. Whilst students engage with these as they go through each unit, they will all come together in the final unit at each Level. Such an approach is designed to support students in the next steps they take after graduation, in whatever direction those may be, and is fundamental to degree studies.

Students will also have the option, between Level 5 (Year 2) and Level 6 (Year 3) of undertaking an extended period of work experience. The course team will be able to discuss this at the appropriate time.

Maintaining Health and Wellbeing

Throughout the course students are encouraged to reflect on their own health and wellbeing, and to develop themselves as a healthy creative practitioner. Students will consider how to develop study and work strategies and habits which maintain and promote their own

wellbeing, and to manage their professional activities in a way which safeguards their mental and physical health.

Course staff have designed the course in order that, as far as is reasonably possible, health and wellbeing are promoted. Therefore, it is vital students maintain constructive communication with their colleagues and their staff throughout their time on this course.

Course Content

Each level operates within three terms over a period of thirty weeks. Each unit has its own aims, learning outcomes, assessment components and assessment criteria. The positive nature of progressive assessment is made clear throughout the experience. Units are self-contained but build upon previously acquired knowledge and skills. The assessment process summarises what has been achieved previously within the unit and identifies developmental strategies, enabling students to build a portfolio of knowledge, an ability to articulate your practice verbally and specific skills appropriate to the subject and practice.

Level 4

The first year of the BA Communication Design and Strategy program is structured into three comprehensive units: Introduction to Communication Design, Communicating Ideas through Strategy, and Designing in Context.

The first unit, Introduction to Communication Design, provides an understanding of research methodologies and the design process, complemented by practical skills like image making, visual thinking, and typography. Emphasis is placed on sketchbook use as a valuable tool for ideation and design exploration. Additionally, students are introduced to basic digital skills, establishing a solid base for future units.

The second unit, Communicating Ideas through Strategy, introduces the aspects of design strategy, idea generation, audience identification, and team collaboration. This unit promotes the crucial role of strategic thinking in effective communication design, including the history and theory of design. Students get to explore how research and strategic planning influence the translation of ideas into impactful designs.

The final unit, Designing in Context, expands on students' understanding of narrative, audience, environment, and context in communication design. It emphasizes the significance of tailoring design decisions to the target audience and environmental factors. The unit also allows students to develop their pitching skills, necessary for presenting their ideas convincingly.

The first year supports students to study confidently at HE level and provides a solid basis for the second year of the course.

Level 5

The second year introduces students to more advanced topics via three units: Design Communication and Testing Strategy, Preparing for Creative Industries, and Design Practice and Strategy.

In Design Communication and Testing Strategy, students explore designing and defining systems, understanding audience and stakeholders' influence on these systems, also they review the role of hierarchy in controlling message and meaning. They develop advanced typography skills and are required to enhance their presentation skills. They are also introduced to the concept of prototyping and testing strategies, a crucial part of any design process.

Preparing for Creative Industries is a year-long unit offering industry-focused briefs, enriching guest speaker sessions, and insights into design agencies. It facilitates students in understanding their identity and voice within the creative industry. They undertake self-branding exercises, begin structuring their portfolios, and are introduced to networking skills. Entrepreneurship opportunities are also covered for those students who may want to start up their own business venture and preparations for an optional placement year commence, giving students a practical perspective on their career path.

Design Practice and Strategy, students are encouraged to draft their own design proposal with integrating strategy. This includes an expanded learning agreement and a self-initiated project accompanied by a strategy presented in a written report format. This unit fosters autonomy and allows students to tailor their learning to their specific areas of interest, further enhancing their strategic design capabilities.

Level 6

In the third and final year students engage in two units during the first term: Professional Practice and Working Strategies, and Creative Strategy.

The Professional Practice and Working Strategies unit introduces students to real-world applications of their skills, involving them in national competition briefs and working strategies, such as design sprints and agile workflows across various projects. Concurrently, the Creative Strategy unit allows students to demonstrate their gained knowledge through writing a project proposal and a comprehensive report for their pending final major project in the Design Practice unit. This exercise fosters deep research, analysis, and strategic planning to achieve the desired project outcomes.

The last two units, Design Practice and Preparing for Creative Industries 2, span across the second and third terms. The Design Practice unit serves as a final major project, offering students the freedom to craft their own project brief and produce a substantial portfolio piece. This platform enables them to highlight their capabilities and align their work with their career aspirations post-graduation.

In tandem, Preparing for Creative Industries 2 builds on the self-branding exercises and networking opportunities introduced in the previous year. Students understand the logistics of establishing a business, gaining insights into intellectual property and copyright considerations. This unit fosters awareness of contemporary trends, ensuring students are well-prepared for a successful career in the fast-evolving creative industries.

Specialist resources:

Specialist resources include industry-standard design software, advanced Apple workstations, a comprehensive library of course specific books and magazines, access to online resources and tutorials.

Course Units

Unit code	Unit title	Credit weighting
Level 4		
CDS401	Introduction to Communication Design	40 credits
CDS402	Communicating Ideas through Strategy	40 credits
CDS403	Designing in Context	40 credits
Level 5		
CDS501	Design Communication / Testing Strategy	40 credits
CDS502	Design Practice and Strategy	40 credits
CDS503	Preparing for Creative Industries	40 credits
Level 6		
CDS615	Major Project Proposal	40 credits
CDS616	Major Product Production	60 credits
CDS617	Portfolio and Professional Practice	20 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 4																												
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**									
Induction week	**CDS401 Introduction to Communication Design** (40 Credits) (weeks 1-10) Pass/fail unit										**CDS402 Communicating Ideas through Strategy** (40 Credits) (weeks 11-20)										**CDS403 Designing in Context** (40 Credits) (weeks 21-30)									

	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**									
	CDS501 Design Communication/Testing Strategy (40 credits) (Weeks 1-10)									Assessment	**CDS502 Design Practice and Strategy** (40 credits) (Weeks 11-20)									Assessment									Assessment
	CD503 Preparing for Creative Industries (40 credits) (Weeks 1-28)																												

	Level 6 CIM																											
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**									
	CDS615 Major Project Proposal (Weeks 1 – 9) (40 credits)																													
										CDS616 Major Project Production (Weeks 10 – 21) (60 credits)																			
																					CDS617 Portfolio & Professional Practice (Weeks 21 – 27) (20 credits)									

Image: Hannah De Castro | BA (Hons) Communication Design and Strategy